

## **Gender and mountaineering tourism**

POMFRET, Gill <<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1161-7703>> and DORAN, Adele <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4964-6908>>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/14636/>

---

This document is the author deposited version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

### **Published version**

POMFRET, Gill and DORAN, Adele (2015). Gender and mountaineering tourism. In: MUSA, Ghazali, THOMPSON-CARR, Anna and HIGHAM, James, (eds.) Mountaineering Tourism. Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism and Mobility . Routledge, 138-155.

---

### **Copyright and re-use policy**

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

# **GENDER AND MOUNTAINEERING TOURISM**

**Gill Pomfret and Adele Doran, Sheffield Hallam University**

## **Introduction**

We live in gendered societies within which our identities are culturally developed and are categorised as either feminine or masculine (Humberstone, 2000; Swain, 1995). While femininity is associated with 'being emotional, passive, dependent, maternal, compassionate, and gentle', masculinity reflects 'strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, confidence, and independence' (Krane, 2001: 117) and it embodies heterosexual characteristics (Messner, 1992). The cultures within which we live value and reinforce masculinity, yet they devalue and undermine femininity (Wearing, 1998). As gender is deeply ingrained within all aspects of society and it is central to explaining human behaviour (Humberstone, 2000), it is inextricably linked to tourism development and tourism processes. It is argued, therefore, that 'tourism processes are gendered in their construction, presentation and consumption' (Rao, 1995: 30). Gender shapes men and women's involvement in tourism in different ways. Gender divisions are most apparent in tourism employment, as women occupy most low-skilled, low-paid jobs, and in the commoditisation of culture at tourist destinations, as women and men play different roles in selling their cultures (Kinniard & Hall, 1994).

As gender is a societal construct which pervades all types of tourism, it is worthwhile exploring the role that it plays in mountaineering tourism. There is a lack of research

on this topic and the discussion within this chapter highlights a dearth of studies which specifically focus on gender and mountaineering tourism. Ordinarily, mountaineering has strong associations with manliness, and its masculinity is reflected in mountaineers' personal narratives, media representations and people's experiences of mountaineering. The commodification of this adventure sport has resulted in the development of commercially organised, guided mountaineering holidays, fuelling the growth in demand for mountaineering tourism (Buckley, 2010; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014). It has created more opportunities for more tourists to participate in a range of both soft and hard mountaineering activities while on holiday, meaning that 'tourists with relatively limited mountaineering experience can now attempt to scale impressively high peaks by booking a packaged mountaineering holiday' (Pomfret, 2012: 145). For the purpose of this chapter, we have adopted a broad definition of mountaineering which includes various 'stand-alone' activities - such as rock climbing, ice climbing, scrambling and hill-walking – and holidays which combine various activities – such as guided, skills-based mountaineering courses and high-altitude mountaineering expeditions.

Despite limited data on gender participation rates in mountaineering tourism and recreational mountaineering it is evident that men participate more than women. For instance, the UK mountaineering tour operator, Jagged Globe, reports that female demand for their skills-based courses in 2013 was only 23%, for guided expeditions it was 27%, and for trekking trips it was 37% (Jagged Globe, 2014). In recreational mountaineering, men generate most of the demand, yet the most dramatic increase in participation currently is amongst women. Testament to this is that female

membership of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC, 2010; BMC, 2014) is on an upward trajectory - 16% in 2002, 25% in 2006, and almost 27% in 2014. Women's participation in rock climbing has increased considerably, although accurate figures on the gender split are difficult to obtain. Additionally, the performance gap in climbing between genders is narrowing (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010) with women increasingly performing as well as, or better than, men. Mountaineering participation rates amongst women also are rising in other countries. For instance, there has been a growth in demand by Japanese women partaking in pilgrimage mountaineering in Japan (Nakata & Momsen, 2010). Nevertheless, this trend is not reflected in high-altitude mountaineering, in which women are markedly under-represented although, since the 1980s, there has been an increase in all-female teams summiting high mountain peaks (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010).

It is worth noting that these changing trends in mountaineering participation also are reflected in the demand for adventure tourism generally, although there is a more equal gender split (57% male and 43% female) in the latter (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2013). Furthermore, there are no major differences between hard and soft adventure participation for men and women, although soft adventure remains slightly more appealing to women. In parallel with this, the supply of women-only adventure holidays such as mountain biking, snowboarding and skiing trips is growing (Intel, 2011), although perplexingly this growth is less apparent in mountaineering and climbing holiday provision.

Despite a substantial body of work on mountaineers (Buckley, 2011), prior research has tended to neglect the role of gender, focusing instead on recreational mountaineers (see Delle Fave, Bassi & Massimini, 2003; Ewert, Gilbertson, Luo & Voight, 2013; Lester, 2004; Loewenstein, 1999). Little is known about mountaineer tourists, with the exception of a small number of studies (Carr, 1997, 2001; Pomfret, 2006, 2011; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014). Hence, men and women's participation in mountaineering tourism merits fuller research attention so as to develop an appreciation of the role that gender plays.

Despite the lack of research on gender and mountaineer tourists, we can gain some insights from studies on recreational mountaineers. Mountaineering tourism and recreational mountaineering are inextricably linked as they share the same facilities and resources (Carr, 2001), and they evoke similar psychological reactions from participants during mountaineering involvement (Pomfret, 2006). Few studies on recreational mountaineers have examined the role of gender, and these tend to focus on masculinity. For instance, this is a prominent theme in studies on high-altitude mountaineers while 'feminist studies of women climbers and women-centred expeditions are still rare' (Rak, 2007: 115) and a complete history of women climbers is lacking (Mazel, 1994).

