

Mountaineering adventure tourists: a conceptual framework for research

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Abstract

Mountaineering has emerged as a popular form of adventure tourism, yet there is scant research that develops an understanding of its participants. This paper contributes to a theoretical understanding of mountaineer adventure tourists by evaluating previous work on mountaineering, mountaineers, adventure, recreation and tourism. It uses this to develop a conceptual framework to examine mountaineer adventure tourists, the key influences on their participation in mountaineering and their actual experiences during involvement. In this framework a number of influences encourage participation. Push elements (Ann. Tourism Res. 4(4) (1977) 184), including risk (J. Leisure Res. 17(3) (1985) 241; Leisure Today 49(4) (1978) 7; J. Phys. Educ. Recreation 19(4) (1978) 27) and mastery (KYKLOS 52(3) (1999) 315), are influential. Pull elements (Ann. Tourism Res. 4(4) (1977) 184), including the natural mountain environment and mountain conditions are also significant. Other influences are personality attributes such as sensation seeking (Sensational Seeking: Beyond the Optimal Level of Arousal, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ, 1979) and lifestyle factors, including previous mountaineering experience (J. Leisure Res. 17(3) (1985) 241). These components combine to influence people's perception of adventure. During participation, mountaineer adventure tourists experience contrasting emotions, a core element of adventure (Adventure Tourism: The New Frontier, Butterworth-Heinemann, London, 2003). They can also experience flow (The Psychology of Happiness, Rider, 1992) and peak experience (The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, Penguin, Baltimore, MD, 1976). How tourists experience mountaineering, and the emotional states encountered throughout this activity, result from the combined influences that originally encouraged them to participate. The framework differs from previous studies on mountaineering (e.g. Int. J. Sports Psychol. 27 (1996) 308; J. Leisure Res. 17(3) (1985) 241; Pers. Individ. Differ. 25(6) (1998) 1063; KYKLOS 52(3) (1999) 315) in that it recognises the inter-relatedness of the influences on mountaineering participation, acknowledges the convergence of tourism and recreation in an adventure setting, and emphasises the importance of investigating mountaineers during their actual participation. Discussion of the framework's value to mountaineering tourism providers is presented, and suggestions are made for further study in this under-researched field.

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1. Introduction

This paper introduces a conceptual framework to evaluate mountaineer adventure tourists, key influences on their participation in mountaineering, and their actual experience during involvement. In presenting this framework the intention is to contribute to theoretical knowledge of mountaineering participants within an adventure tourism setting. The framework adds to existing

conceptualisations by extending understanding of mountaineering participants from an adventure recreation to an adventure tourism context. Previous studies on mountaineers (e.g. Breivik, 1996; Ewert, 1985; Jack & Ronan, 1998; Loewenstein, 1999) have focused on mountaineering as a form of adventure recreation rather than adventure tourism. Generally, limited research has been carried out on adventure tourists (Berno, Moore, Simmons, & Hart, 1996; Fluker & Turner, 2000), inclusive of mountaineer adventure tourists.

Adventure tourism has recently grown in popularity as a niche form of tourism (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie,

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& Pomfret, 2003). It is “characterised by its ability to provide the tourist with relatively high levels of sensory stimulation, usually achieved by including physically challenging experiential components” (Muller & Cleaver, 2000, p. 156). Adventure tourism encompasses a myriad of land-, air- and water-based activities, as indicated in Table 1. Mountaineering is a palpable form of adventure tourism. It involves such activities as rock climbing, backpacking, physical fitness programmes and cross-country skiing (Mitchell, 1983).

While there is a dearth of research that examines mountaineering and its participants in an adventure tourism setting, there is a relative wealth of work from recreational perspectives (e.g. Elmes & Barry, 1999; Ewert, 1985; Magni, Rupolo, Simini, De Leo, & Rampazzo, 1985; Rossi & Cereatti, 1993). This work acts as a steer for adventure tourism researchers. The conceptual framework presented here draws on a review of studies on mountaineering, mountaineers, adventure, recreation and tourism.

