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UNVEILING THE GENDER LENS IN TOURISM

*Wenjie Cai, Albert Nsom Kimbu, Magdalena Petronella
(Nellie) Swart, and Elaine Chiao Ling Yang*

Abstract

Gender profoundly influences all aspects of tourism teaching and knowledge production and practices, yet it lacks the critical and reflexive understanding it deserves. In response the *Routledge Handbook on Gender in Tourism: Views on Teaching, Research and Praxis* aims to fill the gap in gender studies in tourism, offering critical insights, diverse perspectives, and practical guidance for future research and policymaking. This chapter provides an oversight on how this handbook delves into the profound influence of gender on aspects of tourism teaching and learning, research and practices. It explores how adopting a gendered lens challenges conventional knowledge and benefits marginalised communities, suppressed research areas, and silenced voices. Across six parts, the book covers a wide range of gender-related topics in the tourism context, such as gender identities, sexualities, discrimination, workplace challenges, and entrepreneurship.

Keywords

Teaching gender in tourism, Researching gender in tourism, Practising gender in tourism, Tourism development, Tourism workforce, Gendered mobilities, Entrepreneurship.

Introduction

Gender, as an essential dimension of social lives, has been deeply rooted and reflected in every aspect of tourism knowledge production and practices. However, without critical and reflexive understandings, such an important dimension is yet to receive the attention it deserves. From an epistemological aspect, a gendered lens brings alternative perspectives and challenges conventional knowledge productions and ways of thinking. Such a lens (e.g., feminist and queer approaches) does not only benefit research on women but also shifts focus to marginalised communities, suppressed research areas, and silenced voices. It also opens doors for critically understanding power dynamics and challenging unequal power structures. In practice, gender serves as an umbrella term for topics such as gender identities, sexualities, and the (re)production, performance, and construction of gender. Issues related to these topics play an important part in the tourism context, such as bodied and gendered tourist experiences (Small, 2016), stereotypes, discrimination and gender based violence in travel (particularly towards

solo female and LGBTQ+ travellers) (Eger, 2021; Usai et al., 2022) and tourism workplace (Dudley et al., 2022), gender pay gap and the glass ceiling in the sector (Carvalho et al., 2019), unpaid labour in family tourism businesses (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2019), workplace harassment and mistreatment (Cheung et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2021), entrepreneurial leadership (Kimbu et al., 2021), and structured constraints and challenges for women entrepreneurs (Khoo et al., 2023; Ribeiro et al., 2021).

Following UN Sustainable Development Goal #5: Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has been emphasising its significance in the tourism context, particularly as women represent the majority of workers in the sector. UNWTO (2023) believes that through job provision and entrepreneurship, tourism can empower women to be the leaders of society. Recognising several constraints, such as unpaid work in family businesses and low pay and low status compared with their male counterparts (UNWTO, 2019), UNWTO started several initiatives working with strategic partners globally to empower women in the tourism sector. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been proven to foster gender inequality in tourism, particularly in employment (Claudio-Quiroga et al., 2022), UNWTO believes the pandemic provides a golden opportunity to tackle gender-related issues. For instance, Kalisch and Cole (2022) suggest a Feminist Alternative Tourism Economics approach emphasising the Feminist Ethic of Care, Social and Solidarity Economy, and Human Rights-Based Economy in the post-COVID recovery and tourism transformation. Discussing gender in practice and knowledge production is thus invaluable in the post-COVID era when setting future research directions.

It is important to stress that gender issues cover much wider issues than women's issues. Gebbels et al. (2020) emphasised the importance of engaging men in the process of gender reform and equality in the context of tourism and hospitality. Such arguments shift away from a female-centric focus to the relational aspect of gender. In addition, as an umbrella term, gender studies also cover research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other (LGBTQIA+) communities, especially how they negotiate their sexualities and gender identities outside their familiar environment, particularly for transgender individuals (Monterrubio et al., 2021). Shedding light on the overlooked sphere of men and masculinities in tourism, Thurnell-Read and Casey's (2014) edited work is a great initiative to bring in a wide range of empirical insights on the interdependencies of masculinities and travel. In terms of methodology, two recently edited books, *Masculinities in the Field* (Porter et al., 2021) and *Femininities in the Field* (Porter & Schänzel, 2018), provided excellent platforms for researchers to engage in reflexive discussions on gender, and its influences on the tourism fieldwork. It is encouraging to see these initiatives broadening the scope of gender studies.

