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Guiding Women around the World

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Title: Guiding Women around the World

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Abstract:

Writing for the *Guardian*, Linda Kinstler (2018) has recently reported the censorship of advice for women travelers on TripAdvisor, especially when that advice relates to their personal safety. Much of the academic literature centred on women's travel highlights their own responsibility in safeguarding themselves from dangers abroad. As such this paper aims to widen discussions from personal responsibility to institutional responsibility by honing in on the travel trade press and its promulgation of discourses on women's travel.

The world's largest publisher of guidebooks is Lonely Planet (Bender, Gidlow & Fisher, 2013), and the prominence of Lonely Planet has been noted by Tegelberg (2010: 494), who postulates that the guide book is a commercial instrument that silences 'alternative perspectives [and] raises important questions about the epistemological implications of the wide dissemination and use of Lonely Planet guidebooks.' Acknowledging that Lonely Planet is an important brand in travel advice, but also that many tourists now turn to internet based advice, this research is centred on a discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972) of the Lonely Planet website's advice for female travelers.

Web pages on Women Travelers from the five most visited countries of each continent were collected utilising NVivo and then analysed individually by both researchers. The discourse analysis shows that the different regions offer specific advice for female travelers, which is arguably shaped by postcolonial relations. Interestingly destinations in the West utilize negative auto stereotypes highlighting dangers for female travelers, whereas those destinations that have been criticized by the mass media as sexist play down any dangers that female travelers may face. While mass media can often be critiqued for discursively engaging in 'specific sexism' (sexism over there) to obscure Western gender relations and justify discrimination (Gianettoni & Roux, 2010). Lonely Planet online creates a culturally relativist paradigm within which guidebooks create discourses on women's rights.
