

Out in Front: Tracking Women's Leadership in Adventure Travel

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**ADVENTURE TRAVEL
TRADE ASSOCIATION**

www.adventuretravel.biz

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Adventure Travel Trade Association

About Us

Established in 1990, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) serves over 1,000 members in 100 countries worldwide. Members predominantly include tour operators, tourism boards, specialty agents and accommodations with a vested interest in the sustainable development of adventure tourism. The ATTA delivers solutions and connections that propel members towards their business goals and the industry toward a responsible and profitable future. Through its regional AdventureConnect and AdventureNEXT events and annual Adventure Travel World Summit and AdventureELEVATE trade conference, the ATTA excels in professional learning, networking and partnering services. With expertise in research, education, adventure travel industry news and promotion, members of the ATTA receive competitive opportunities that help establish them as leaders in adventure tourism.

About Our Research

The ATTA strives to produce regular reports that take the pulse of the industry through our membership as well as the global travel industry. In addition, consumer research studies lend insight into the fast paced and changing world of travel and travelers perceptions of it. At adventuretravel.biz, Research Reports can be located that dive deeply into the motivations of adventure travelers, the size of the industry, the landscape and health of the industry at large, as well as other targeted reports on subjects ranging from Travel Agents to adventure travel in specific destinations.

Women in Adventure Tourism: Growing in Prominence

Adventure travel has its roots in the great expeditions of intrepid explorers: first ascents of high peaks and descents of wild rivers, brave journeys into the depths of tangled jungles. And while historically men have dominated the headlines and received wide notoriety with published accounts of their journeys, there is no shortage of heroic women adventurers in history and certainly not in the current era. The April 2017 cover of Outside magazine proclaimed, “The Future of Adventure is Female” and featured leading adventurers and athletes from around the world: Lindsay Vonn, Mira Rai, Diana Nyad, Emily Erickson, and many others.

Women’s prominence in commercial adventure tourism is also expanding. Women can be found in all areas of the adventure travel industry - as company founders, CEOs, lead guides, product development managers, and everything in between.

“When we think about women in adventure travel, we can’t ignore the cultural and historical context. In Brazil, we are one of the first generations to work professionally. In my family, I am the second generation to do so. The prior generations were not able to combine the role of raising a family and work outside from home. So, in that sense, the progress we have taken is enormous.”

- Camilla Barp, Gondwana Brasil

Globally, women represent between 60 and 70 percent of the tourism workforce¹. Data from International Labor Organization (ILO) shows that despite this high level of participation in tourism, however, women are not proportionally represented at the leadership level. Neither in government (where only one in five tourism ministers is female²) nor in the private sector³.

Private sector data is available on a country level basis. One example from an Equality in Tourism study finds that in the UK, women represent 53.6 percent of the workforce but only 12 percent of board seats⁴.

Compared to other industries tourism provides better opportunities for women’s participation in the workforce and women’s leadership, especially in developing countries⁵. As a sector dominated by small businesses and entrepreneurs, tourism offers many opportunities for self-employment, compared to other sectors⁶. According to the UNWTO report Women in Tourism, women are almost twice as likely to be employers in the tourism industry compared to any other sector.

Women benefit from being able to work in tourism, and tourism businesses have also been shown to benefit from women’s leadership. Research indicates that inclusive workplaces, which support female leadership, experience financial benefits. The Women1st Campaign found a direct link between the presence of women on boards and in management and the company's

organizational and financial performance - this correlation suggests that when women are strongly and fairly represented on boards and in leadership, companies perform better⁷.

The purpose of this study was to establish a baseline understanding of the status of women in the adventure industry.

Key Goals Were:

- Find out roles held by women at adventure businesses
- Understand the types of benefits offered to women to support a work life balance and encourage leadership development
- Gather information about how the Adventure Travel Trade Association and its members might be proactive about identifying and supporting pathways to success for women

These findings are presented in aggregate. They are useful for ATTA members to compare their company's policies and performance relative to others in the industry.



Research Method

This report was compiled using:

- 1) Secondary research on gender studies from the travel and tourism industry as well as other sectors;
- 2) An online survey, distributed by the Adventure Travel Trade Association to its members accessible between March 14th and April 1st, 2017;
- 3) Twelve interviews with women leaders in adventure tourism.

