



OUTDOOR ADVENTURE TOURISM

A Review of Research Approaches

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Abstract: A review of the existing literature on adventure tourism reveals that research on this subject has so far focused mainly on preconceived notions of scholars and practitioners. This paper argues that individuals' subjective experience of adventure and their perceptions of what constitutes it have to be also researched and considered in the study of adventure tourism. Qualitative research methods should be afforded greater prominence in its investigation. The proposed shift in focus to individuals' perceptions of adventure also challenges the exclusivity of only certain market segments and independent travelers being associated with this form of tourism. Further research, marketing, and management implications are discussed. **Keywords:** adventure tourism and recreation, overland travel, individual adventure experience. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Résumé: Tourisme d'aventure au grand air: un bilan des approches de recherche. Dans cet article, on passe en revue la littérature du tourisme d'aventure. Le bilan révèle que la recherche sur le tourisme d'aventure s'est concentrée jusqu'à présent sur les idées préconçues des savants et des praticiens. Cet article soutient qu'il faut examiner également les expériences subjectives des individus au sujet de l'aventure et leurs perceptions de ce qui constitue une aventure. Par conséquent, il faudrait accorder plus d'importance aux méthodes de recherches qualitatives dans l'investigation de ce genre de tourisme. Un tel changement d'objectif sur les perceptions des individus met en question l'exclusivité de certains segments du marché et l'association entre voyageurs indépendants et tourisme d'aventure. On discute des implications pour les recherches futures, le marketing et la gestion. **Mots-clés:** tourisme d'aventure, récréation d'aventure, voyage par voie de terre, expérience d'aventure individuelle. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Definitions of adventure tourism have traditionally centered on adventure recreation (Hall and Weiler 1992; Sung, Morrison and O'Leary 1997). Such experiences are characterized by the interplay of competence and risk (Martin and Priest 1986). Recently, Walle (1997) offered an expansion and redefinition of adventure tourism by proposing the insight model as its basis. He argues that it is the quest for insight and knowledge (rather than risk) that underlies adventure tourism. Common to these definitions is that it is researchers who have determined what constitutes it with research taking place within these

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set parameters. The question, however, is whether such a relatively narrow focus of research is sufficient to gain a comprehensive understanding of adventure tourism.

This paper proposes an alternative, yet complementary, approach. It argues that individuals' subjective experience and perception of adventure need also to be considered for a more complete understanding. In developing this argument, the paper first reviews the current literature on the subject, especially Walle's (1997) proposal to replace the prevalent "risk theory" as the foundation of adventure tourism—a proposition that requires critical assessment. The literature review suggests that at present adventure tourism is essentially viewed as an extension of adventure/outdoor recreation; the contribution of the tourism aspect is generally ignored.

To address this shortcoming, the paper discusses the overland tourist. This turns from the traditional focus on the destination region to that of the transit route and necessitates a review of some previously forwarded propositions. Most importantly, however, the paper shifts focus to differences in individuals' perceptions, resulting from differences in personality and previous tourism experience, to open up further research. The proposed change in research focus to individuals' perception has implications for both the management and marketing of adventure tourism.

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE TOURISM

When assessing adventure tourism it is necessary to also refer to adventure recreation, as the latter is at the heart of the former as it is currently defined. The vast majority of studies accept adventure recreation as its integral part (Christiansen 1990; Hall 1989; Johnston 1992). Adventure recreation has its origin in traditional outdoor recreation. While both types involve activities and specific skills in outdoor settings, they differ, according to Ewert, in the "deliberate seeking of risk and uncertainty of outcome" (1989:8) associated with adventure recreation. To him, risk takes on a central role as satisfaction with the experience, and a desire to participate may decrease if risk is absent. In this context, risk is most commonly equated to the physical risk of serious injury or death. This notion characterizes an adventure recreation experience as does the construct of perceived competence (Martin and Priest 1986; Priest 1992), or more accurately the interplay between them (Ewert and Hollenhorst 1989; Martin and Priest 1986).