Although we have seen a positive development in gender research in tourism in recent years, Figueroa-Domecq and Segovia-Perez (2020) pointed out that tourism gender studies rarely consulted their parent disciplines of feminist and gender studies. In the same vein, Aitchison (2005) emphasised the importance of tourism gender studies to engage and critically appraise the origin, particularly feminist empiricism, standpoint feminism, and poststructural feminism. In addition to the epistemological aspect, gender studies in tourism also have a significant real-life impact; the findings have effectively influenced policies, raised awareness for the general public, and are transforming future generations and workforces. Therefore, in this handbook seek to advance this knowledge further theoretically and empirically.

In addition, compared with other research areas in tourism, the current body of knowledge is still lacking in terms of discussion on teaching and learning, research approaches, and the practices of gender in tourism, particularly in the Global South. We need more critical and alternative voices, empirical insights from the overlooked regions, first-hand reflections on the pedagogical practices and research methods, and more investigations on the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual orientations. This handbook thus aims to fill this notable gap by offering a detailed and critical understanding of the discussions related to teaching and learning, research and gender practices. The book is a novel contribution to the current conversations related to how gender is perceived in tourism. Furthermore, the handbook format helps to develop the scope and directions for future research. By proposing practical guides, contributors in this handbook offer transferable “takeaway points” that future researchers can apply. In this handbook, we also aim to provide a holistic picture, including the cycle of paradigmatic standpoints, knowledge production, tourism education, workplace, and entrepreneurship. We also aim to cover both macro (wider issues on pre-, during, and post-COVID-19 impacts and tourism development and policy) and micro (individual experiences) perspectives.

An Idea Is Born

In 2016, the then Deputy Minister of Tourism in South Africa, Ms Thokozile Xasa, stated that “....there was a low percentage of women at board and executive management levels of large enterprises in the tourism sector” (South African Government, 2015). To transform the sector and to grow the tourism economy it was deemed necessary to build more capacity amongst women leaders and executives, especially amongst previously disadvantaged communities. The Executive Education of black women was prioritised and institutions of higher learning could tender to offer a programme on behalf of the National Department of Tourism. The University of South Africa won the bid to offer the one-year programme under the leadership of Nellie Swart for the next five intakes. Since 2016, 124 students graduated from the programme. The programme’s success is evident in the regular promotions of graduates, not only in tourism but also in related sectors. In 2019, the UNWTO recognised this programme as a good practice in tourism education and training (UNWTO, 2019). However, results from the annual student surveys indicated the majority had challenges in maintaining a work-life balance, with concerns of little support from their families and employers. These alarming revelations motivated a wider investigation into the challenges experienced by individuals in the tourism industry based on their gender or gender identity.

The impetus for starting the book began with Nellie Swart’s suggestion to Routledge on 30 November 2020, to work on a “Routledge Handbook on Women in Tourism” based on her involvement in the Executive Development Programme for Women in Tourism, in South Africa. Concerns raised by the students in the programme motivated the conceptualisation of the book. Faye Leerink, Commissioning Editor from Routledge, responded positively but suggested expanding the scope to include gender in tourism. Nellie shared the idea with Wenjie Cai on 2 December 2020, and Wenjie proposed inviting Elaine Yang and Albert Kimbu to join the editorial team. The first editorial meeting took place on 16 February 2021. A handbook proposal was submitted to Routledge on 15 March 2021 and was resubmitted to address reviewers’ comments on 3 June 2021. Once the editorial contracts were signed with Routledge, the call for chapters was distributed on 9 November 2021.