A Note on Terminology:

- Adventure Travel: Adventure Travel is defined by ATTA as a trip containing two of the following three components: physical activity, interaction with nature, and cultural exchange.
- Leadership: For the purposes of this project, women are considered to be in leadership positions if they own their business or work in a position that includes people management.
- Gender pronouns: The pronouns used in the analysis of the data are the results of a self-identifying survey question: 'Are you a man or a woman?'



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Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile

Key Findings

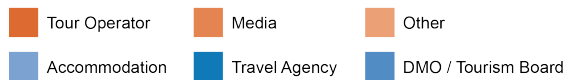
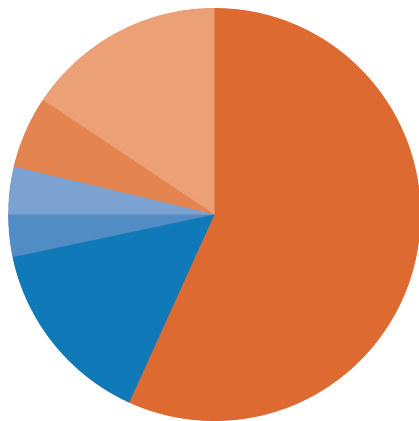
- On average, boards of adventure companies participating in this survey are comprised of 38 percent women. This compares favorably with women's representation on boards in mainstream tourism and Fortune 500 companies in which 11 percent of board members are women.
- Respondents reported that their own companies do provide equal opportunities and equal pay for men and women, but said they believe that the adventure industry and the broader tourism industry in general do not provide women and men with equal opportunities
- Women, and especially mothers, seeking to rise to the top of their industry face challenges, which they believe are not also faced by men:
 1. The pressures of motherhood
 2. Chauvinism and prevalence of an 'old boys network'
 3. Lack of female role models
- Gender bias goes both ways. Men can experience gender bias in the adventure industry as well, such as being offered stereotypically male tasks.
- There is no connection between a female client base and female leaders at tour operators. With the exception of companies that cater specifically to women, neither survey respondents nor interviewees indicated seeing an increase in female clients as a result of the company having female owners or managers.

- Only one fourth of adventure companies in this sample have a formal mechanism for addressing harassment in the workplace.

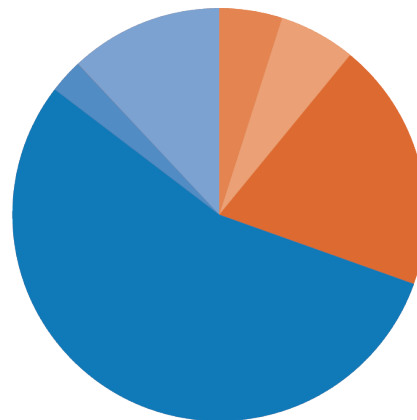
Profile of Respondents

Two hundred and sixty three respondents answered an online survey. 78 percent of respondents were women. 56 percent of respondents work for tour operators and 54 percent are headquartered in North America.

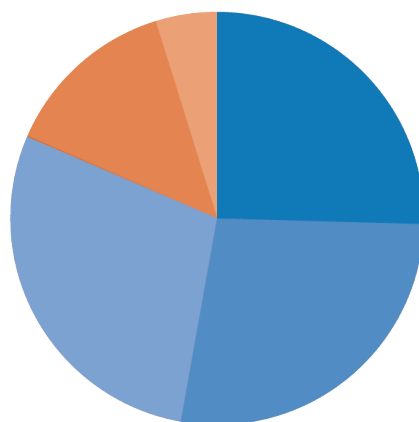
What type of company do you work for?



Where is your company headquartered?



What was your company's revenue in 2016?



Respondents to the survey came from companies both large and small, with average annual revenue varying from greater than \$5M to less than \$250,000.

In terms of the respondent's client base, on average 54 percent was female. With the exception of companies that cater specifically to women, both survey respondents and interviewees did not see an increase of female clients because they are female owners or managers.

Female Representation on Boards

Studies on gender equality at leadership levels in other sectors typically use female representation on boards as a measure of female leadership in the industry. The results from this sample of adventure businesses indicates that:

- 52 adventure companies have an average of 5.6 people on the board
- 35 percent of companies have a woman as chairperson
- 17 percent have no women on their board
- 4 percent have no men on their board
- On average, boards are comprised of 38 percent women

At 38 percent, this sample of respondents from the adventure travel industry indicates adventure businesses have more female representation on boards than tourism business in general. The Equality in Tourism report in 2013 found that “only 15.8 percent of all board members are women⁸.” Furthermore, one quarter of companies surveyed did not have a single woman on the board.