Walle sought to expand the notion of adventure by arguing that one can distinguish between two types: risk taking adventure and that which is pursued to gain knowledge and insight. While this expansion to incorporate insight seeking is useful, several comments in regard to his argument are in order. He refers to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs to point out contradictions between this and the prevalent risk theory of adventure, to open his argument for the need for the alternative insight theory. It is, however, important to note that Maslow's theory itself has been questioned on several grounds. Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert and Wanhill, for example, note that:

While a great deal of tourism demand theory has been built upon Maslow's approach, it is not clear from his work why he selected five basic needs; why they are ranked as they are; how he could justify his model when he never carried out clinical observation or experiment; and why he never tried to expand the original set of motives (1993:21).

When discussing Maslow's theory, Walle implies that lower level needs have to be fully satisfied before individuals attempt to fulfill needs at higher levels of the hierarchy. However, it has been shown that individuals move on to focus on the fulfillment of the latter once the former are satisfied to a degree acceptable to them (Mills 1985). In the context of adventure tourism it would mean that individuals, by not fully addressing their safety needs, do accept a certain element of risk and danger in order to satisfy higher level needs through adventurous pursuits. But such a situation is not indicative of Walle's claim that adventurers willingly abandon safety in order to fulfill themselves at a higher level. In fact, research has shown that they are very much concerned with safety, reflected in the meticulous preparation of their equipment, the careful examination of environmental conditions, or in a commercial setting in the selection of experienced operators (Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993; Ewert 1994; Hall and McArthur 1994).

Walle continues by stating that according to the conventional risk theory, the adventurer seeks risk for its own sake and because of the emotional rewards provided by experiencing it. Consequently, "adventure involves pursuing risk as an end in itself" (1997:269). While such an interpretation contrasts rather nicely with his alternative "insight seeking" theory, it is somewhat inaccurate. Numerous studies have shown that risk is not pursued as an end in itself (Ewert 1985, 1993, 1994). In fact, risk often plays a negligible role. Ewert and Hollenhorst note that "although adventure recreators seek out increasingly difficult and challenging opportunities, they paradoxically do not necessarily seek higher levels of risk" (1994:188). However, what they do seek is to match their skills and competence with the situational risk. In summary, an adventure recreation experience is a "search for competence with a valuation of risk and danger" (1989:127). Therefore, learning and gaining insight are not possible side effects of risk/adventure recreation as argued by Walle, they are integral parts. This is particularly pronounced for adventure recreationists at a higher level of engagement (Celsi Rose and Leigh 1993; Ewert 1994).

Therefore, gaining insight is a motive for both the traditional adventure recreationist and the insight seeker. Yet, what is likely to vary is the level of risk accepted by the individual. Walle asserts that certain activities such as fly fishing and bird watching constitute adventure activities since participants seek insight and knowledge. He goes further to imply that ecotourism at large, by virtue of participants gaining insight, can be regarded as adventure tourism. While most ecotourism activities do not involve great actual risk for participants, some of these activities, for example bird watching, may not pose any risk at all to an individual, neither actual nor perceived. Thus, at this point it becomes necessary to ask "what is the original meaning of adven-

ture?" If risk—physical, psychological, or social—is completely absent and a person only gains insight and knowledge, can these experiences still be regarded as adventure?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Brown 1993:31) defines adventure as "a chance of danger or loss; risk, jeopardy; a hazardous enterprise or performance." Clearly, it has in the English language acquired a connotation of risk and uncertainty. Suggesting that "insight seeking" could replace "risk" to refer to adventure appears to be in clear contrast to its historic meaning. It seems more appropriate that both risk and insight seeking have to be present, in varying degrees, for an adventure to take place.

In accord to this line of thinking, gaining insight as one motive for and a result of adventure has been pointed to in earlier writings. Quinn (1990) notes that the human desire or drive to experience what is hidden and unknown initiates adventure. Similarly, Dufrene states: "We are attracted by a deep forest or lake because it gives the impression that there is some truth to discover, some secret to abduct from the heart of the object. It is the eternal seduction of the hidden" (1973:398). The reward for those who seek adventure lies in the discovery and unveiling of the hidden and unknown.

Therefore, adventure is quite obviously linked with exploration. Yet the focus of the latter has changed over the centuries. Originally adventure was associated with the exploration of foreign, faraway places to search for new land, wealth, and scientific advances. Examples include the voyage of Pytheas (c. 330 BC) to the ultima Thule (ultimate land)—the Arctic Circle, Pizarro's journey to Peru (1526) and Cook's expedition to Tahiti (1768–71). In the latter part of the 19th century, however, resulting from a new appreciation of the wilderness and the emerging need for adventure

the reason for adventuring shifted from the necessary by-product of searching for scientific knowledge [land and wealth] to reasons related to an individual's own personal desires. Adventure became a legitimate quest for its own sake, or an end in itself rather than a means to an end (Ewert 1989:26).