Similarly, as mountaineering tourism is a palpable type of adventure tourism (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie & Pomfret, 2003), we can advance our understanding of gender's role in mountaineering tourism through considering other types of

adventure tourism. Problematically, however, this also is an under-researched topic as most studies focus on recreational adventurers (Buckley, 2011).

The lack of work which examines gender and mountaineering tourism reflects also the dearth of research on gender and tourism. Scholarly curiosity in gender and tourism gained prominence in the 1990s with the publication of several seminal texts (see Kinniard & Hall, 1994; Sinclair, 1997; Swain, 1995) yet interest in this topic dwindled over time, although it recently has resurged (Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic & Harris, 2007). It is argued that mainstream tourism research mostly does not consider women's experiences and women's voices (Pritchard et al, 2007). This may, in part, be due to the prominent and traditional masculinisation discourse typically associated with tourism, which provides an opportunity to escape from domestic environments and family commitments (Rojek & Urry, 1997). This draws attention to the need for further investigations which explore the motives, behaviour and experiences of female tourists and how these differ from those of men (Harris & Wilson, 2007; Timothy, 2001).

The chapter is structured to encourage readers to appreciate the key issues around gender and mountaineering tourism, to consider the limited research that exists, and to present opportunities for further investigations on this topic. It explores two key themes which feature most prominently within previous research related to gender and mountaineering tourism. The first theme examines representations of gender within mountaineering narratives and the media. This discussion introduces the notion of landscapes as socially constructed gendered spaces, and then it analyses

masculine and feminine representations of these landscapes, both within mountaineering narratives and within different forms of media. The second theme appraises gendered experiences within mountaineering. It initially focuses on gendered motivations, then gendered expectations and identities within mountaineering, and finally gender and mountain guides. These two key themes are strongly linked by the long tradition of masculinity within mountaineering as the latter is represented, and consequently, perceived and experienced as an activity which epitomises core hegemonic masculine features (Frohlick, 2005; Ortner, 1999). In the concluding section, suggestions for further research on the role that gender plays in mountaineering tourism are briefly outlined.

### **Gendered landscapes and their representation within mountaineering narratives and mountaineering media**

Discussion now turns to the first theme which is concerned with gendered mountaineering landscapes and how these are represented both within mountaineering narratives and within mountaineering media. This section initially provides an overview of landscape characteristics, and gendered mountaineering and adventure tourism landscapes.

The word 'landscape' has many meanings, yet it is commonly viewed as a physical entity which is pictorially represented and understood 'in a single gaze' (Pritchard & Morgan, 2010: 118). Aside from their physical features, landscapes are 'interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined' by us to give them meaning

(Gieryn, 2000: 465). As such, we experience landscapes subjectively and in different ways. Due to their socially constructed nature, and the significant role that gender plays in society, landscapes are gendered concepts.

Historically, mountaineering landscapes provided men with an opportunity to 'perform adventurous masculinities' (Stoddart, 2010: 109), to journey far away from home and to escape domestic responsibilities for the purposes of exploration, conquest and adventure. The development of mountaineering was influenced by all-male institutions, particularly the army, which favoured male styles of interaction (Frohlick, 1999, 2006; Logan, 2006). At home, in the post-war years and with the onset of modernity, men felt that their manhood was threatened by more feminized landscapes within which life revolved around family matters and neighbourliness (Dummit, 2004). Rak (2007) notes that from early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the golden age of high-altitude mountaineering in the 1950s – when all 8,000 metre Himalayan peaks had been climbed – mountaineering came to be associated with 'masculine heroism', 'manly imperialism' and 'cultural superiority' (p. 114). The use of gendered language further reinforced the masculinisation of mountaineering landscapes. For instance, Gaston Rébuffat, a mountaineer who climbed Annapurna in 1950, coined the term "the brotherhood of the rope" (1999 cited in Rak, 2007: 117) to describe the correct way to climb. This serves to emphasise the manliness of high-altitude mountaineering landscapes, through its associations with strength and leadership, while effectively disregarding women from participation. It is worth noting that femininity within mountaineering landscapes exists but only in metaphorical, subordinated forms. Mountains are referred to in a phallic way, using



terms such as 'virgin peak' and 'virginal purity'. Their domination is eroticized, and mountaineering is played out as a ritualised competition for masculine supremacy (Charroin, 2011; Logan, 2006; Moraldo, 2013).

Different types of landscape are apparent within mountaineering. While high-altitude, remote landscapes offer the most potential for participation in extremely challenging and 'hard' forms of mountaineering, tamer landscapes at lower altitude with supporting infrastructure - such as huts and cable cars - offer a broader range of hard and soft mountaineering activities. What is not fully understood is how these different mountaineering landscapes are interpreted and experienced by men and women, presenting another topic for further investigation. It is evident that masculinity still dominates present day mountaineering landscapes, despite women's increased participation and prominence in mountaineering over recent years. Many think that women are unable to cope with the demands of mountaineering, as they lack physical strength and mental endurance (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010).

However, the successes of renowned women mountaineers such as Wanda Rutkiewicz and Chantal Mauduit contradict this viewpoint and prove that women do indeed possess the fortitude to accomplish major peaks in mountaineering.

Adventure tourism landscapes, inclusive of mountaineering landscapes, offer tourists plentiful opportunities to participate in short, sharp fixes of adventure in which they can 'accelerate through increasingly compressed and hyper inscribed space' (Bell & Lyall, 2002: 21) to enjoy adrenaline-fuelled experiences. While participation in such activities encourages adventure tourists to experience rather quickly these

adventurous spaces, the longer length of time required for mountaineering allows for participants to immerse themselves more fully into the mountain landscape. Yet, while some mountaineering companies offer treks and expeditions which take place over long time periods, many provide much shorter skills-based courses, aimed at developing competence in mountaineering. As such, tourists on these skills-based holidays may, because of the more limited time spent in the mountains, also 'accelerate' through these sublime mountain landscapes. However, the pace and intensity at which tourists experience mountaineering within these landscapes, and whether there are differences in women and men's experiences, is unknown, highlighting the need for further investigation.