The Women in Travel Empowerment Index, which measures the number of females on boards of tourism companies in the UK, found a 26 percent representation rate in 2015 (up from 12 percent in 2005).

Camber Outdoors surveyed its membership in 2016 and found that only 11 percent have a woman board president and that on average, 23 percent of the remaining board members are women⁹.

Comparing this to major public companies – the adventure industry sample also performs better. In 2017, only 10.6 percent of board seats of Fortune 500 companies were occupied by women¹⁰. In 2016, the FTSE 100 (a list of the top companies listed on the London Stock Exchange) had 23.5 percent female representation on their boards. This is significantly better than their American counterpart, in which 16 percent of the S&P 1500 (an index of U.S. stocks compiled by Standard & Poor) had board seats held by women in 2016.

A study done by EY of the S&P 1500 found that the larger the board size, the more likely it is to contain women¹¹. In contrast, this was not found in this survey of the adventure industry – there appears to be no correlation between the size of a board and female representation on boards.



Staff Profiles

The UNWTO report on Women in Tourism found that globally, women are well represented in service and clerical jobs but poorly represented at professional levels in tourism. Similarly, Camber Outdoors found that only 17 percent of C-suite positions in the outdoor industry are held by women¹².

In the sample of adventure travel businesses, this survey found that the majority of companies had more women than men employees overall, however slightly more non-staff contractors were men:

Overall Full-time Employees

Women	11
Men	6

Overall Non-Staff Contractors

Women	5
Men	7

On average, there were an equal number of men and women in leadership positions at adventure companies. In fact, on average companies had both one man and one woman in the CEO/Owner/Founder role. Notably, more companies have zero men in the top spot than the reverse.

However, as the table below shows, when relating the number of women in leadership positions with the overall size of the company, it was found that as companies grow in size fewer women leaders are found. These numbers are averages of the total sample. The average indicates that women make up 50 percent of non-staff contractors, 36 percent of non-management staff, 26 percent of management staff and 25 percent of CEOs.

Staff Pipeline
Average men and women in various positions in adventure travel companies

	Percent of Women Overall	Percent of Women CEO	Percent of Women Management	Percent of Women Staff	Percent of Women Non-Staff Contractors
Small Companies <i>(less than 20 staff overall)</i>	68%	64%	65%	59%	51%
Big Companies <i>(more than 20 staff overall)</i>	60%	26%	49%	63%	40%

Case Study: Bannikin Travel and Tourism

Bannikin Travel & Tourism Ltd. Case Study for ATTA Women in Travel Report



How Bannikin Became Known:

Building a Strong Consultant Brand – Both the Obvious and Obscure Rewards

When we set out to build Bannikin seven years ago, we knew we needed to build a strong, recognizable brand, rather than a profile based solely on the Directors/Owners within the company – which is the more common route many travel & tourism consultants take. The rationale for this was that we knew to generate the most long-lasting success, the brand needed to be able to outlast the founders, and leave room for a vibrant team to feel a sense of true ownership over the company they were helping to build.



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Cracking The Code

Although we didn't explicitly map this out while building our business plan in these early days, the emphasis on a strong brand, rather than on individuals as travel and tourism consultants, has aided us in many other ways as well. It has meant that we've never needed to compromise on work-life balance. For example, both founders have managed to start families seamlessly, without interrupting the continual growth and success of Bannikin, and we are excited for other Bannikin team members to do this too when they are ready! As one person put it, we "cracked the code" on female adventure tourism consultants being able to have families without their businesses suffering.

In short, building a strong consultant brand for Bannikin was key to the company's overall success in ways both planned and unplanned, and ways both related to our personal lives, and the business itself.

How Did We Do It? Company Culture

Having a compelling, vibrant, future-thinking yet reality-focused tourism consultant brand attracts the best, most creative and energetic team members in the business. Bannikin has always managed to hire the most inspired, motivated, smart, and fun professionals in this small niche of ours. Our team is built of budding entrepreneurs, and people who care about being a part of something that is small but growing, and that is doing things differently (and better.) Ever since we hired our first employee, even though this was a part-time, contract job (that within weeks grew to a full-time permanent position!) the message was clear: you are an equal part of building this company, all ideas are encouraged, and all reward and recognition will be the team's, not the founders'. This became the Bannikin culture, and helped us, hire after hire after hire, attract what we think are the most dynamic, youthful, and smart bunch of tourism professionals in the business. We've been very particular to identify team members who will value the opportunity to be entrepreneurial in an established environment - to find team members who wish to grow with us.