All four editors represent the broad demographics of scholars in tourism and are non-native English speakers but work in Anglo-centric academia. Such experience provides editors with a particular lens in editing the book. Although trained in Anglo-centric institutions, all four editors' own research work has been emphasising the importance of alternative worldviews and paradigms in developing tourism knowledges away from Anglo-centric traditions and philosophies. We also believe in the importance of representation and giving platforms to the marginalised voices in knowledge production to challenge dominant discourses. Being non-native English speakers ourselves, we are also taking a more empathetic and developmental approach in the process of review and editing.

The Editorial Process

In adhering to the academic and research integrity of the collection, a rigorous peer-review process was followed. During the review process authors were commended for their interesting and well-presented contributions. Through the mentorship process, reviewers provided positive feedback on the chapters, acknowledging the authors' efforts and highlighting the potential of their research. The author's honesty and vulnerability were appreciated when sharing their autoethnographic experiences. The reviewers recognised the importance of the topics addressed in the chapters and believed they could make valuable contributions to their respective fields. Several recommendations were made by the reviewers to the authors to improve the chapters. They suggested clarifying the focus and structure, aligning the content with the aims of the edited collection, strengthening the literature review with more recent references, and ensuring theoretical foundations are well-developed. The reviewers emphasised the need for clearer connections between theory and findings, incorporating intersectionality as a lens and providing practical takeaways for readers. Furthermore, the reviewers recommended enhancing the methodology sections by justifying research approaches, providing more details on data collection and analysis, and addressing issues of translation and interpretation. They also advised revising the findings to better align them with gender perspectives, including more participant quotes, and discussing the implications of the research. In terms of writing style, the reviewers recommended improving the flow, grammar, and proofreading for consistency. Overall, the feedback acknowledged the chapters' potential contributions while providing constructive suggestions to enhance their quality, focus, and relevance to the edited collection. By implementing these recommendations, the authors have strengthened their chapters and increased their impact in their respective fields.

In the editorial process, it is with regret that we must reject certain papers submitted for inclusion in the handbook. The double peer-review process ensured the academic credibility and rigour of the chapters and also ensured all of the submissions had substantial contributions to gender studies and practices. Unfortunately, some submissions did not meet the necessary criteria. The reasons for rejection varied, but common issues included a lack of emphasis on the gender element, insufficient engagement with existing literature, unclear practical contributions, and a misalignment with the book's scope. Additionally, the rejected chapters lacked well-defined purposes, theoretical foundations, and the necessary gendered insights. Problems with methodology, weak literature reviews, insufficient use of data, and writing style and structure also contributed to the rejection. We did provide constructive and actionable feedback for authors to improve their works for future submissions. It is essential for authors to address these shortcomings by providing stronger foundations, improving the structure and

clarity of their work, and adopting a more focused and gender-centric approach in future submissions.

In this handbook, we have contributions and contexts from all around the world. A wide geographical range of gendered topics captured in the 16 chapters is authored by a diverse range of 37 English-speaking and non-native English-speaking researchers. Authors are represented by 16 countries (Australia, Brazil, China, Germany, Ghana, India, Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Uganda, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA)) across four continents, to enhance the international appeal and circulation of the handbook. Although we never aim to represent every corner of the world, the contextual findings and insights from different continents do offer a comprehensive understanding of gender issues across the world. In particular, we have several contributions from the Global South, which provide an alternative, yet important contribution to knowledge. We also feel it is important to provide a platform for scholars from the Global South to have their voices heard. In addition to the vast geographical representations, chapters in this book also make up a full knowledge production and application cycle, which consists of discussions on philosophical discussions, fieldwork and pedagogical reflections, and student experiences. In addition, our authors discuss both how gender is a tool of empowerment and the challenges and negotiating strategies. Some chapters also bring in novel perspectives and new understandings, either through intersectional insights or by challenging conventional understandings.

Structure of the Handbook

Six themes emanated from the 16 chapters, which are summarised in the following sections.

