

Title: Representation of Tourism Knowledge: A Post-colonial Perspective on Gender and Ethnicity

Author:

Sanggyeong Je
Griffith University, Australia

Abstract:

Feminism has opened new lines of inquiry and given significant influence across the discipline. The long tradition of females' gendered roles as well as the existing patriarchal structure (old boy's networks) impede women from progressing to the top level. Therefore, encouraging women to lead in a workplace and society is important, and there has been an increasing awareness of building balance between male and female speakers at tourism events. The empirical evidence also shows that tourism knowledge is not only gendered but also colonised with deep roots of Eurocentrism. As the representation of speakers is the key factor to show a society's hierarchy and materialise tourism knowledge, it is required to map how both social norms (gender and ethnicity) are reflected at events where the internationalisation of tourism knowledge occurs.

The study hired the bounced units of 121 events held by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) in 2017. It is the first attempt to examine where the organisation stands for equality. UNWTO is one of the largest tourism organisations, and it has promoted gender and nation equality as parts of its sustainable development goals (SDGs). A total of 64 meetings were analysed as the samples where the biographical information of speakers was available. The information of 1656 speakers was collected from UNWTO's website, partner-websites and any associated social media pages. The statistical implication showed that the organisation is not lining up with its solemn promise. Overall, there were 1151 male speakers (70%) and 505 female speakers (30%). 26 meetings (41%) indicate that male speakers outnumbered female speakers three-fold. Only four meetings (6%) were outnumbered by females and one single meeting (1.5%) showed impartial representation of male and female speakers. When the study further breaks down the gender representation of prominent positions such as keynote or highlighted speakers, the result was also similar with the overall gap (male keynote speakers: 175, female keynote speakers: 77). In terms of ethnicity, there was a nearly equitable representation between Westerners (Europe, Anglo America, Australia and Pacific Islands) and non-Westerners (Non-Anglo America, Asia, Middle East, Africa). Nevertheless, Westerners, especially, Anglo-Americans seem to be included as speakers more often regardless of the event location. It is viewed as a preference for Western knowledge which is evidence of Eurocentrism.

The study indicates two major concerns: implicit gender bias and neo-colonial practice in tourism knowledge. The lack of diversity-aware reflexivity is problematic because it may skew analyses of tourism knowledge production. Therefore, it is recommended to adopt a balance policy as part of the process for organising an event. The lens of post-colonial feminism has

provided an opportunity to explore subaltern groups building reflective and transformative knowledge. Feminist research is essential to empower women and girls; however, there is still a lack of effort in tourism research. Therefore, the study has value to enlighten this marginalised area and address its absence in the history and ideology of tourism research.