Read more about Bannikins services here: www.bannikin.com



Workplace Benefits


The result of interviews with women in adventure businesses suggests that in adventure travel, the primary imbalance that exists is not between men and women, but rather between mothers and everyone else.

Becoming a mother puts limits on a woman's career. Those limits are both internally imposed and externally imposed. As one interviewee, Norie Quintos, expressed it: "There are external limits: you simply don't have the time to attend as many evening or weekend networking events - and that may be seen as a tick against you. But internally, many mothers self-limit and decline to take the next step on the ladder, because they fear they won't be able to balance the increased responsibilities of work with family."

'Choosing the Mommy Track,' e.g. women voluntarily opting out of certain positions because they feel they cannot fulfill the needs of a more senior job, seems less common in adventure travel than other sectors. Interviewees indicated that although their career trajectory slowed during the early years of their children's life, they were able to either continue working or return after a brief hiatus. Many took time off, worked part-time, or participated in job-sharing programs. Our research shows that female guides will usually move to the office after having kids.

"I didn't become a trip leader, although I wanted to, because I knew it was incompatible with my desire to start a family."

After returning to work, being a working mom in adventure involves making choices that can impact the growth of the company - being pickier about travel opportunities, missing opportunities to train staff, and not working the long hours they might have worked pre kids. Both mothers and employers tend to create expectations around a mother's ability at work.



"I can't count the number of times that people at work have asked me 'Who watches your children when you're on a field site?' No one asks my male colleagues that."

- Moe Carrick

There are certain workplace benefits that make it easier for mothers to balance their family and professional lives. Childcare typically costs parents one-third of their income. A recent study by James J. Heckman, from the University of Chicago showed that high-quality care in youth leads to more success in adulthood¹³. The more companies can provide benefits that encourage a work/life balance, the more companies can retain women and support their professional development.



Maternity and Paternity Leave

Research shows that parental leave benefits parents, kids, and companies. Virtually all countries mandate that companies provide some paid parental leave. A notable exception is the US, where only 12 percent of companies offer paid parental leave after the birth of a child¹⁴.

Of all companies surveyed, 75 percent offer paid maternity leave. Twenty-five percent did not offer any paid maternity leave (all 25 percent similarly offered no paternity leave). Sixty-four percent of those companies also provided zero unpaid parental leave. Only half of these were headquartered in the United States.

The majority of respondents indicated that their companies did provide some paid and unpaid leave for new parents:

All companies:

- Average paid maternity leave: 3.3 months
- Average unpaid maternity leave: 3 months
- Average paid paternity leave: 1.2 months
- Average unpaid paternity leave: 1.8 months

In this survey, there was no correlation between a company having a female CEO/Founder and number of months of paid maternity leave. In fact, on average, companies with no female leadership even had slightly more generous parental leave plans.

No female leadership at CEO/Founder position:

- Average Paid Mat Leave: 3.7
- Average Unpaid Mat Leave: 3.2 months
- Average Paid Pat Leave: 1.8 months
- Average Unpaid Pat Leave: 1.1 months

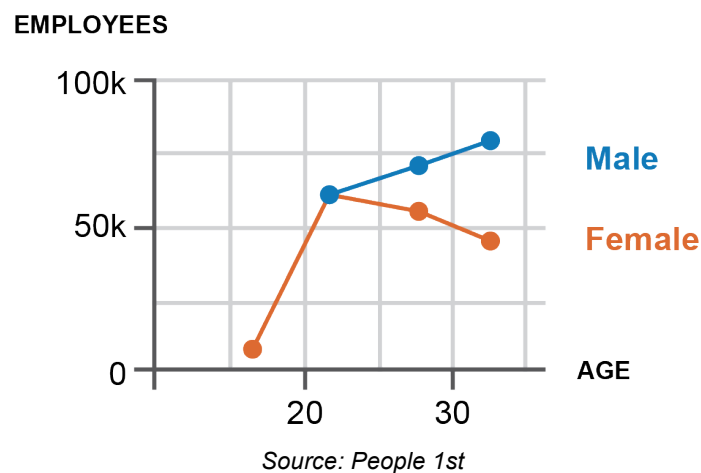
The table below provides an overview of the average of months provided by country and region. Adventure companies in Europe provide the most months for parental leave.