Mountains were climbed and wild rivers navigated, purely for the experience and to determine one's strengths and abilities. It is debatable whether adventure was only a by-product of travel in earlier times, as claimed by Ewert, rather than also a primary motive. However, until the end of the 19th century, outdoor adventure recreation did not have the widespread acceptance it would gain in the following decades. All this bears on the question of how adventure recreation relates to adventure tourism. As mentioned earlier, the former has long been accepted as the integral part of the latter. Hall and Weiler's definition of adventure tourism represents one of the most frequently cited definitions on the subject:

A broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialized and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participant's home range and containing elements of risk; in

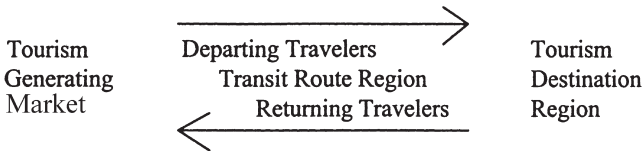
which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and management of the touristic experience (1992:143).

Later definitions by Johnston (1992) and Sung, Morrison and O’Leary (1997) essentially rest on the same premise. In contrast, Walle (1997) incorporates certain outdoor activities other than the traditional recreation ones into the confines of adventure tourism. Nevertheless, there is a commonality among these to date rather few definitions/conceptualizations. They all view adventure tourism essentially as an extension of adventure/outdoor recreation; the introduction of the tourism element merely serves to transfer the place at which the outdoor/adventure recreation activity takes place from the participant’s home base to the destination.

As already noted, adventure has historically been associated with the exploration of foreign, faraway lands. Yet, the current conceptualization of adventure tourism captures only one aspect of adventure (specific recreation activities), while ignoring the contribution of the tourism aspect to reach distant localities. In order to highlight the contribution of the tourism aspect, it is useful to put the phenomenon of adventure tourism in the context of the tourism system.

Tourism’s Contribution to Adventure

Leiper (1979, 1995) proposes the conceptualization of tourism as a system comprising five distinct elements: the tourist(s), a generating region, a transit route, a destination region, and the tourism industry (Figure 1). The various environments (sociocultural, physical, technological, and political) surround the system. Of particular interest to the discussion are its geographical elements, namely the tourist generating market, the transit route, and the destination region. As mentioned earlier, conceptualizing adventure tourism as an extension of adventure/outdoor recreation confines the role of tourism to transferring the place at which adventure/outdoor recreation activities take place from the generating market to the destination region. Therefore, the focus is on the activities that take place at the destination. As such it completely ignores the role of the transit route. Yet, the latter is of particular importance to adventure tourism, as it is this element which can be the most important aspect for the traditional adventure tourist.



Environments: human, socioculture, economic, technological, physical, political, legal, etc.

Figure 1. Tourism System. Source: Leiper (1995:25)

The Asian Overland Route, originally used for regional trade, has been described by many people as the classic overland trip of modern times. In the late 60s and 70s, thousands of young people from Western countries embarked on their journey. Tourists, often commencing the trip in Europe, crossed Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India to reach their final destination, Nepal. In doing so they mainly used local modes of transport, ranging from buses to boats to camels or horses. But while reaching Nepal was the aim of the trip, the journey itself was for most people more important than the final destination.

Zurick (1995) provides an account of his travels along the Asian Overland Route in the mid-70s. He recalls his first encounter with Istanbul—a city that provided to overland tourists an initial taste of the mysterious Orient and a parting from the world known to them. Passing through Erzurum in Eastern Turkey meant, according to Zurick, that “[even though] there were no violent civil wars [in the area at the time], the threat of robbers was constant in a place where murder was commonplace and theft even more so”. Crossing Afghanistan, he found himself “traversing an uneasy landscape of feudal wars, unfettered nomads ... and a vast, generally inhospitable terrain, a landscape that bakes in the summer sun and freezes under winter’s snow”. A popular stop enroute, Kabul and its main thoroughfare in particular harbored “a volatile mix of Western and Afghan drug and gem smugglers, Pakistani gunrunners, convicts, spies and international pleasure seekers”. Following the descent of the Khyber Pass, overland tourists were exposed to Pakistan, a “spicy land, full of humidity, haggard beggars, and cow dung, reverence and bustling markets”, simply in the way enroute to India. Yet India, “pointing in new directions rather than confirming the Orient as a singular place”, disappointed many overland tourists who subsequently moved on to Kathmandu, the final destination on the Asian Overland Route (Zurick 1995:62, 63, 66, 69, 73).