Investigations of mountaineers have identified some important motivation and personality influences on participation. Motivation-based research (Elmes & Barry, 1999; Ewert, 1985; Loewenstein, 1999; Walter, 1984) suggests that complex motives trigger mountaineering involvement, such as risk- and challenge-seeking. Studies of mountaineers’ personalities reveal that they have sensation seeking traits (Breivik, 1996; Cronin, 1991; Gomà Freixanet, 1991; Jack & Ronan, 1998; Rossi & Cereatti, 1993). Zuckerman (1979, p. 10) defines sensation seeking as “the seeking of varied,

novel, complex and intense sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences”. While the aforementioned work provides insights into why individuals participate in mountaineering, it neglects to consider the emotions involved whilst they are engaged in the activity.

2. The conceptual framework

The customary approach to mountaineering research focuses on one type of influence on participants, such as motivation (e.g. Elmes & Barry, 1999; Ewert, 1985) or personality (e.g. Gomà Freixanet, 1991; Jack & Ronan, 1998). By contrast, the conceptual framework presented here recognises that important inter-related elements influence participation in mountaineering and people’s actual experiences of it. These are push factors (Dann, 1977) such as mastery (Loewenstein, 1999); pull components (Dann, 1977), e.g. the natural mountain environment; personality traits, for instance sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1979); lifestyle elements such as experience (Ewert, 1985); personal perceptions of adventure; and emotional states, for instance, flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). They have been selected for inclusion in the framework as they are deemed to be important influences on mountaineer adventure tourists.

The framework differs from earlier conceptualisations on mountaineering in that it recognises the convergence of tourism and recreation in an adventure setting. The inter-relationship between these two leisure forms has

Table 1
Conventional and contemporary adventure tourism activities

Land based	Water based	Air based	Mixed (land/water/air)
Abseiling	Body boarding	Ballooning	Adventure racing
Backpacking ^a	Canoeing	Bungee jumping	Charity challenges
Bicycling	Canyoning	Cliff jumping	Conservation expeditions
Caving	Cruise expeditions	Gliding	Cultural experiences
Climbing ^a	Kayaking	Hang-gliding	Gap year travel
Dog sledding	Sailing	Micro-lighting	Hedonistic experiences
Hiking ^a	Scuba diving	Paragliding	Spiritual enlightenment
Hunting	Snorkelling	Parachuting	Wildlife watching
Horseback riding	Surfing	Skydiving	
Jungle exploring	Water skiing		
Motorcycling	White water rafting		
Mountain biking	Windsurfing		
Mountaineering ^a			
Orienteering			
Quad biking			
Scrambling			
Skiing ^a			
Snowboarding			
Snow mobiling			
Snow shoeing			
Via Ferrata ^a			
Wilderness experiences ^a			

^aBackpacking, climbing, hiking, mountaineering, skiing, via ferrata and wilderness experiences are all mountaineering-related activities.

been identified (Krippendorff, 1987; Ryan, 1991), yet it has not been acknowledged in a mountaineering context. Mountaineering demands active engagement from participants involving such activities as scrambling, rope-work, travelling across glaciers, use of ice axes and crampons, acclimatisation and navigation. It is suggested, therefore, that mountaineers experience different emotional states during mountaineering. During participation, recreational adventurers potentially experience flow, which combines enjoyment and exhilaration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), and peak experience (Maslow, 1976), which generates emotions leading to intense happiness.

The following discussion examines the main components of the conceptual framework shown in Fig. 1. The core of the framework concerns the key influences on mountaineering participation and the actual experiences of it. The first part of the framework highlights mountaineering as a phenomenon, and the connections between mountaineering tourism and mountaineering

recreation. The second part of the model relates to the main inter-related influences on mountaineering participation. These are push and pull factors (Dann, 1977), personality characteristics, lifestyle elements, and personal perceptions of adventure. Push factors are social-psychological, internally generated motives, such as escapism, social recognition, socialisation, self-esteem and novelty, that determine the need for travel. Pull factors are the elements that represent a promise of satisfaction at destinations (Dann, 1977; Lee, O'Leary, Lee, & Morrison, 2002). They influence destination choice (Dann, 1977) and include tourism marketing stimuli (Goosens, 2000). Push and pull factors “melt together in the brain of the consumer...and the individual is motivated, or not, to take advantage of the supply in the market” (Goosens, 2000, p. 305). The framework's third element concerns the push and pull influences (Dann, 1977) driving tourism participation. The fourth part of the model illustrates the emotional states associated with adventure, and therefore mountaineering,