Country or Region	Avg. Paid Maternity Leave	Avg. Unpaid Maternity Leave	Avg. Paid Paternity Leave	Avg. Unpaid Paternity Leave
USA	1.1	2.2	0.5	1.8
Canada	3.75	4.6	1.6	4
Europe	6.8	5.2	3.7	3.25
Africa	2.3	3	0	1.8
South America	3	0.8	0.2	0.1
Asia	3	5.25	0.5	0



Workplace Policies

One of the principal reasons that women are not in as many management positions overall as men is because they do not return to work after having children. A report by People1st found that, in the UK, the career trajectory of men and women in tourism is similar until the age of 22, but then the number of women in the sector drops and at age 33 there is a steep decline¹⁵.



Certain workplace policies support women in the work life balance and in their professional development (for example, childcare assistance). Respondents to the ATTA survey generally had one or more benefits provided by their company. Only 5 percent of respondents said their

company offered no benefits. These companies were both big and small and located in various parts of the world: size and location were not a factor in the presence of certain benefits.

Type of Benefit	Percentage of Respondents Who Have Access to This Benefit at Their Company
Flexible Working Arrangements	69%
Paid Time-Off	44%
Ability to Work Virtually	52%
A Zero Tolerance Policy for Discrimination and Harassment	61%
Professional Development Programs	40%
None of the Above	5%

Respondents had an option to insert other types of benefits.

These Included:

- Equity committee
- Women’s executive group
- Accelerated advancement for female guides



Diversity Statements

A diversity statement is a written mission to promote inclusion in the workplace. The goal is to promote shared values and clearly state the position of the company to employees and customers. Typically, a diversity statement (sometimes called a ‘values statement,’ or an ‘inclusion statement’) lists the elements that the company will not discriminate against (gender, sexual orientation, race). The European Commission found that having a diversity statement results in improved communication processes, better management, and less staff turnover¹⁶.

Similarly, having a formal mechanism to address harassment and discrimination is important for women. Many companies in the adventure sector are small and medium sized businesses that do not have a dedicated human resources department, meaning there is not a specifically trained person to handle discrimination.

Type of Statement / Mechanism	Percentage of Respondents Who Have This Type of Statement
Diversity Statement	23%
A Formal Mechanism to Address Harassment and Discrimination	28%

Professional Development

Overall, this sample had high access to professional development programs. Men are slightly more positive in their perception of equal opportunity for men and women with respect to promotions, leadership roles, salary increases, and training.

Types of Professional Development Available and Access

Types of professional development	Percentage of Respondents who felt men and women had equal opportunity – Overall	Percentage of Male Respondents who felt men and women had equal opportunity	Percentage of Female Respondents who felt men and women had equal opportunity
Promotions	86%	96%	83%
Leadership roles	88%	93%	88%
Salary increases	82%	93%	82%
Training programs	82%	90%	83%

While the majority of adventure companies in this sample offer further learning opportunities for their employees, respondents report there is not as much access to innovative incentive programs that support leadership development and work life balance.

Programs to Support Work/Life Balance and Access

Program to Support Work / Life Balance	Access for All Employees
Mentorship Programs*	41%
Further Learning Opportunities	76%
Wellness Initiatives	36%
None of the Above	17%

**This survey did not distinguish between formal and informal mentoring programs.*

Case Study: Moementum



Worth and Women: Is asking the real issue?

Research confirms that women earn less than men. Despite equal opportunity legislation, assertiveness training, and increased transparency about pay scales to ensure equality, women consistently earn less per hour, per week, per month for the same work, than their male counterparts. Many point to women's hesitation to ask for more as a key cause to their generally lower starting and regular wages.

I have coached many (female) clients on the nuance of asking for what they want to make when being considered for a job, as well as how to continue to receive bonuses and incentives that feel equitable and fair. I can point to many systemic structural issues that are a factor in women making less money than men such as starting wage being lower, career interruptions such as child-rearing, and internalized self-worth or confidence.

Net-Net—the issue is not “the ask.” It is the held beliefs that drive the ask (or not.) Most people feel gratitude, pride, and genuine relief when they receive the offer of a job. They usually worked hard for it, and it always feels good to be wanted and to land somewhere where we can work and get paid! But women, it seems to me, have a different private conversation than most men I know don't, in the privacy of their own mind. It sounds something like this:

“I can't believe I got the job! Phew! It is a decent wage – I should be grateful.”