Two important observations can be made from the above account of overland travel. First, the traditional prerequisites for adventure—risk and uncertainty—are present. It is also apparent that the quest to gain insight features prominently. Yet, at the same time, the absence of specific adventure/outdoor recreation activities, as outlined in Table 1, is noticeable. The physical movement through a variety of hostile environments rather than the participation in a specific activity poses

Table 1. Adventure Recreation Pursuits^a

Backpacking	Kayaking	Rogaining
Bicycling	Orienteering	Sailing
Diving	Mountaineering	Snowshoeing
Hanggliding	Rafting	Spelunking
Ballooning	Rappelling	Trekking
Hiking	Rock Climbing	Sky Diving

^a Source: Ewert (1987:5); Hall and Weiler (1992:144).

risks and dangers to the overland tourist. These risks and dangers introduce the element of uncertainty about the outcome of the journey.

Second, it is evident that most of the countries on the Asian Overland Route are, in spatial terms, situated on the periphery rather than being core countries (Pearce 1979). This also applies to other important adventure travel circuits, for example the "Gringo Trail" in Latin America or the "Salt Road" in Africa. Tourist flows linking generating regions in developed countries with Third World nations have been noted for various types of tourism. However, for overland travel the flow of tourists from core countries (in Europe and North America) both to and through a variety of peripheral countries is of particular importance.

Zurick (1992) proposes a spatial hierarchy model specific to adventure tourism. He notes that in most instances individuals proceed from the generating region through an intervening gateway, located in the semiperiphery, to a national gateway in the periphery destination. Their flow is further channeled through regional gateways to the actual adventure region, both of which extend into the frontier of the peripheral destination. To be applicable in the present context, Zurick's model would have to take into account the overland movement from the adventure region to further regional, even national gateways, and from there to other adventure regions. This cycle may be repeated several times, depending on the particulars of the overland trip.

By extending the perspective on adventure tourism beyond specific adventure/outdoor recreation activities, another viable market segment can be identified: the overland tourist. The physical movement along the transit route constitutes the key adventure element. Zurick's journey along the Asian Overland Route falls into this category, representing independent (non-commercial) overland adventure tourism. Still today there are many people who embark on such trips independently, traveling, for instance, on the South American Circuit without the assistance of a tour operator. However, there are now also numerous commercial overland operators. For example, Encounter Overland, a British operator, offers an "Africa A-Z" expedition. The expedition from London to Cape Town, undertaken with a special four wheel drive expedition truck, travels through Morocco, Mali, Niger, Zambia, Malawi, and Namibia, to name just a few countries. The experiences of traveling along the 27,500 kilometer route are the focus of the journey and of greater importance than the final destination, Cape Town, itself.

Adventure recreation is not an integral part of commercial overland travel; at most it is optional to tour participants and then usually of low actual risk. Consequently, skills required to participate would be minimal to moderate and optional, given the commercial setting. For independent overland trips where some adventure recreation activities such as backpacking or hiking may be means of alternative transport, skills would be essential. However, given the nature of overland travel, skills pertaining to a specific adventure recreation activity are generally less important than skills required to deal with distinct and sometimes

hostile sociocultural or political environments. The setting (non-commercial vs. commercial) determines who provides skills to deal with these environments and who controls the risk.

Reviewing Zurick's (1995) account of his journey, it becomes apparent that motivations beyond those traditionally identified for adventure tourism—gaining and assessing skills and competence in a natural setting posing some risk—are important to overland tourists. The desire to travel through peripheral destinations, often rich in cultural traditions, suggests a strong motivation. The difference between overland tours and “cultural tours” lies in the acceptance of actual risk and danger as part of the experience due to the regions traveled through and the usually extended time frame for the former. Furthermore, encountering the culture would only be part of the total experience. The desire to encounter various distinct, often remote physical environments, without necessarily engaging in any adventure recreation, appears also important.