It is suggested that adventure landscapes are dominated by masculinity because men have prevailed as pioneers of unexplored, challenging landscapes, and they have developed codes of behaviour (Norwood, 1988) which continue to be followed in the present day. Therefore, women experience men's interpretation of these landscapes and, while this may be a positive and enjoyable experience, they may prefer more 'gender-neutral' or feminized environments within which to participate in adventure activities (Humberstone & Collins, 1998) or mountaineering tourism.

Consideration is now given to masculinity themes within mountaineering narratives and mountaineering-related research. Mountaineering is represented as a heroic and manly activity within mountaineering narratives, such as within guides and histories (Logan, 2006). Early narratives convey hegemonic masculine features, such as bravery, risk-taking, competitiveness, physical strength, rationality, leadership, self-

sacrifice, ruggedness and resourcefulness, and they describe the male body as dominating the natural environment (Frohlick, 1999; Logan, 2006; Moraldo, 2013).

Mountaineers are considered to be the most highly literate group of individuals within all sports as they have written many personal narratives about their expeditions. Both past and present mountaineering narratives mostly have been written by men and they recount stories of physical hardship, referring often to themes of masculinity. However, because of this focus on masculinity, daily practices within mountaineering are often not mentioned within these narratives. These practices include everyday domestic acts (e.g. getting dressed, turning on the stove, melting water and erecting tents), the camaraderie which develops, and the friendships which are formed. They are carried out by men and women alike, yet they are considered to be feminine acts and hence they get overlooked in narratives (Frohlick, 1999). Therefore, it can be argued that our perception of mountaineering as masculine stems from what gets published in mountaineering narratives. This opens up mountaineering to new questions and new areas of research. Is mountaineering really a masculine activity? Are we assuming a hegemonic masculinity that all men are the same? Or, are there different types of masculinities within mountaineering? Within less institutionalised new sports, such as windsurfing, skateboarding and mountain biking, a number of different masculinities - many of which are more open to women - and femininities, are apparent (Wheaton, 2000, 2004). As noted by Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994: 20), 'Rarely, if ever, will there be only one hegemonic masculinity operating in any cultural setting'. Therefore it can be assumed that there are multiple masculinities and, equally,

multiple femininities within mountaineering. Thus the prevailing view that masculinity dominates mountaineering can now be seen as more complex and multidimensional.

Like other mountaineering activities, rock climbing is a male-dominated activity with more males than females participating. Yet, there is a mix of both masculine and feminine characteristics in rock climbing. It involves high levels of risk and strength, which are often referred to as masculine features, but it also requires good technique, balance and grace, which are thought to be feminine characteristics. It is argued that climbing will continue to reinforce hegemonic masculinity unless the value of femininity is emphasised (Plate, 2007). Therefore, studies on masculinities (see Robinson, 2008; Wheaton, 2004, 2008) and the role of gender (Kiewa, 2001) should be supplemented with further research on women's experiences, their empowerment, and expressions of femininity in a range of mountaineering activities. Additionally, focus needs to be directed towards the experiences of both men and women and the range of femininities and masculinities occurring within mountaineering tourism. In this way we can gain a fuller picture both of conformity and resistance to stereotypical gender characteristics within mountaineering.

The next topic to be appraised within this theme concerns how female mountaineers are perceived within gendered mountaineering landscapes. Very few mountaineering narratives have been written by women, reflecting their disproportionate number in mountaineering. Historically, women who participated in mountaineering and who wrote autobiographies were considered to be deviants (Moraldo, 2013). This was

especially the case for early mountaineers - mostly from the upper classes - who resisted gender norms both by being mountaineers and by having an unconventional social and family life within which they chose not to marry or to have children. These women were often labelled as masculine and sometime as lesbians, as Lopez-Marugan (2001: 15 cited in Moscoso-Sanchez, 2008: 188) writes:

Venturing into the mountains was more than suspicious and to fasten themselves to a rope in order to climb in the company of men was symptomatic of lesbianism. To those that succeeded in overcoming these prejudices, there remained a long road for them to travel, between the hounding of public opinion, the incomprehension of their families, and what was worse, the criticism of some climbers.

This criticism was still apparent in the 1970s when women were invited to join organised expeditions. For instance, Arlene Blum, an experienced climber, was not selected for an American-led expedition because the male leaders considered her to be insufficiently lady-like, and instead they chose women with less climbing experience. This implies that for women at that time, social skills were more important than climbing skills (Blum, 2005).

While equality within mountaineering has since grown, in contrast to their predecessors, modern female mountaineers increasingly are adhering to gender norms (Moraldo, 2013). Although they are considered to be deviant because they participate in mountaineering, female mountaineers are not seen as deviant in their

daily lives if they choose to have a family while continuing with mountaineering. Nevertheless, this deviancy has not come without criticism. Within mountaineering, motherhood provokes scrutiny and criticism in ways that fatherhood does not, with moral questions levelled at women but not at men (Frohlick, 2006). This criticism comes not only from the media but also from the mountaineering community. Alison Hargreaves, a mother and professional mountaineer who died descending K2 in 1995, was accused publicly of 'acting like a man' in attempting to 'have it all' (Rose & Douglass, 1999: 273). Hargreaves was regarded as a terrible and selfish mother because she chose to be away from her children and she was able to 'switch off' from being a mother to pursue her profession in mountaineering.