Or

“If I go back and ask for more (money, benefits, vacation, flexibility) they might say ‘No’ at best, and at worst, withdraw their offer.”

Or

“If I start here, I can always earn more over time. This is fine for now.”

The problem is, now is the baseline for any future promotion or progress, resulting in systemic wage discrepancies nationally.

I am deeply troubled by the held beliefs that we as women carry that drive our behavior in compensation discussions, including:

- The idea that asking for what we want/need will result in rejection
- A bias towards asking for more money or benefits as rude
- Feeling that we are so lucky to have a job that it overshadows our pragmatic need to be fairly (equally) paid
- Unconsciously accepting that the coveted offer meets our need for self-worth, regardless of whether the compensation is high enough

I propose we as working women try on a set of new beliefs about money (pay):

- I believe that compensation discussions are a negotiation, and that asking is a normal part of the offer acceptance process. And in the worst case scenario, “no the salary is what we offered” is not the same as “no we no longer want you.”
- I believe that monetary compensation and benefits relate to fair labor practice and are the currency for how organizations assess value of contribution from employees. It is responsible to know and to ask for what you feel is fair for the job you have.
- I earned the right to this offer through my hard work and accomplishment. Luck may also be on my side, but regardless, I deserve to be fairly paid.
- My self-worth is not tied to what I make, but it is connected to what I am willing to settle for as felt fair pay.

Women should assume that pay is commensurate to value, and that to rectify the systemic wrongs of pay gaps for our daughters, sisters, and friends, we need to shift our beliefs. From new beliefs, we can make different assumptions, and create different asks.

Read more about Moementum's services here: <https://moementum.com/>

Adventure Tourism Industry Compared to All Tourism

Respondents were asked to rate their company, the adventure industry, and the tourism industry in general in terms of equal opportunities for men and women.

On average, respondents found their own companies to be very equal. This is reflected in previous questions where the majority of respondents worked with at least one female manager and have access to supportive workplace policies. However their perception of the rest of the industry is not as positive. The tourism industry and the adventure industry are perceived as being on par in terms of equal opportunities for men and women, but at one point lower than respondents' own companies:

The question was “How would you rate the following in equal opportunities for men and women.” (one is not equal, five is very equal)

- Your company: 4.59 out of 5
- The adventure tourism industry in general: 3.43 out of 5
- The tourism industry in general 3.45 out of 5

This sentiment was echoed in the interviews conducted. When asked about challenges faced as a woman in the adventure sector, nearly every respondent replied, “I haven’t faced any challenges, but I believe I am the exception.”

Eighty-nine percent of respondents ranked their own company as four or five out of five stars in terms of gender equality. Of the 11 percent that ranked their company as three or below, there was no one geographic consensus: 63 percent located in North America, with 30 percent in Africa and 7 percent in Asia.

Respondents were asked if they felt pay at their company was equal and fair and 90 percent responded ‘yes.’ Only 10 percent of respondents felt that pay was not equal and fair. However, within that 10 percent, the majority - 92 percent - were women, indicating that where there are inequalities, women perceive they are receiving less than their male colleagues.



Examples of Bias

The survey asked respondents if they had personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender bias in their own company and in the adventure industry.

"I believe that both men and women have an implicit bias: they believe that men make better leaders, when in fact we lead in different ways. It took some time for me to realize I was an effective leader because my style was different from that of my male counterparts and my own idea of what leadership looked like."

- Norie Quintos

17 percent of respondents (the majority of which were women), said they had noticed examples of bias against women at their own company. However, many more respondents, 42 percent, have witnessed gender discrimination within the adventure industry.

The examples provided in the survey, as well as anecdotes related during the qualitative interviews can be divided into three principal categories:

1. Preconceptions about women in adventure travel, especially guides.

Respondents noted examples of negative preconceptions about female leadership and guiding from both employers, colleagues, and clients. First, many respondents noted that there are

significantly fewer female guides, especially in developing destinations. Secondly, many noted that despite high caliber of female guides, clients occasionally express disappointment when assigned a female guide as they feel less safe. One respondent noted that when a problem arises, “Clients automatically seek out a male as an authority figure.”

“We believe that women make great trip leaders - they pick up on a lot more subtle things and have better people skills. However, only about one-third of our guides are women.”