Teaching and Learning Gender in Tourism

Maria Gebbels (Chapter 2) and Husna Zainal Abidin and Ireena Nasiha binti Ibnu's (Chapter 3) chapters provide perspectives from both educators and students in Western Higher Education Institutions. Gebbels' chapter emphasises the need to design a genderconscious curriculum as the key to addressing gender issues in the wider society and future workforce. Reflecting on her own teaching and learning practice, and using the principles of heutagogy, the chapter recommends educators reflexively evaluate their teaching philosophies by turning to the critical feminist theories or critical pedagogy literature, co-creating a collective and inclusive learning space where gender issues can be openly discussed, challenged, and reflected, and using innovative techniques to facilitate dialogue and conversations. From the student's perspective, Abidin and Ibnu interviewed female Muslim students from Malaysia and Indonesia studying tourism programmes in the UK and USA universities. Their study found that female Muslim students have positive experiences in a conducive learning environment, in which they feel respected and accepted by their lecturers and peers. However, the study also indicates some challenges, such as a lack of awareness regarding prayer times in the teaching terms and limited representations in the course contents. Recommendations are given from both insightful studies. Teaching and learning serve a primary role in knowledge dissemination. Discussions on gender and intersectionality should be embedded in the curriculum design and further implemented in an open, supportive classroom and beyond.

Researching Gender in Tourism

Two methodological chapters provide rich insights into researching LGBTQ+ communities. From a more theoretical level, Núria Abellan Calvet and Marta Salvador-Almela's work (Chapter 4) explores the potential of feminist research when applied to the study of tourism, specifically, the inclusion of gender non-conforming identities in the tourism sector. Investigating a case study of non-binary, genderfluid, and genderqueer identities in Barcelona, the chapter aims to fill a knowledge gap encompassing tourism and gender non-conforming tourists. The feminist approach (such as intersectionality, self-reflexivity and positionality, power dynamics, and feminist standpoint theory) challenges hegemonic and traditional knowledge production, with a specific agenda on social change and giving voices to the marginalised. By proposing some excellent questions, the chapter offers a checklist for those who would like to carry out feminist studies in tourism. From a more practical perspective, Vizak Gagrat's study (Chapter 5) discusses the challenges and negotiating strategies when conducting research with bisexual and transgender participants. Adopting an autoethnographic approach, the author discussed challenges such as difficulties in recruiting participants, sensitivity issues when researching vulnerable communities, and participants' fear of biphobia and transphobia. By reflecting on the fieldwork, Gagrat emphasised the benefits of attending events and snowballing to recruit participants and building a trusting relationship with respect and positive affirmations. The author also emphasises the importance of maintaining ethical boundaries and being mindful of sensitive issues for vulnerable participants. It is worth pointing out that both chapters contribute to the overlooked literature on transgender, bisexual, and gender non-confirming studies in tourism. By offering practical guidelines for research design, data collection, and data analysis, these two chapters are invaluable contributions to this handbook for future knowledge generations in this area.

Practising Gender in Tourism I – Tourism Development

Tourism developed in a responsible and sustainable manner is often considered a pathway to women's empowerment, achieving gender equity and overall community development, especially in marginalised societies. This is a topic explored in three chapters of this collection. A starting point to achieving gender equity and community development is through the formulation and implementation of the right policies and strategies. Consequently, in Chapter 6, Shireen van Zyl and Hugh Bartis analyse gender inclusion in South Africa's responsible tourism policies, identifying the positive changes induced by extant legislations. They equally articulate the need for more improvements in terms of alignment of terminology within policy documents, and importantly, the interpretation and implementation of these policies for women to be fully empowered. In Chapter 7, Eylla Laire M. Gutierrez further adopts an empowerment lens to examine how the experiences of Filipino women's participation in tourism activities within their communities contribute to their psychological, economic, and political empowerment while at the same time enabling them to become active agents and facilitators of community development through tourism. They equally highlight the critical importance of right supporting frameworks. Taking a focus on the role of Ubuntu in leadership and tourism development in Africa, Ogechi Adeola and Albert Nsom Kimbu in their conceptual work (Chapter 8) contend that Ubuntu can provide a foundation for socially and environmentally sustainable tourism development that fosters gender equity, promotes the

well-being of local communities, and preserves natural and cultural resources. They conclude that if well understood and practised in tourism, Ubuntu could lead to the revitalisation and promotion of African traditions and values that prioritise collective well-being and community development. Collectively, these chapters provide a snapshot of the importance of policies and societal values in enabling tourism to be a driver of women's empowerment and community development.