What a tenuous path fraught with obstacles mountaineering must have been for these women. Women were accepted within the mountaineering community, but only on the condition that they exuded femininity and hid any signs of masculinity. Yet, through displaying femininity they were considered to be inferior by their male peers. Furthermore, 'sacrificial motherhood' was, and possibly still is, assumed, whereby mountaineering mothers must forgo their adventure and give up their lives as mountaineers when they become mothers as they are expected only to be caregivers and to focus exclusively on their children (Frohlick, 2006: 486). This perpetuates the male domination of mountaineering.

While it is clear that women have had to overcome a number of challenges imposed by male and societal attitudes towards their participation in mountaineering, it is unknown if women are still experiencing such challenges today. With a growing

number of women participating in mountaineering activities recreationally and when on holiday, men's attitudes towards increased female participation needs further analysis.

Attention is now directed towards media representations of gendered mountaineering landscapes. It is evident from the above discussion that mountaineering landscapes and narratives are dominated by themes of masculinity. Similarly, different media forms, such as magazines, holiday brochures and films fixate on the male gaze, depicting mountaineering landscapes as masculinised, sublime environments. However, previous research has neglected to examine media representations of masculinities and femininities within mountaineering landscapes.

As the media is influential in communicating the values and norms of different sport subcultures (Thorpe, 2008), accurate representation of sports' participants - inclusive of mountaineer tourists - is important. The media influences 'understanding of who belongs in these places and which modes of interaction with these places are most highly valued' (Stoddart, 2010: 114). It is argued that women are misrepresented, under-represented, or they do not feature at all within mountaineering media, reflecting an untruth that their participation in mountain sports is remarkable rather than the norm (Stoddart, 2010). As increasing numbers of women participate in mountaineering, it is important that they have a strong presence in the media and that they are represented correctly for their mountaineering accomplishments.

The growth and success of mountain film festivals in recent years has encouraged academic enquiry into the way in which mountaineering landscapes are represented through the media of film, and whether such festivals perpetuate perceptions of hegemonic masculinity within mountaineering through their emphasis on men's greatness and on their heroic adventure achievements. As Frohlick (2005: 178) notes, 'Mountain film festivals are spaces where contemporary versions of adventure are produced and imagined through 'hypermasculinization'', and where traditional views of the heroic white male adventurer from colonial times are reinforced (Foster & Mills, 2002). As such, these festivals are places within which women are considered to be 'gendered spectators' (p.178), featuring only peripherally in the screened films as less significant 'others'. Women's position in mountaineering landscapes is, therefore, often displaced, leading viewers to assume that these women are part of the support team rather than part of the mountaineering team. Furthermore, women spectators are positioned at mountain film festivals as soft feminine adventurers, contrasting with 'hardcore' (p.179) adventurers, who are usually men. These women are viewed as active consumers of soft adventure who are more likely to buy packaged adventure holidays. Such positioning does not take into account the narrowing gender split in mountaineering tourism participation, preferring instead to reinforce the masculinisation and male-domination of recreational mountaineering.

Women mountaineers are represented within the media in a strongly feminised way, with attention focused more on their physical characteristics, particularly their feminine appeal, than on their athletic prowess in mountaineering. Furthermore, the



media prioritises women's private lives over their mountaineering accomplishments. Despite their importance to international climbing, women climbers continue to be represented in outdoor sports magazines as 'scantily-clad sexual objects' (Rak, 2007: 132). Such portrayals can impact negatively on their social acceptance into the climbing community, generating feelings of disempowerment amongst women (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010).

One study (Vodden-McKay & Schell, 2010) analysed representations of women rock climbers in *Climbing* magazine - a leading specialist publication - between 1991 and 2004. Of the 421 articles assessed, only 3% focused on women. While photographs showed women climbers participating in climbing, the most salient and homogeneous images were of 'young, white, able-bodied women with hair at least shoulder length' (p.142). The magazine's narrative alluded to the maleness of climbing, mentioning characteristics such as power, strength, risk-taking and virility, and positioned women as 'real' women in spite of their participation in a male-dominated adventure activity. The magazine articles focused on women's heterosexuality, accentuating their involvement in romantic relationships, domesticity within their home lives, and their roles as mothers. They highlighted women climbers' physical appearance, particularly their physique and their attractiveness, and they infantilised women, describing them as younger than their age and alluding to their childlike qualities. Such work shows the pressing need for the media to portray accurately women's climbing competence and accomplishments rather than depicting them in such a traditionally feminised way. By doing so, more

women will be inspired to participate in climbing and other mountaineering activities through positive role models.

### **Gendered experiences within mountaineering tourism**

The second key theme explores gendered experiences within mountaineering tourism. It focuses, firstly, on gendered motivations, secondly on gendered expectations, thirdly on gendered identities, then fourthly on gender and mountain guides.

Considerable previous research has examined the motivations of mountaineers. For instance, 14 out of 50 reviewed motive-based adventure activity studies investigated mountaineers (Buckley, 2011), although a majority of these have focused on recreational mountaineers. Few studies (Carr, 1997, 2001; Pomfret, 2006, 2011; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014) specifically have examined the motives of mountaineer tourists. While there is some understanding of why people participate in mountaineering, there is a dearth of research about the role that gender plays in motivating mountaineers, and it is not possible to gain in depth insights from the previous work as it has not specifically addressed gender. As mountaineering has higher participation rates for men than women, motivational comparisons according to gender are made more complex and this may explain, in part, why this topic has been neglected by researchers.