“Men and women have different experiences of enculturation: men are trained to say they know something even if they don’t and then they learn what is needed, whereas women are trained to be rigorously honest with our limitations, appearing under qualified by comparison. One consequence is women tend to over-prepare and over-credentialize themselves.”

- Moe Carrick

Several interviewees mentioned that the home office / field office split is typically divided by gender. More men are working as guides and more women are working in the headquarters. If there is one area where women faced outsized challenges compared to men, it is certainly in the guiding field. Many respondents noted that the bar is higher for a female to succeed as a guide. They have to prove they are competent in the outdoors, more than men.

2. The masculine culture of adventure travel

Respondents found that a masculine culture exists within adventure travel. Specific examples included:

- An association* event being held at a Hooters
- Women given dress codes at sales shows

A few respondents noted that female guides get harassed by male guides, and another noted that female guides are not taken seriously by male counterparts.

“Machismo [is] an issue in many countries. Women's appearance, dress, speech, opinions are judged more critically and can have more influence on business.”

“There is a bias for female guides as there are less of them and less in senior positions. If they're not happy to share a twin room with a male guide, they may not be offered the work.”

*This was not the ATTA but another association.

“The dominant culture in adventure (and in business) remains largely white and male in how things are done, emphasizing leadership approaches that don’t always play as well for women leaders. A man may be seen as “commanding” or “decisive” whereas a woman with the same traits may be seen as “controlling.” As social capital, empathy, and connectedness become critical leadership traits, the playing field gets more level and “feminine” leadership traits become of more value for men and women.”

- Moe Carrick

The issue of projecting confidence was raised by several respondents. Women found that projecting confidence was negatively interpreted (by men and women) and being too assertive.

In many places, a chauvinist culture still exists and women in leadership positions do encounter this.

“Running an adventure company in Europe, I’ve faced the macho attitude many times especially in the Mediterranean area. Men underestimate you all the time. If you’re too young, they don’t trust you. If you’re a woman, they think you aren’t good enough and if you’re good looking it’s even worse. To overcome this, we’re required to work harder and be more determined than men in our position are. We have to be better in order to be considered equal.”

- Tulia Callbero

3. The informal networking that benefits men.

Referred to multiple times as ‘the old boys club,’ respondents indicated that they felt opportunities for promotions or advancement were missed, because men tended to award leadership roles to other men that they socialized with.

“Men can seem more comfortable when working with men – more “buddy” energy.”

It is important to note that, several respondents noted that their organization was gender unbalanced in the opposite way or that they have specific initiatives in recruit female guides.

“We actively seek women employees, especially in the field, working as adventure guides. That is we have a reverse gender bias in favor of females.”



Women in Leadership Session at ATTA's annual Adventure Travel World Summit

Towards a Gender-Balanced Industry

In both the survey and the interviews respondents were asked to provide suggestions on how to move towards a more gender-balanced industry where the number of women in leadership positions is proportional to the number of female employees and clients.

Several respondents noted that nothing needed to be proactively done. There were two separate rationales given for this approach. A first group felt that progress is currently moving in the right direction and although equality is not yet achieved, it is changing organically. A second group felt that although there is a gender imbalance at the top levels of leadership, calling attention to it would only make it worse and highlight it for those who didn't see it. Many respondents reflected on how to change the mindset that results in gender discrimination and has a negative impact on the upward movement of women.

"I really don't believe the ATTA should support one gender, race, or any class of people based on a perceived shortage of that type of people in the industry. Any programs such as leadership development should be accessible to any and all. If you want to add educational initiatives about how not to discriminate (or how to determine if you are) based on gender or other class, then do that.

I wonder if even talking about a difference of opportunities would be pushing us backwards. We're introducing the idea that women need special treatment. I don't want to put that idea in anyone's head."

- Robin Pollak

Many respondents reflected on how to change the mindset that results in gender discrimination and has a negative impact on upward movement of women.

Creating enabling environments for working mothers was seen to be an important step to supporting women in the industry, and improving employee retention. Especially initiatives that support female guides:

“Family penalizes women more because most of the child bearing/rearing burden is on them, and if they choose to do it with breastfeeding etc. it requires time away from other activities which a father may instead choose to do. So just awareness and sensitivity to this issue so that women are able to do both. (...) addressing child-bearing/rearing issues with/for female guides would be huge. At the moment, guiding most adventure travel trips with young children is incompatible. Other than having family trips or having a companion along to help with childcare, I don't see any way to get around this incompatibility, especially seeing as most multi day trips are 12-16 hour long work days...”