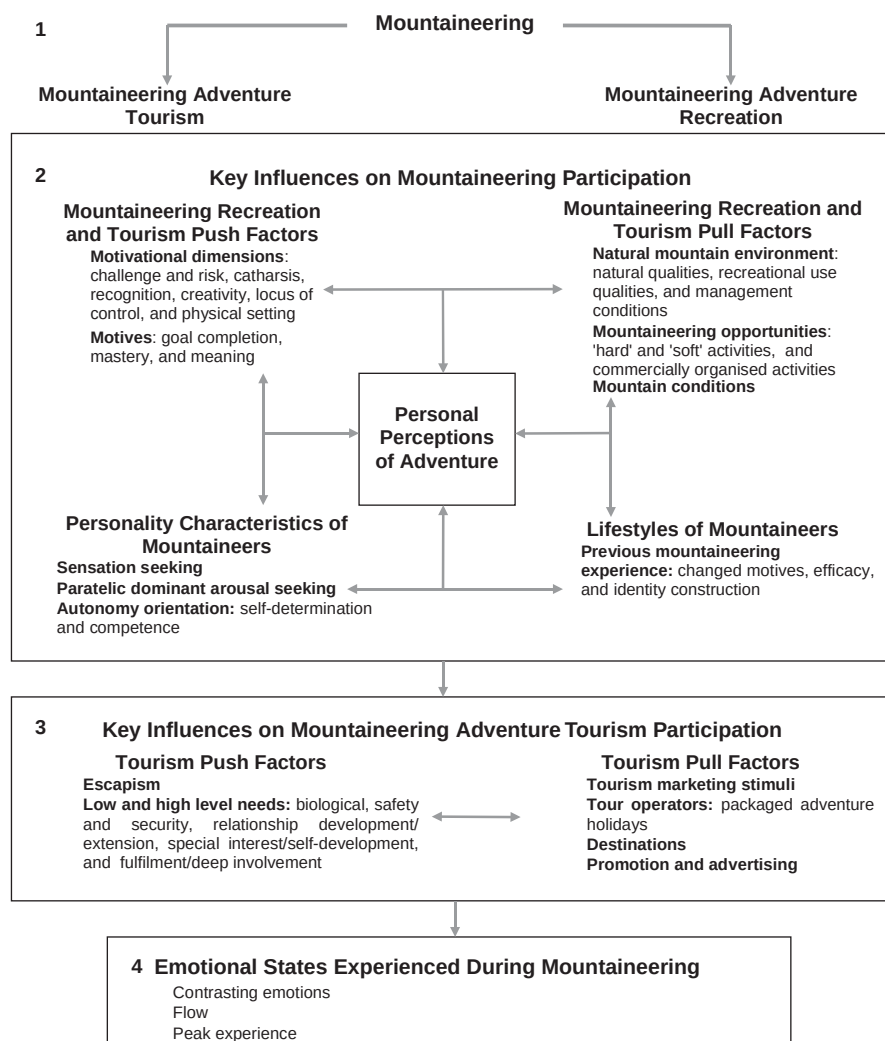


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework: key influences on people's participation in mountaineering and experiences during involvement.

participation. How individuals experience mountaineering, and the emotional states encountered throughout this activity, result from the combined influences that originally encouraged them to participate.

2.1. Mountaineering

Discussion of the framework starts with mountaineering, as shown in the first part of Fig. 1. The mountaineering phenomenon is categorised as a form of risk recreation (Robinson, 1992) and as a risky sport (Jack & Ronan, 1998). As such, it entails actual or perceived physical danger and uncertain outcomes (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989). Risk recreation stimulates “intense levels of cognitive and emotional arousal” (Robinson, 1992, p. 53) in participants. Competent participants, who are in control of the event’s outcome, experience arousal positively. By contrast, individuals who cannot control the event’s outcome experience arousal negatively, feeling anxiety and fear.

Mountaineering participation brings rewards such as arriving at the summit of a peak, feeling physically rejuvenated or achieving new technical skills. Simultaneously, participants sometimes endure hardships to achieve these benefits. For instance, extreme mountaineers can experience altitude sickness, snow-blindness, exhaustion and frostbite (Loewenstein, 1999).