Of relevance here is Cohen's work (1972, 1973) on the various tourist types. The non-institutionalized form of tourism (drifting), the effect of *Vermassung* (loss of individuality), and its consequent institutionalization are of particular interest. Cohen's “drifter” is characterized by not adhering to a fixed itinerary or timetable, not having well-defined goals of travel, and by the desire to be immersed almost fully into the host culture by adopting the hosts' way of life. This original drifter corresponds closely with the early independent overland tourist. However, already in the 70s Cohen (1973) notes the effects of *Vermassung* with the formation of fixed drifter itineraries and a system of tourism facilities and services catering specifically for this segment. Accompanying this institutionalization was a certain loss of drifters' interest in and involvement with the local people, and a growing orientation towards other drifters. He concludes that even though the element of adventure is still present in commercial overland trips, the spontaneous individualism of the original form of drifting is gone.

Several parallels can be drawn to Walle's work. But there are also important differences. First, both the overland adventure tourist and his insight seeker have motives beyond those traditionally associated with adventure tourism. They both seek to gain knowledge and insight more than matching their skills and competence with situational risk. However, in contrast to Walle who focuses mainly on gaining insight into wilderness settings, it is argued here that gaining insight into the cultural environment is also important to the adventure tourist. Insight is also sought by the overland tourist through encounters along the transit route rather than merely adventurous activities at the destination. Furthermore, there are also some similarities in the practical context. Walle notes that at times “forward thinking practitioners have seemingly outdistanced both scholars and the profession in general” (1997:278). He points to the fact that ecotourism emerged in the industry before scholars focused on it. Similarly, numerous, particularly British, adventure tour operators have serviced overland tourists for more than 20 years, either exclusively (Dragoman) or in conjunc-

tion with the adventure recreation segment (Exodus, Encounter Overland).

Management and Marketing Propositions

Several propositions applied to the whole spectrum of adventure tourism have to be reviewed once the overland tourist is brought into the discussion. Darst and Armstrong (1980) note that competition among individuals and groups is minimal, while competition between people and their environment is the norm. This relates mainly to adventure recreation. In these instances participants are foremost concerned with mastering the challenges posed by the physical environment. Hall and Weiler (1992) add that under these circumstances group considerations take on a secondary role. However, competition and conflict among individuals in groups is almost always evident in commercial overland travel. Due to the extended period of travel in a group (commercial overland tours can last up to 40 weeks), conflict and competition among individuals, exacerbated by travel through a variety of challenging environments, can be anything but minimal.

Hall and Weiler (1992) claim that in adventure tourism the environmental setting takes on a subordinate role. They argue that the setting provides only the backdrop for the activity with the latter being what attracts the individual. This proposition is certainly valid when the focus of the trip is on engaging in adventure recreation. Overland tourists, however, are more attracted by the environmental setting than by a specific activity. They seek remote environments, possessing natural beauty and rich cultural traditions, with adventure recreation activities being at best of secondary importance.

It is evident that the motivations of adventure tourists who foremost seek to gain knowledge about the external environment, and those who are more concerned with the discovery of their own strengths and capabilities differ significantly. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly differentiate between these market segments since marketing strategies devised to appeal to one segment are unlikely to address the needs of the other. Walle also notes the need for individually tailored marketing strategies for different segments of the market, concluding that his "insight seeker," equated by him with the ecotourist, represents an under-served market. It is open to debate whether ecotourism indeed represents an under-served segment at present. However, what is questionable is his claim that "this form of tourism ... has been successful precisely because it goes beyond theories and strategies that assume that adventure is merely risk seeking" (1997:278). Insight seekers/ecotourists are a viable and legitimate segment. However, it is doubtful that they necessarily had to be assigned to the adventure market in order to be adequately served by the industry in terms of product formulation and promotional strategies. Since the presence of risk and challenge has been shown a prerequisite for adventure, some but not all forms of ecotourism fall under the adventure tourism realm.

This paper has so far identified several distinct segments: the traditional adventure recreationist, the ecotourist seeking insight but also

accepting and being exposed to risk, and the overland tourist. Dividing the market is of course crucial from a marketing point of view in order to define target populations and develop appropriate marketing mix strategies to meet their needs. The question, however, becomes whether with such preconceived notions of what constitutes adventure tourism, practitioners and scholars really do gauge the full size of the market. After all, the discussion has so far centered on what they consider as adventure tourism. However, this conception may disagree with what individuals themselves regard as adventure experiences.