There is some uncertainty, therefore, about whether men and women are motivated differently or similarly to partake in mountaineering. Early work (Norwood, 1988) on extreme female adventurers suggests that women and men want the same. Women want to prove to themselves that they are skilled and competent adventurers with the core psychological strength needed to help them to overcome their feelings of fear, risk and hardship. Whether such motivations are applicable to present day mountaineers and different types of mountaineers, from those on guided packaged mountaineering holidays to those on high-altitude unguided expeditions, is not fully known. More recent research on mountaineer tourists (Pomfret & Bramwell, 2014) has looked briefly at gender's influence on motivations and found that challenge, developing mountaineering experience and socialising motivated both men and women, and while men were slightly more motivated by adventure, women were slightly more motivated by competence development. Other work (Plate, 2007) concludes that women are strongly motivated to improve their climbing performance and they achieve this through climbing with other women, and through participation in women-only climbing events in which they can challenge themselves. They feel more inspired to climb harder when they climb with other women as they experience a supportive and less competitive environment within which 'there is less focus on partner dynamics and more energy going towards climbing itself' (p.10). Men also appreciate climbing with women for the same reasons and they perceive strong women climbers as role models who provide inspiration.

In contrast to the aforementioned discussion on gendered motivations, research on male and female mountaineers generally has found that their expectations of one

another, based on their past experiences, conform to stereotypical gender characteristics (Kiewa, 2001; Moscoso-Sanchez, 2008; Robinson, 2008). Women expect men to be more focused on mountaineering, demonstrate greater involvement in clubs and associations, to be more physically capable, to have a greater pain tolerance, and to be more concerned about their self-image. On the other hand, men expect women mountaineers to be masculine, yet they also expect them to be less capable, more focused on the social aspects of mountaineering, and less involved in clubs and associations. Furthermore, men expect women to have only a limited ability to self-sacrifice, and to prioritise family over mountaineering.

These gendered expectations play a part in shaping the behaviour of climbers, in that some male climbers would choose never to climb with women, as they expect women to hold them back and expect them to be less motivated (Kiewa, 2001). Similarly, some female climbers choose not to climb with men as they find men hold them back. Women feel that men have low expectations of them, and men's enthusiasm to climb up a route quickly and complete as many routes in a day creates unwanted pressure and impacts negatively on their experience.

While these studies provide insights into the gendered expectations between men and women, they also adopt a binary approach. This approach assumes that men are strongly masculine whereas women are strongly feminine (Robinson, 2008).

However, the boundaries which have been conventionally associated with masculinity and femininity within mountaineering are becoming more blurred.

Various studies (Kiewa, 2001; Plate, 2007; Robinson, 2008) have reported that male

and female climbers find no difference between climbing with men and climbing with women, and some male climbers regard women climbers as their equals. Some male and female climbers are equally focused on the activity, while others prioritise the spirituality and nature-based elements of the experience, or concentrate on the relationships that develop and enhance their climbing. Some male climbers avoid climbing with people who have a competitive attitude, while some female climbers choose to climb with men as they expect to be challenged and to be pushed by them.

What this demonstrates is the complexity of participants' expectations and, subsequently, their gendered experiences of mountaineering. As differences in expectations shape and sometimes limit engagement in mountaineering, further research needs to explore the gendered expectations of mountaineer tourists and how these influence the holiday experience. Rather than focusing on gender differences and how these restrict participation, the positive experiences which men and women enjoy during mountaineering participation with their gender opposites need to be explored. Taking this approach will provide a more stimulating way to think about how relationships between genders accentuate participants' experiences of mountaineering.

These clearly differentiated expectations of male and female mountaineers point towards a gendered identity within mountaineering. Moscoso-Sanchez (2008) believes that this identity develops through patriarchal domination and socialisation processes, for instance through family, school, peer groups and mass media. It is

thought that women are disadvantaged compared with men both within mountaineering and within society generally. Men exercise their influence, or dominance, over women, and women subconsciously accept their expected inferiority. For example, in mountaineering it is assumed that women will climb after men, and that they will organise the practical arrangements such as purchasing food for their mountaineering trip and booking mountain huts. Consequently, this limits women's opportunities to develop their mountaineering skills and constantly places them in second position. Similarly, when spouses or committed couples participate in mountaineering together, if the female mountaineer becomes pregnant and has children, she is expected to renounce or considerably alter her mountaineering participation habits. This reflects unequal gender roles and, more importantly, it reduces the opportunity for women to participate in mountaineering and pursue their mountaineering ambitions. Ultimately, it results in women having a less significant presence in mountaineering.

In addition to this gender identity, a mountaineering identity is also apparent (Moscoso-Sanchez, 2008). Both men and women perceive this identity as an area (the mountain in its distinct forms) and as a sport (which comprises different activities and varied styles). Furthermore, it is seen as a subculture which unites all mountaineers by a common lifestyle based on values which reflect contact with nature, personal development, challenging experiences, expeditions and human relations. Rock climbing is particularly appealing to women, providing them with a space to 'fit in' and experience an empowering sense of belonging within this subculture. The more time that women are involved in climbing, the more that they

cease to feel as if they belong to 'mainstream' culture and the more that they feel accepted within the climbing subculture. Therefore, some women climbers climb to differentiate themselves from traditional femininity and, by doing so, they construct their climbing and mountaineering identity (Dilley & Scraton, 2011; Robinson, 2008).

Packaged mountaineering tourism potentially offers women a more gender-neutral landscape within which they can play out their mountaineering identity, they can concentrate on developing their skills, and they can achieve their ambitions. This is because gendered roles and differences may not be as prominent given that the tour operator's role is to arrange all the practicalities of their holidays. Within this landscape, the mountaineering identity gains prominence and it challenges stereotypical gender roles by encouraging women's empowerment.