Mountaineering operates at different levels and involves “hard” and “soft” adventure activities. Hill (1995, p. 63) suggests that “soft” adventure “refers to activities with a perceived risk but low levels of real risk, requiring minimal commitment and beginning skills; most of these activities are led by experienced guides”. Its activities are usually less physically demanding and require little or no experience from the participants (Millington, Locke, & Locke, 2001). “Soft” adventure activities, such as guided trekking holidays or introductory mountaineering training courses, appeal to novice mountaineers or to those who prefer controlled adventure experiences. “Soft” adventurers’ motives include escapism, experiencing new environments, self-discovery (Lipscombe, 1995), novelty, excitement, and socialising (Ewert, 1989). By contrast, “hard” adventure “refers to activities with high levels of risk, requiring intense commitment and advanced skills” (Hill, 1995, p. 63). “Hard” mountaineering activities include climbing expeditions, rock climbing and strenuous treks (Millington et al., 2001). “Hard” adventurers’ motives include risk and challenge (Lipscombe, 1995).

2.2. Mountaineering adventure tourism and mountaineering adventure recreation

The first part of Fig. 1 highlights mountaineering as a tangible form of both adventure tourism and adventure recreation, with marked similarities between each leisure

form. “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” (Weber, 2001, p. 361). All types of tourism share fundamental characteristics with recreation as they often use the same resources and facilities, have similar impacts, and evoke similar psychological and social responses among participants (Hall & Page, 2002; McKercher, 1996; Williams, 2003).

Recreation and tourism are becoming less spatially and temporally separated due to, e.g. advances in travel technology and the promotion of the same attractions to both groups of leisure user. Hence there is “a greater spatial coincidence between recreational day visitors and staying tourists” (Williams, 2003, p. 16). However, this spatial coincidence is less evident in mountaineering. It is suggested that, depending on where mountaineers reside, accessible mountainous terrain, which provides both “soft” and “hard” adventure activities, is limited for recreationists whereas for tourists, fewer limitations exist. Furthermore, recreational mountaineering can act as a precursor to mountaineering tourism, as indicated in Fig. 2. Mountaineers living near north Wales can take recreational day excursions to Welsh mountain regions throughout the year and enjoy biannual holidays to the Himalayas or the Alps. These recreational trips potentially serve as training exercises for expeditions in the latter mentioned destinations.

Distinguishing mountaineering tourism from mountaineering recreation is problematic because the nature of mountaineering is changing. As mountain adventure tourism broadens its range of traditional activities (walking and climbing), mountaineering is becoming more fragmented and fusing with tourism (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). Indeed, within a more widely defined consumer culture, tourism is subsuming mountaineering and making it less distinctive (Chaney, 1996).

Today, in mountains throughout the world, mountaineering has been subdivided, re-invented and



Fig. 2. The relationship between the tourism and recreational region for mountaineering.

redefined. Climbing is now adventure climbing or sports climbing; abseiling has become an end in itself; hill walking in “exotic” places has been redefined as trekking... (Beedie & Hudson, 2003, p. 626).

2.3. Mountaineering recreation and tourism push factors

As shown in the second part of Fig. 1, individuals are influenced by varied push factors that relate to participant motivation in mountaineering. Studies of mountaineers (Elmes & Barry, 1999; Ewert, 1985; Loewenstein, 1999; Walter, 1984) reveal the range of motivations behind mountaineering participation. While these investigations focus on the motives of recreational mountaineers, it is suggested that they are also important to mountaineer adventure tourists, given that tourism and recreation share similarities (Hall & Page, 2002; McKercher, 1996; Williams, 2003).

In an investigation of experienced and inexperienced mountaineers, Ewert (1985) identified six key motivational dimensions of mountaineering participation, as presented in Fig. 3. The motivational dimension of challenge and risk embodies the motives of excitement, personal testing and accomplishment. Risk acts as “a stimulatory motive to participate in the activity” (Vester, 1987, p. 242). It is linked to the pursuit of positive outcomes (Mitchell, 1983; Ewert, 1989) as well as the potential to lose something of value (Cheron & Ritchie, 1982; Martin & Priest, 1986). Risk can be subjective, i.e. the level of risk participants perceive, or objective, i.e. the number of accidents reported for a particular activity (Rossi & Cereatti, 1993).

Risk is strongly linked to competence. Before participating in an adventurous activity, people evaluate their perceived competence against the perceived risk involved (Martin & Priest, 1986; Robinson, 1992). If risk is viewed as exceeding competence, individuals experience fear, anxiety, feel threatened and may decide not to participate. However, if they participate and are not sufficiently competent to cope with the actual risks involved, their experiences can be negative (Martin & Priest, 1986).