A starting point for this discussion of individuals' view of adventure is the realization that a "psychological movement" or process accompanies the adventure tourist's geographical movement from the generating region via the transit route to the destination region and back. Turner (1969) views societies as products of the ongoing dialectic between structure and antistructure. Structure refers to the institutionalized set of political and economic positions, offices, roles, and statuses that constitute social organizations, whereas antistructure points to experiences beyond the confines of society. While Turner, in his subsequent writings (1972, 1973) focuses on pilgrims, his work has relevance in the present discussion. According to Turner, once individuals are out of the structural context of society, they go through a three stage ritual process: a spatial and social separation, liminality, and re-integration. This process can also be observed with adventure tourists. They, by traveling to destinations peripheral to their home environment, have removed themselves both physically and symbolically from their normal structured world and their social group. The separation stage is followed by the entry into the state of antistructure where "communitas" can be experienced.

The formation of *communitas* has been particularly recognized in the context of adventure recreation activities, mostly in conjunction with the "flow" experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). As shown in Figure 2, two dimensions—skills and challenges—characterize any activity. If the latter posed by an activity are greater than a person's, skills, anxiety is a likely outcome. Conversely, a person experiences boredom if his/her skills are greater than the challenges inherent in the activity. Only when a person's skills match the challenge posed by the activity, does flow occur. The "flow experience," a transcendent state, has been described as a phenomenological state where self, self-awareness, behavior, and context form a unitized singular experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). The literature asserts that flow is attained when the situational risk (mainly physical) matches the participant's competence for the specific activity. Or alternatively, it has been described as exercising "control over the relationship between the individual's abilities and the demands of the context" (Celsi et al 1993:12) in connection with skydivers, and Ewert (1994) notes this in his study of climbers. This common experience of flow is said to create a bond, or "communitas" among participants, with Turner (1972) describing *communitas* as "a shared flow."

The establishment of *communitas* and shared experience assuming transcendental character is also conceivable in contexts other than

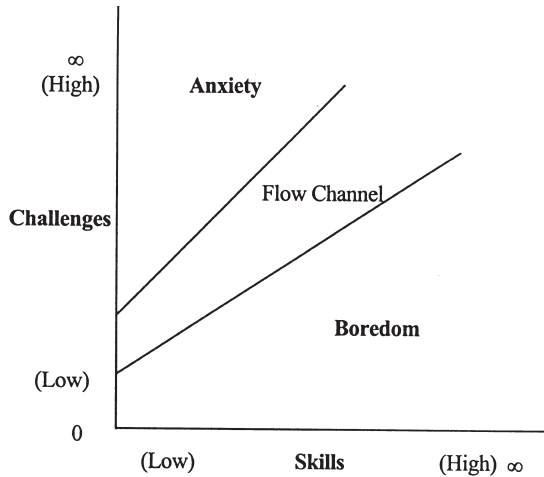


Figure 2. Flow Concept. Source: Csikszentmihalyi (1990:74)

adventure recreation. As discussed earlier, overland travel, as along the Asian Overland Route, can bring people in contact with unique cultures, sacred places and what Horne (1992) defined as the cultural genes bank of places. Encounters with these aspects of the external environment can challenge individuals' abilities, less in a physical than in a psychological or intellectual sense. Previously held views of oneself and one's world may be challenged, reviewed, and revised. Horne (1992) refers to such experiences as "discovery"—a sense of excitement and wonder when experiencing something that will make the world seem much wider. These "discoveries" can vary in intensity, even resulting in profound changes in perception. Following such experiences of "flow" and "discovery" in the state of liminality is the process of reintegration whereby adventure tourists, upon returning home, usually acquire new roles and a higher status in their ordinary social group as a result of their travels.

Perceptions of Challenge and Risk

As is apparent from the above discussion, the individual is at the center of the movement in both geographical and psychological terms. Yet, to date individual differences in perception of challenges and risks resulting from variations in people's personality and previous travel experience have not entered the discussion on adventure tourism. In this respect individuals vary in their approaches and strategies to situations posing challenges and risks (Knowles 1976) and in their perceptions of what constitutes them. These perceptions are partly a result of assessing one's specific skills. They are, however, also a matter of how one is predisposed to regard situations of challenge and risk in general.