The final topic to be considered within this gendered experiences theme is gender and mountain guides, as guides have considerable influence over the client's experience of packaged mountaineering tourism. Very few studies have specifically researched mountain guides (see Beedie 2003, 2008; Martinoia, 2013) and to the authors' knowledge, there is no known research which focuses on mountain guiding from a gender perspective. However, Martinoia's (2013) study on the guide-client relationship provides a unique insight into the experiences of male mountain guides and it confirms gendered expectations and reinforces masculinity within male guiding. The study reveals that some male guides prefer women clients as generally they are more easily satisfied customers. These clients reduce risk-taking by being easier to coordinate. They underestimate their abilities and they prioritise seeking

pleasure from their experiences rather than achieving high performance. However, the study found that guides did not share this preference for female clients with other guides, or with the public, as they feared being labelled as a 'guide for the ladies' and they did not want their professional mountaineering skills to be feminised.

It should be recognised that male mountain guides are under considerable pressure to maintain a mythical image of being masculine, highly responsible, physically irreproachable risk-takers. Since gender is hierarchical, signs of femininity in guiding - such as anxiety, refusal to take risks, managing the clients' emotions, and 'mothering' the client - can lead to guides being downgraded by their peers, and this can impact negatively on their ability to secure employment (Martinoia, 2013).

Female guides also face challenges within their profession. Similar to the underrepresentation of women in mountaineering, the guiding profession also sees few women qualifying. Since 2005, five women per year on average (3.7%) have sat the entrance exam for the mountain guide training school in France (Martinoia, 2013). Conversely, in Aconcagua (Argentina) 30% of trainee mountain' guides are women, yet few will become guides, or even assistant guides, within the Argentinean mountaineering tourism industry. This is because agencies are unwilling to place female guides in positions of authority over their male counterparts (Logan, 2006).

## **Conclusion**



This chapter has focused on two key themes concerning the role that gender plays in mountaineering tourism. Firstly, it examined gendered landscapes and their representation within mountaineering narratives and within the media. From this analysis, it can be concluded that mountaineering landscapes have evolved as, and remain, strongly masculinised concepts. Mountaineering narratives are rife with stories of heroic, masculine achievements because mountaineering has been, and still is, male-dominated, despite more women participating in this adventure activity. These narratives employ sexualised terms to symbolise mountains in a strongly feminine way. In the same way that themes of masculinity pervade through mountaineering narratives, and in spite of limited research on media representations of mountaineering landscapes, it can be concluded that different media forms seem to positively emphasise the masculinity of mountaineering while negatively misrepresenting women mountaineers in an overly feminised way.

The second theme explored gendered experiences within mountaineering tourism. Discussion focused initially on the motivations of mountaineers, and it was apparent that very few researchers had adopted a gendered approach to explore this topic. Therefore, uncertainty exists about whether female and male mountaineers are motivated similarly or differently. Next, in considering the gendered expectations of mountaineers, it can be concluded that both men and women conform to gender stereotypes. Problematically, studies on gendered expectations adopt a binary approach despite the boundaries between femininity and masculinity becoming blurred and hegemonic masculinity within mountaineering being increasingly

challenged. Following on from gendered expectations, the construction of gendered identities was appraised, and it was determined that men have a more prominent mountaineering identity than women. This is not the case however in rock climbing, in which women climbers develop strong climbing identities to distinguish themselves from mainstream feminine cultures. Finally, the expectations and experiences of male mountain guides, and how these reinforce masculinity within the guiding profession, and the challenges which female mountain guides face, were considered.

It is hoped that this chapter has encouraged readers to appreciate the key issues around gender and mountaineering tourism. The review of previous research presented highlights how little we know about the role that gender plays in mountaineering tourism. While the studies discussed reveal some insights into this topic, they also expose many gaps in our knowledge. In an attempt to address these gaps, we provide a number of suggestions for further research in Table 1. The themes presented in Table 1 – mountaineering landscapes, masculinity and femininity within mountaineering tourism, media representations of mountaineering landscapes, gendered experiences in mountaineering tourism, gendered motivations, expectations and identities in mountaineering tourism, and gender and mountain guides – are all important themes for further investigation if we are to more fully understand the role that gender plays in mountaineering tourism.

<b>Table 1: Further Research in Gender and Mountaineering Tourism</b>	
<b>Research theme</b>	<b>Suggestions for further research</b>
Mountaineering landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How different types of 'hard' and 'soft' mountaineering landscapes are interpreted and experienced by men and women.</li> <li>• How female mountaineers interpret and experience strongly masculinised mountaineering landscapes.</li> <li>• The pace and intensity with which men and women experience different types of mountaineering tourism (e.g. skills-based holidays, guided expeditions) within mountaineering landscapes.</li> </ul>
Masculinity and femininity within mountaineering tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move away from traditional research approaches which assume that a static dichotomy exists between male and female mountaineers, and that all male mountaineers are defined by their hegemonic masculinity.</li> <li>• The extent to which different types of masculinity and femininity exist within mountaineering tourism, as is the case in newer, less institutionalised adventure activities (e.g. windsurfing, mountain biking).</li> <li>• Women's experiences, feelings of empowerment, and expressions of femininity in a range of different mountaineering tourism activities.</li> <li>• Men's attitudes towards increasing female participation in mountaineering tourism, and women mountaineers' perceptions of these attitudes.</li> <li>• Examination of feminist perspectives on mountaineering tourism to develop improved mountaineering experiences for women.</li> </ul>
Media representations of mountaineering landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How men and women are represented in different types of mountaineering tourism media (e.g. travel guides, tour operator brochures).</li> <li>• The extent to which women mountaineer tourists are accurately represented, for their skills and accomplishments, within these different media forms.</li> </ul>
Gendered experiences in mountaineering tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigation into the experiences of different groups of mountaineers. For example, different abilities of mountaineer tourists participating in various mountaineering activities, comparative studies of single gender and mixed gender mountaineer groups, and experiences of recreational mountaineers and how they transfer their mountaineering skills to a tourism context.</li> </ul>
Gendered motivations in mountaineering tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparative analysis of the motivational similarities and differences which encourage male and female participation in mountaineering tourism.</li> <li>• Motivations which encourage each gender to participate in mountaineering tourism, to ascertain the extent to which different masculinities and femininities are motivated similarly or differently.</li> </ul>
Gendered expectations in mountaineering tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The expectations that male and female mountaineer tourists have of each other while mountaineering together on holiday, and how these expectations encourage a positive mountaineering holiday experience.</li> <li>• Exploration of how social relationships between men and women enhance rather than impair their mountaineering tourism experience.</li> </ul>
Gendered identities in mountaineering tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How participation in mountaineering tourism is used by men and women to differentiate themselves from traditional masculinities and femininities to construct a mountaineering identity.</li> <li>• Examination of how more gender-neutral, packaged mountaineering tourism landscapes facilitate opportunities for women to play out their mountaineering identities and to enjoy feelings of empowerment.</li> </ul>
Gender and mountain guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the challenges which guides face due to gender and explore how gender influences the client-guide relationship and the overall holiday experience.</li> </ul>