“The first step is just having an awareness of how men and women are perceived in a group. I would like to have our guide instructors (mostly men) learn to look for little things, like not letting men dominate conversations during training, changing the culture to provide equal opportunities to show off skills etc.”

Again, many respondents noted that their organizations were mainly run by women or that they were proactively promoting leadership promotions to women and hiring female guides:

“Our company is female-owned and managed already. We actually need to get more men on board!”

“We're more than good - all women already!”

Mentoring and Student Placements

Several respondents mentioned that mentoring programs that provided experienced mentors to women in the adventure industry would be useful. Likewise, student placements in adventure industries might encourage more young women to get involved in the adventure industry.



Advice From Seasoned Leaders

Interviewees were asked what advice they would give to women aspiring to leadership positions in the Adventure Industry. Below are a few direct quotes from female leaders in adventure:

- Be a good student of your organization - understand the entire ecosystem of how our field works. Know your skill set, and imagining yourself in each role, until you find the one where you say yes!
- Remember that your dream position doesn't need to already exist. I knew I couldn't have a trip leader life, but I really wanted to travel. But as I got involved in the details of the business, I kept navigating closer to the parts that I was passionate about.
- This industry rewards innovation like none other. We feed on what's new. That's what our guests are looking for. Our product is totally connected with the curiosity of our travelers.
- Get involved - join a board, talk at your local university, offer to be a mentor - even if you don't see other women in these roles in your community. You can be the first.
- Form strong partnerships. Find both women and men who believe in you and can advocate for you.
- Apply for jobs that you are not perfectly qualified for.
- Sometimes I get put in a tough situation and I am about to do something and I say: "Wait, what would I do if I was a man?" - then I do that thing.

Summary Recommendations for the Adventure Industry

1. Work Towards Gender Parity at the Top

- The number of women on a company's board should be proportional to the number of women working at the company. It is a trend for countries to introduce requirements for gender parity on boards (Norway was the first in 2002 and many other countries have followed suite). Companies can get ahead of the curve by instituting their own requirements now.

2. Men Need to Join the Conversation

- This survey was answered by 78 percent women, but a gender balanced industry benefits everyone. Men need to be actively included in initiatives and dialogue.

3. Mentorship Programs

- The benefits of being both a mentor and a mentee are long-lasting for participants. This program does not need to be strictly for women, but simply to provide a platform where young professionals can access experienced practitioners in their field for on-going mentoring.

4. Workplace Policies

- Companies can and should make it easier for parents to balance their work and family life. This includes better maternity leave, on-site childcare and flexible working conditions.

5. Media Portrayal

- The media has its part to play. One respondent suggested that adventure media should make an effort to feature real adventurous women of all shapes and sizes with and without kids.

6. Identify a Trusted Human Resources Person

- Many companies in the adventure sector are small businesses that may not have a dedicated human resource person. This means that employees may not have someone who is specifically trained and tasked with dealing with complaints or instances of discrimination. If it is not possible to hire a dedicated Human Resource staff person, small companies may consider identifying and training a person within the organization to take on this role to provide a safe place for employees to address any workplace issues.



Conclusion

In the area of gender diversity, the world has seen great progress in the last ten years. In government, half of the countries worldwide have or have had a woman at the top and both male and female leaders are aiming for gender balanced cabinets. In education, most countries have equal numbers of men and women graduates (in some countries, there are more female graduates than male). But the private sector lags behind.

This study suggests that companies in adventure tourism are ahead of the curve when it comes to female leadership in the private sector. And this study provides a useful benchmark from which to gauge women's progress in the adventure industry going forward. As research shows, gender-balanced leadership benefits companies, employees and consumers. Supporting working moms benefits kids in the long run, too¹⁷.

Companies should continue to seek out policies that support the work/life balance of parents, support women in the countries where they work and support the professional development of all employees.

McKinsey and Company estimates that gender parity can be reached within a decade - it seems that the adventure industry might reach this marker even earlier.

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Extras:

A report from McKinsey on 'The Power of Parity' found that USD\$12 trillion could be added to the global GDP by 2025 by simply advancing women's equality.

The UNTWO report on Women in Tourism concludes that tourism offers pathways many to success for women.