Berlyne (1960) suggests that every individual has a preferred or

"optimum stimulation level" (OSL) and is motivated to increase or decrease novelty, a construct closely related to arousal/sensation seeking (Lee and Crompton 1992), and complexity if the environmental stimulation is below or above the optimum. A high OSL is indicative of sensation seekers while sensation avoiders are characterized by a low OSL (Zuckerman 1979). The former have received much attention in the literature to date (Ewert 1994; Schuett 1993). However, despite the work of Wahlers and Etzel (1985) who discussed the influence of lifestyle stimulation, people with a low OSL were generally not perceived as likely to engage in activities like mountaineering or skydiving, or to join an overland trip through Central Africa. To them even a comparatively tame ecotourism venture was said not to appeal and their typical choice of vacation was more likely to be a cultural tour of Rome or a beach holiday on the Canary Islands.

While such vacations may not be thought of as adventure holidays from a marketing point of view, for individuals characterized by a low OSL, they may have all the elements of an adventure. The risks and challenges may not be so much of a physical nature as they are psychological and social in these instances, yet skills are equally required from these tourists to confront challenging situations during the trip. Such situations may or may not be relatively easy to handle for the individuals in the home environment, yet the separation and transgression into tourism are likely to accentuate them, giving them a more challenging character. Under such circumstances individuals may even experience flow.

Previous travel experience is a further aspect that is likely to affect an individual's perception of a holiday as an adventure. Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) proposed the concept of a travel career ladder. While it has been further developed (Pearce and Moscardo 1985; Pearce 1988), adopted (Kim 1997), and critiqued (Ryan 1998), the essential premise of the concept based on Maslow's need hierarchy is as follows: Tourists are initially more concerned with fulfilling physiological and safety needs. With greater experience they increasingly seek to satisfy higher level needs such as relationship, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Adventure tourism has so far been mostly related to an individual's pursuit of peak experiences, attempting to address a need for self-actualization. According to the travel career ladder, this would generally refer to more experienced tourists. However, it is conceivable that a first-time tourist, attempting to satisfy mainly lower level needs, perceives the above mentioned cultural tour to Rome as more challenging and risky, and requisite of many more skills, than, for instance, an experienced high altitude trekker would perceive his 50th trip to the Himalayas.

To potentially substantiate such a viewpoint, and consequently, incorporate the subjective adventure experience of an individual into the conceptualization of adventure tourism it would be necessary to approach and investigate the subject not only from the currently prevalent *etic* but also more from an *emic* perspective. These two concepts were first introduced by Pike (1954) who derived them from the linguistic terms "phonetic" and "phonemic," to be used in a more gen-

eral context than linguistics. Pike was a proponent of the emic approach, regarding etic analysis merely as a means of access to emics. The discussion on the two perspectives took on momentum when Harris, an anthropologist, published *The Nature of Cultural Things* (1964) in which he strongly advocated the etic approach. He viewed it as important in itself, independent of emics. Over the years proponents of both methods have begun to acknowledge the value of the other and the necessity to employ both to further advance knowledge. A full discussion of the on-going and complex debate appears elsewhere (Headland, Pike and Harris 1990), so a brief summary of the two perspectives will suffice.

Etics involves the study of behavior from outside a particular system. It requires scholars to utilize logical and empirical analysis, adopting strict scientific methods to study the phenomenon under investigation. According to Harris,

Etic statements depend upon the phenomenal distinctions judged appropriate by the community of scientific observers. Etic statements cannot be falsified if they do not conform to the actor's notion of what is significant, real, meaningful, or appropriate (1968:575).

In contrast, emics is concerned with studying behavior from inside a system. The premise of the emic approach is the adoption of the subject's viewpoint by the researcher. A variety of methods are utilized to gain such insights, including interviews, participant observation, or observation. Qualitative approaches are employed to derive values, meanings, etc., from subjects on which an emic perspective can be developed. Gottlieb (1982) first introduced the emic approach into tourism research. In the context of authenticity, she notes:

this [emic] perspective ... proceeds from the premise that what the vacationer experiences is real, valid and fulfilling, no matter how "superficial" it may seem to the social scientist. ... it assumes that the vacationers' own feelings and views about vacations are "authentic," whether or not the observer judges them to match the host culture (1982:167).