## Reference list

Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) & George Washington University  
(2013) *Adventure tourism market study*, Seattle: ATTA.

Beedie, P (2003) 'Mountain guiding and adventure tourism: reflections on the choreography of the experience', *Leisure Studies*, 22: 147-167.

Beedie, P. (2008) 'Mountain Guiding and Adventure Tourism: Reflections on the choreography of the experience', in M. Weed (ed.) *Sport and Tourism: A Reader*. London: Routledge.

Bell, C. and Lyall, J. (2002) 'The accelerated sublime: thrill seeking adventure heroes in the commodified landscape', in S. Coleman and H. Crang (eds.) *Tourism: between place and performance*, Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Blum, A. (2005). *Breaking Trail: A Climbing Life*. New York: A Lisa Drew Book/Scribner.

British Mountaineering Council (BMC, 2010) *Popularity and economic benefit of mountaineering: instant expert*. Available HTTP  
<<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/participation-in-climbing-mountaineering>> (accessed 16 July 2014).

British Mountaineering Council (BMC, 2014) 'Male and female membership information for research purposes'. E-mail (16 July 2014).

Buckley, R. C. (2010) *Adventure tourism management*, London: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Buckley, R. C. (2011) 'Rush as a key motivation in skilled adventure tourism', *Tourism Management*, 33 (4): 961–970.

Carr, A. M. (1997) 'Guided mountaineering clients in New Zealand's Southern Alps', in J. Higham and G. W. Kearsley (eds.), *Proceedings of trails, tourism and regional development*. Centre for Tourism and IGU, University of Otago: Cromwell, New Zealand.

Carr, A. M. (2001) 'Alpine adventurers in the Pacific Rim - the motivations and experiences of guided mountaineering clients in New Zealand's Southern Alps', *Pacific Tourism Review*, 4 (4): 161–170.

Charroin, P. (2011) 'Femmes et homes dans les sports de montagne: Au dela des differences (review)', *Journal of Sport History*, 38 (1): 157-158.

Cornwall, A. and Lindisfarne, N. (1994) 'Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology', in A. Cornwall and N. Lindisfarne (eds.). *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, London: Routledge.

Delle Fave, A., Bassi, M., and Massimini, F. (2003) 'Quality of experience and risk perception in high-altitude rock climbing', *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 15 (1): 82–98.

Dilley, R. E. and Scraton, S. J. (2010) 'Women, climbing and serious leisure', *Leisure Studies*, 29 (2): 124-141.

Dummitt, C. (2004) 'Risk on the rocks. Modernity, manhood, and mountaineering in Postwar British Columbia', *BC Studies* 141: 3-29.

Ewert, A. W., Gilbertson, K., Luo, Y., and Voight, A. (2013) 'Beyond "because it's there": Motivations for pursuing adventure recreational activities', *Journal of Leisure Research*, 45 (1): 91–111.

Foster, S. and Mills, S. (2002) *An anthology of women's travel writing*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Frohlick, S. (1999) 'The 'Hypermasculine' Landscape of High-Altitude Mountaineering', *Michigan Feminist Studies*, 14, 1999-2000: 83-106.

Frohlick, S. (2005) "That playfulness of white masculinity': mediating masculinities and adventure at mountain festivals', *Tourist Studies*, 5 (2): 175-193.

Frohlick S. (2006) "Wanting the Children and Wanting K2': The incommensurability of motherhood and mountaineering in Britain and North America in the late twentieth century', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 13 (5): 477-490.

Gieryn, T.F. (2000) 'A space for place in sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26: 463-496.

Harris, C. and Wilson, E. (2007) 'Travelling Beyond the Boundaries of Constraint: Women, Travel and Empowerment', in A. Pritchard, N. Morgan, I. Ateljevic and C. Harris (Eds.), *Tourism and Gender: Embodiment, Sensuality and Experience*, Wallingford: CAB International.

Humberstone, B. (2000) 'The 'outdoor industry' as social and educational phenomena: gender and outdoor adventure/education', *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 1 (1): 21-25.

Humberstone, B. and Collins, D. (1998) 'Ecofeminism, 'risk' and women's experiences of landscape', in C. Aitchison and F. Jordan (eds.) *Gender, Space and Identity*. L.S.A. Publication 63, Eastbourne: LSA.

Jagged Globe (2014) 'Client Statistics'. Email (17 July 2014).

Kiewa, J. (2001) 'Stepping around things': gender relationships in climbing', *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* 5 (2): 4-12.