Although it is asserted that risk is crucial to any form of adventure (Ewert and Hollenhorst, 1989; Meier, 1978; Miles, 1978; Walter (1984, p. 73)) argues that

“danger exists and minimising it is part of the skill of mountaineering, but danger has little to do with the motives of most climbers”. Similarly, Walle (1997) contends that risk is not an intrinsic goal of adventure and that gaining insight is the primary motive leading to fulfilment.

The catharsis dimension incorporates the motives of relaxation, slowing of the mind and getting away. The recognition dimension is associated with the status of being a mountaineer, or “to be known as a mountaineer” (Ewert, 1985, p. 243). Loewenstein (1999) analyses the personal accounts of “hard” mountaineers in mountaineering literature, and concurs that recognition, or self-signalling, acts as a significant motive for participation. Individuals could therefore be motivated to partake in “hard” mountaineering because of its prestigious status. However, they “desire to impress without appearing that (they are) trying to impress” (p. 322) in an attempt to disguise their more ego-oriented reasons.

The motivational dimension of creativity entails using one’s mind, thinking, and helping others. Ewert (1985, p. 243) notes that mountaineering activities concerned with creativity involve problem solving, for instance through “route finding, terrain analysis, and hazard evaluation”. Success in such activities requires that participants are competent mountaineers with adequate experience. The locus of control dimension is characterised by decision-making, developing one’s abilities, gaining control, and forming friendships. The physical setting, or mountain environment, is another motivational dimension driving mountaineering participation. It involves viewing scenery, enjoying wilderness, and being close to nature.

Loewenstein (1999) identifies other motives that are influential for participation in “hard” mountaineering. Goal completion is thought to be an almost obsessive need in “hard” mountaineers, this being a compulsion to complete self-established goals. This compulsion becomes so strong in some instances that mountaineers put themselves in real danger, suffering grave consequences. Doug Hansen is a case in point: he died on Everest in 1996 after reaching the summit 2 h after the pre-arranged turn-back time. He had attempted the mountain a year earlier, but had to retreat when only 300 vertical feet from the summit. One of the expedition members, Beck Weathers (1998; c.f. Loewenstein, 1999, p. 325), notes that “under no circumstances was he (Doug Hansen) going to allow himself to be turned around again”.

The mastery motive (Loewenstein, 1999) shares similar features to Ewert’s (1985) challenge and risk, and locus of control motivational dimensions. It provides an impetus for people to go mountaineering because “they *can* do it—they are good at it” (Loewenstein, 1999, p. 329). Mastery reflects varied

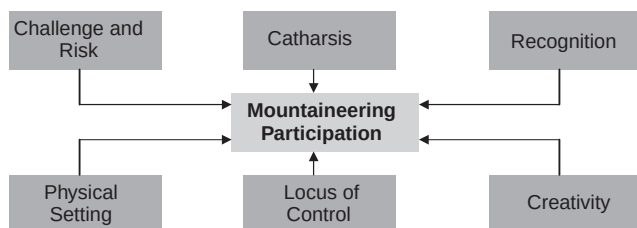


Fig. 3. Motivational dimensions linked to mountaineering participation. Source: adapted from Ewert (1985).

needs such as total absorption in the activity, improvement of self-esteem and control over one's environment.

Loewenstein (1999, p. 331) suggests that mountaineering sometimes “offers a new perspective on life”, providing meaning to a person's existence. However, this can involve a high personal cost for the mountaineer. This is illustrated by Simpson's (1993, p. 119) account of his experience of an avalanche:

Maybe for the first time I learned in the avalanche exactly what it is to be alive, how precious, and how fragile. There was so much to be lost from a moment's careless mistake but so much to be gained by knowing the value of life.

2.4. *Mountaineering recreation and tourism pull factors*

The second part of Fig. 1 highlights pull elements that are thought to influence mountaineering participation and entice people to visit destinations in either their home region or further afield.