In the study of adventure tourism, researchers have established that the notions of risk and challenge are paramount. As argued earlier, this is in agreement with the meaning adventure has acquired throughout history. However, it is researchers who have evaluated peoples' recreation/tourism experiences and categorized them to be either adventurous or non-adventurous. Thereby they have come to focus their attention on certain segments of the market, mostly specific forms of outdoor recreation. But does that mean that only these market segments, be they outdoor adventure recreation, overland travel, and certain forms of ecotourism, can be regarded as adventure tourism? Or could it be that by assessing individuals' perceptions of their vacations, adventure experiences may fall into market segments that so far have been perceived by both scholars and practitioners as anything but adventure tourism?

CONCLUSION

This article has reviewed the existing literature on adventure tourism, proposing that the prevalent focus on researchers' and marketers' understanding of it is too narrow to gauge the full size and potential of this market. Underlying this proposition is the recognition that individuals' subjective experience of adventure and their self-perception may not be consistent with researchers' and practitioners' classifications. This has several implications for the research, management, and marketing of adventure tourism.

In terms of research, the approach to the subject from an emic perspective, utilizing qualitative research methods is essential. It will be useful to establish exactly how factors such as personality characteristics and previous travel experience affect an individual's perception of adventure and what other factors are of importance in this context. The use of this research approach itself is, however, not enough. With it has to come the realization that the type of setting and the type of risk associated with adventure tourism are not necessarily confined to the ones researchers currently focus on.

The spatial context may not only be tied to wilderness outdoor settings, which in the past have been focal due to the ready presence of physical risk. Yet, this may be equally, in some instances more, present in some large cities, for instance, than it is in certain outdoor settings. In fact, it could even be argued that adventure tourism does not have to be associated with any specific type of setting but is rather a function of a person's exposure to the unknown that poses risk and challenge. Therefore, it is important to conduct this type of research also in non-traditional settings.

It is equally important to avoid a preoccupation with situations posing physical risk only. Risk is a multidimensional construct (Brooker 1983; Cheron and Ritchie 1982; Jacoby and Kaplan 1972). Yet, risk dimensions other than the physical one have only been briefly mentioned in the literature without being further investigated. The recognition and research of the psychological and social risk dimensions in particular may, however, have important implications for the management of the experience. At present, adventure operators do make allowances that deal mainly with the physical risk, but the management of adventure may equally require a focus on specific skills and tools that assist participants to deal with these other types of risk. Given the subjective experience of adventure, further research may reveal that the provision of such coping mechanisms is perhaps equally important to those addressing the physical risk, even in environments that many experienced tourists would consider safe. It may be these measures, reflective of the intimate understanding of the customer, that offer a competitive advantage for a specific operator in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Consequently, these alternative types of risk should be afforded the same prominence in the research as physical risk to understand their impact on the individual and his/her perception of adventure, and to utilize this knowledge both in the management and the marketing of adventure tourism.

The expansion of the types of settings and risks to be considered obviously introduces difficulties in deriving an exact definition of adventure tourism. Yet, it has perhaps more fluid boundaries than a single definition could capture. These boundaries, challenging the exclusivity of only certain market segments being associated with this type of tourism, may also open up new opportunities for marketers. Market segmentation using psychographics in combination with the currently used segmentation approaches would appear critical in this context, as it may result in the identification of "marginal" adventure tourists. These individuals may currently choose products other than those offered by adventure tourism operators. However, they may be turned into potential customers by targeting them with appropriate promotional messages and media. Expending some marketing effort on select people in these previously untapped markets may increase adventure operators' customer base without the need for substantial marketing expenses. Promotional messages alone, reflecting an intimate understanding of the subjective nature of adventure experiences, may be sufficient to turn these potential customers into actual ones. In other instances, adjustments to the actual products being offered may be required to better meet their needs. These adjustments, of course, would have to be of a rather subtle nature so as not to alienate operators' core markets. Consequently, it is not suggested that these product modifications should be foremost in terms of destination/activity coverage, but perhaps more in the management of these adventure experiences, as outlined above.

As suggested here, the proposed change in research focus on the subjective adventure experience may both have theoretical implications and prove profitable to practitioners. Therefore, it should be of interest to researchers and practitioners alike to engage in more research to further explore the adventure tourism phenomenon along the lines suggested in this paper. ■

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