Practising Gender in Tourism II – Gendered Tourism Workforce

The section on the gendered tourism workforce encapsulates two chapters (Chapters 9 and 10) that address different aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry in different countries, India and Brazil, with a focus on the perceptions and empowerment of female workers. The travel and tourism sector in India is described as highly profitable, generating substantial foreign revenue and creating numerous employment opportunities. Within this context, Chapter 9 by Md. Tariqul Islam and Uma Pandey provides valuable insights into the perceptions of Indian female undergraduate students who aspire to work in the rapidly expanding tourism and hospitality industry. These students' perceptions are influenced by factors such as social status, career prospects, and the work environment and benefits offered by the hospitality industry. It calls on policymakers and stakeholders in the hospitality industry, to modify their policies and work environments to cater to the needs of female workers in the industry. In Chapter 10, Cassiana Panissa Gabrielli, Natália Araújo de Oliveira, Gabriela Nicolau Santos, and Laiara Amorim Borges report the lack of attention given to racism and sexism within the Brazilian airline industry and proposes an analysis of the empowerment of black women workers in this context. Quilombo Aéreo (2022), a collective of black aeronauts formed to combat racism in aviation, is highlighted as a relevant initiative. Four dimensions of female empowerment (cognitive, psychological, political, and economic) are the focus of the analyses which support the emphasis on the intersectionality of race and gender in the airline industry. Chapter 10 highlights the need for black Brazilian women crewmembers to develop strategies based on their experiences and collective efforts, which contribute practically to their empowerment and that of other black women in the industry. Overall, both studies shed light on the experiences and perspectives of female workers in the tourism and hospitality industry in their respective countries, but they differ in their specific contexts and foci.

Practising Gender in Tourism III – Gendered Mobilities

As gender mobilities examine and explore how gender roles intersect with class, race, and sexuality to shape patterns of travel in the broader cultural, economic, and social processes, we share two chapters on this perspective. A study on "Solo female travellers' emotions. An analysis of specialist bloggers' narratives" (Chapter 11) by Marina Abad Galzacorta and Maria Cendoya Garmendia highlights the booming trend of solo female tourism worldwide and the emotions experienced by women during their solo travels, including feelings of freedom, spontaneity, empowerment, anger, and fear. The chapter analyses the profiles, emotions, and motivations of solo female travellers, focusing on Spanish-language travel blogs that emphasise emotional and safety aspects. It is evident that women's travel narratives have evolved, with expressions of emotions being a dominant theme in the weblogs of solo female travellers. Bingjie Liu-Lastres, Alexa Bufkin, and Amanda Cecil (Chapter 12) explore the role of female

business travellers in the tourism and travel industry, with a focus on risk perceptions and safety concerns. A risk profile of female business travellers is developed, focusing on their perceived risks, safety concerns, and travel willingness before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. A shift in concerns towards health and safety due to the pandemic is highlighted in this chapter. Perceived safety is found to mediate the relationship between risk perception attitude variables and travel willingness during the pandemic. Additionally, self-efficacy and perceived severity significantly predict travel intentions. The study emphasises the importance of a gendered approach in understanding female business travellers' risk perception and provides implications for crafting effective marketing messages to encourage their return to business travel post pandemic. Both chapters contribute to the understanding of women's experiences in travel and tourism, examining their emotions, concerns, and evolving dynamics in the context of solo travel and business travel, respectively.

