Mountain Women in a Mountain Man's World

Janeen Arnold Costa, University of Utah

[to cite]:


[url]:

http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/15578/gender/v02/GCB-02

[copyright notice]:

This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at http://www.copyright.com/.
Modern-day rendezvous are recreational activities intended to re-create the Mountain Man rendezvous that occurred historically from approximately 1825-1840 in the western part of what is now the United States. The goal of the present-day rendezvous is to reproduce the event "authentically" through appropriate activities, behaviors, and consumption of objects; it is a consumption experience which includes men, women and children. Women were, however, notably absent or only minimally present in the original rendezvous. Consequently, in the context of the rendezvous re-creation in modern times, women face special challenges in appropriating the proper identity (which is carefully monitored). An analysis is presented which shows a "layering" of expenditures and attention to appropriate dress and activities in which women are at the lowest level, below men and children.

However, as was the case in the society of the early 1800's, women are considered to be responsible for the appearance of their husbands, children and homes; it is primarily through this social connection that women are judged for accuracy and skill. Their relative absence at the original rendezvous also allows women in the modern-day consumption context greater latitude in terms of their appearance and role-playing. Thus, it is the women who serve to symbolically connect the past with the present, illustrated both through the goods they consume and the activities for which they are responsible. A Goffmanesque approach, emphasizing "presentation of self," is used in this interpretive piece.