

Lipstick Puts Gloss on Adventure Travel Industry

By Paige Stringer

If you believe that adventure travel is all machismo and testosterone, think again. Fifty-two percent of adventure travelers today are women, according to the Adventure Travel Trade Association, and their numbers are rapidly increasing. The average adventure traveler is not a 28-year old male, but a 47-year-old female.

As more and more women forge their independence, an entirely new sub-category of adventure travel has emerged. Women-only tours and girlfriend getaways are now a mainstay in most tour operators' catalogs.

Women aren't just filling up tour slots though; they are also making the decisions about where to spend their travel budget in the first place. Travel website, Gustystraveler reports that 80% of all travel decisions are made by women, regardless of who they travel with, who pays for the trip, or where they go.

Once the trip is booked, women need gear - and their purchasing power expands to that area as well. The Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) reports that women spend an average of \$295 annually per individual on outdoor apparel and equipment. According to the OIA, the women's outdoor retail market has experienced double-digit annual growth in each of the past 5 years.

For all you outdoor gear industry marketers: women should be your #1 target. Here are three suggestions for appealing to the increasing ranks of women in adventure travel:

1) **Don't Give Them Guy Stuff:** A recent REI survey showed a majority of women want gender-specific outdoor gear, and 36% believe that gear designed specifically for women can enhance their performance. Gear manufacturers who design such products will quickly gain a niche since there are still relatively few manufacturers who cater to women. But if you do, don't trivialize the product with cheap materials, poor construction, or the color pink. Women are serious about their outdoor gear, and will respond to companies who take them seriously as well.

2) **Go Where the Women Are:** Women generally engage in more research before making purchases than men do, and they seek out information from peers. Promote your products on web sites and blogs that cater to women, run campaigns and special events at trade shows and at retail outlets, advertise in women magazines. Partner with tour operators who offer women-only trips for product sampling opportunities.

3) **Tap into Their Core Values:** Women process information differently than men, so that branding campaign you've been using to reach men probably won't resonate with this market. Women value adventure travel for the cultural and emotional benefits it offers in addition to the physical benefits. Develop an integrated marketing campaign that utilizes advertising, promotion, and public relations to communicate a woman-specific message - one that taps into these values and explains how your product will contribute to the overall experience.

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