Practising Gender in Tourism IV – Gender and Entrepreneurship

The chapters in this section unpack the role of gender in shaping women tourism entrepreneurs' experiences, highlighting the opportunities, challenges, and constraints faced by women tourism entrepreneurs. Evidence increasingly suggests that women entrepreneurs are creating and managing successful businesses, but failure rates remain consistently high among women entrepreneurs (Figuroa-Domecq et al., 2022). However, Nompumelelo Nzama and Ikechukwu O. Ezeudji (Chapter 13) in exploring gender nuances in tourism-related business performance in Durban, South Africa, uncovered that even though gender contributed to enabling access to start-up capital, it played no significant role on business performance and success. Rather management, networking, and marketing capabilities were pivotal in engendering entrepreneurial success which if deployed correctly could increase entrepreneur's performance. This viewpoint is supported by Brenda Boonabana in Chapter 14 examining women's entrepreneurship in rural Uganda where she suggests adopting a gender transformative approach to address gender constraints and underlying gender inequalities faced by tourism women entrepreneurs in Uganda.

In a similar vein, Ewoenam Afua Afenyo-Agbe, Issahaku Adam, Albert Nsom Kimbu, and Frederick Dayour (Chapter 15) adopt a migrant entrepreneurship lens to explore the role of gender and ethnicity in shaping migrant tourism entrepreneurs' experiences in Ghana. Their qualitative study not only unpacks the role of gender and ethnicity in shaping migrant tourism entrepreneurs' business experiences but equally provides key insights into their mobility decision-making process while underscoring the role of the family, as well as their experiences of dealing with and living in host communities. Similar findings are shared by Xiangli (Sally) Fan, Haili Qing, Jiamei Zhang, and Fan Zhong in Chapter 16. In this study, they unpack the critical role played by women in revitalising rural communities in China through tourism entrepreneurship. Their quantitative study not only evidences the dual disadvantages (rural and gender discrimination) faced by rural Chinese women, but, more importantly, the chapter equally highlights the critical influence of family support (psychological, capability, and financial) in helping rural Chinese women to overcome these challenges and establish tourism enterprises, thus gaining respect and recognition from their families, communities, and institutions. With this in mind, in reviewing literature on the motivations, barriers, non-governmental strategies, and government policies on women tourism entrepreneurship, Magdalena Petronella (Nellie) Swart, Vanessa S. Bernauer, and K. Thirumaran's systematic

literature review in Chapter 17 contributes to debates by different stakeholders (researchers, public, and industry stakeholders) to better understand critical success factors for women tourism entrepreneurship and reflect on how these could be maximised and challenges minimised, enabling women entrepreneurs to thrive and flourish in hospitality and tourism.

Conclusion

This handbook on gender studies in tourism sheds light on the critical and reflexive understanding of gender as an essential dimension of social life that impacts every aspect of teaching and learning, tourism knowledge production and practices. Gender studies in tourism have the potential to influence policies, raise awareness, and transform future generations and workforces. The handbook aims to advance this knowledge both theoretically and empirically, encouraging more critical and alternative voices and empirical insights from overlooked regions. It also emphasises the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual orientations in tourism studies, encouraging future research to address these aspects. Through rigorous double-blind peer reviews, the book maintains academic integrity, ensuring contributions are substantively valuable to gender studies and practices. The book is structured around six themes: teaching and learning gender in tourism, researching gender in tourism, practising gender in tourism regarding tourism development, the gendered tourism workforce, gendered mobilities, and gender and entrepreneurship. Each chapter contributes valuable insights from different parts of the world, offering a comprehensive understanding of gender issues in tourism. It covers diverse contexts and foci, providing a holistic picture of gender's impact on the tourism field. Overall, the book fills significant gaps in the current body of knowledge as it offers practical guidelines and transferable takeaways and contributes to setting future research directions. The diverse geographical author representation ensures a comprehensive understanding of gender issues worldwide, with contributions from scholars in 16 countries across four continents. Moreover, the book emphasises representation and giving platforms to marginalised voices in knowledge production, while challenging dominant gender discourses.

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