Kinniard, V. and Hall, D. (1994) 'Theorising gender in tourism research', *Tourism Recreation Research*, 25 (1): 71-84.

Krane, V. (2001) 'We can be athletic and feminine, but do we want to? Challenging hegemonic femininity in women's sports', *Quest*, 53: 115-133.

Lester, L. (2004) 'Spirit, identity and self in mountaineering', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 44 (1): 86-100.

Loewenstein, G. (1999) 'Because it's there. The challenge of mountaineering ... for utility theory', *Kyklos*, 52 (3): 315-343.

Logan, J. (2006) 'Crampons and Cook Pots: The Democratization and Feminisation of Adventure on Aconcagua', in L. A. Vivanco and R. J. Gordon (eds.). *Tarzan was an Eco-Tourist ... and Other Tales in the Anthropology of Adventure*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Mazel, D. (1994) *Mountaineering women: stories by early climbers*, College Station: Texas A and M UP.



Martinoia, R. (2013) 'Women's mountaineering and dissonances within the mountain guide profession: 'Don't go thinking he was a guide for the ladies'', *Journal of Alpine Research*, 101-1.

Messner, R. (1992) *Annapurna: 50 years of expeditions in the death zone*. Trans. Tim Carruthers, Seattle: The Mountaineers.

Mintel Oxygen (2011) 'Adventure tourism in South Africa', September 2011. *Mintel Marketing Intelligence*.

Moraldo, D. (2013) 'Gender relations in French and British mountaineering: A lens of autobiographies of female mountaineers, from d'Angeville (1794–1871) to Destivelle (1960)', *Journal of Alpine Research*, 101-1.

Moscoso-Sanchez, D. (2008) 'The social construction of gender identity amongst mountaineers', *European Journal of Sport and Society*, 5 (2): 183-190.

Nakata, M. and Momsen, J.D. (2010) 'Gender and tourism: gender, age and mountain tourism in Japan', *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, 6 (2): 63-71.

Norwood, V. (1988) 'Light, power, space, and sun: women in landscapes of adventure', *Women's Studies Int. Forum*, 11 (2): 155-165

Ortner, S. (1999) *Life and death on Mount Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan mountaineering*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Plate, K. R. (2007) 'Rock Climbing is a Masculine Sport? Understanding the complex gendered subculture of rock climbing', in V. Robinson (ed.) special issue for *Sheffield Online Papers in Social Research, Gender and Extreme Sports: The case of climbing*, August, Issue 10.

Pomfret, G. (2006) 'Mountaineering adventure tourists: A conceptual framework for research', *Tourism Management*, 27 (3): 113–123.

Pomfret, G. (2011) 'Package mountaineer tourists holidaying in the French Alps: an evaluation of key influences encouraging their participation', *Tourism Management*, 32 (3): 501–510.

Pomfret, G. (2012) 'Personal emotional experiences associated with packaged mountaineering holidays', *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 4: 145–154.

Pomfret, G. and Bramwell, B. (2014) 'The characteristics and motivational decisions of outdoor adventure tourists: a review and analysis', *Current Issues in Tourism*, DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2014.925430

Pritchard, A. and Morgan, N.J. (2010) 'Constructing tourism landscapes – gender, sexuality and space', *Tourism Geographies* 2 (2): 115-139.

Pritchard, A., Morgan, N., Ateljevic, I. and Harris, C. (2007) 'Editors' introduction: tourism, gender, embodiment and experience', in A. Pritchard, N.J. Morgan, I. Ateljevic, and C. Harris (eds.) *Tourism and Gender: Embodiment, Sensuality and Experience*, Wallingford: CABI Publishing.

Rak, J. (2007) 'Social climbing on Annapurna: gender in high-altitude mountaineering narratives', *ESC* 33.1-2 (March/June 2007): 109-146.

Rao, N. (1995) 'Commoditisation and commercialisation of women in tourism: symbols of victimhood', *Contours* 7 (1, March): 30.

Robinson, V. (2008) *Everyday Masculinities and Extreme Sport: Male Identity and Rock Climbing*. Oxford: Berg.

Rojek, C. and Urry, J. (1997) *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, London: Routledge.

Rose, D. and Douglas, E. (1999) *Regions of the Heart: The Triumph and Tragedy of Alison Hargreaves*, London: Michael Joseph.

Sinclair, M. T. (1997) *Gender, Work and Tourism*, London: Routledge.

Stoddart, M.C.J. (2010) 'Constructing masculinised sportscape: skiing, gender and nature in British Columbia, Canada', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 46 (1): 108-124.

Swain, M.B. (1995) 'Gender in tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22 (2): 247-266.

Swarbrooke, J., Beard, C., Leckie, S. and Pomfret, G. (2003) *Adventure tourism: the new frontier*, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Thorpe, H. (2008) 'Foucault, technologies of self, and the media. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 32 (2): 199-229.

Timothy, D.J. (2001) 'Gender relations in tourism: Revisiting patriarchy and under-development', in Y. Apostolopoulos, S. Sonmez and D. J. Timothy. (eds.), *Women as producers and consumers of tourism in developing regions*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Vodden-McKay, S. and Schell, L.A. (2010) 'Climbing high or falling flat? Representations of female rock climbers in Climbing magazine (1991-2004)', *Journal of Research on Women and Gender*, March 2010: 136-151.

Wearing, B. (1998) *Leisure and Feminist Theory*, London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Wheaton, B. (2000). 'New Lads?': Masculinities and the 'New Sport' Participant', *Men and Masculinities*, 2: 434-456.

Wheaton, B. (2004). "New lads'? Competing masculinities in the windsurfing culture', in Wheaton, B. (ed.). *Understanding Lifestyle Sports: Consumption, Identity and Difference*. Abingdon: Routledge.