While the natural mountain environment motivates individuals to engage in mountaineering (Ewert, 1985), it also acts as a pull element, drawing individuals to certain destinations that have suitable resources. It is suggested that mountains provide the settings for mountaineers to achieve personal satisfaction and satisfy their original participation motives. Mountain destinations can be examined through the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, defined as “the combination of physical, biological, social and managerial conditions that give value to a place” (Clarke & Stankey, 1979, p. 1). These conditions result from “qualities provided by nature (vegetation, landscape, topography, scenery), qualities associated with recreational use (levels and types of use) and conditions provided by management (roads, developments, regulations)” (Clarke & Stankey, 1979, p. 1). The natural and recreational use qualities for mountaineering include the range of “hard” and “soft” mountaineering activities facilitated by the mountain topography as well as the landscape and vegetation. The management conditions include the extent to which the region has been developed for mountaineers, such as through the provision of mountain huts and trekking routes, and the enforcement of regulations, such as access restrictions. These qualities will act as pull factors for mountaineers in their destination decision-making.

It is suggested that diverse mountaineering opportunities exist for adventure tourists and adventure recreationists within their home environment. However, the natural resources available within the home environment dictate whether “soft” or “hard” mountaineering is pursued. “Soft” activities take place on mountains that demand limited technical skill or experience to climb, and involve minimal real risk. “Hard” activities are available on mountains that offer experienced

mountaineers the opportunity to use well-developed skills and to contend with high levels of risk. Although it is possible for individuals to engage in both “hard” and “soft” activities within their home domain, unless they reside in remote mountainous regions, certain “hard” activities will not exist, e.g. climbing the summits of previously undiscovered peaks.

Another pull element is the availability of commercially organised mountaineering activities at destinations. On the one hand, these are “soft” activities such as package trekking holidays organised by specialist tour operators and introductory mountaineering courses arranged by outdoor activity companies. On the other hand, they are “hard” activities, e.g. expeditions to climb 8000 m summits, run by mountaineering guiding organisations.

Mountain conditions entice people to specific regions at certain times of the year. Therefore, warm, dry weather in summer would encourage rock climbing participation whereas unusually warm weather in winter would discourage mountaineers from ice climbing due to melting ice and avalanche risks. Weather conditions undergo dramatic changes over relatively short periods of time in mountain regions, and this directly affects mountaineering successes. Some regions of the world are now suffering the effects of climate change and “scientists now believe global warming is melting the Alps, threatening widespread devastation over the next two decades” (McKie, 2003).

2.5. *Personality characteristics of mountaineers*

The second part of Fig. 1 illustrates key personality traits that influence mountaineering participation.

Sensation seeking is one of the main personality characteristics of mountaineers. Zuckerman (1979) devised the Sensation Seeking Scale to measure the extent to which individuals possess this trait. The Scale measures different aspects of risk-taking in everyday life (Timpop, Kerr, & Kirkaldy, 1998), and comprises a total score (SSV Total) and four sub-scales: thrill and adventure seeking (TAS), experience seeking (ES), boredom susceptibility and disinhibition. Several studies have established that experienced mountaineers score highly on the Scale (Breivik, 1996; Jack & Ronan, 1998; Magni et al., 1985; Rossi & Cereatti, 1993). In particular, experienced mountaineers achieve a high-SSV Total score as well as high scores on the TAS and ES sub-scales (Cronin, 1991; Gomà i Freixanet, 1991). The high TAS score suggests that these mountaineers favour exciting, risky and adventurous activities, while the high ES score indicates that they enjoy sensations of the senses and mind.

Participants in risky sports, such as mountaineering, tend to be in a state of paratelic dominant arousal seeking rather than its opposite state, telic dominant

arousal seeking (Chirivella & Martinez, 1994; Kerr, 1991). Paratelic dominance is where “the individual attempts to gain as much arousal as possible, high arousal being felt as pleasant (excitement) and low arousal as unpleasant (boredom)” (Murgatroyd, Rush-ton, Apter, & Ray, 1978, p. 519). Participation in mountaineering encourages arousal through activities such as rock or ice climbing, and glacier traversing. By contrast, telic dominance characterises people who strive to reduce levels of arousal and “in this case high arousal is felt as unpleasant (anxiety) and low arousal as pleasant (relaxation)” (Murgatroyd et al., 1978, p. 519).

Another attribute that characterises mountaineers is autonomy, involving “a mechanism for coping with the often intense decision-making demands of the risk setting” (Robinson, 1992, p. 55). Autonomy is manifested through self-determination and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Self-determination, the ability to make one’s own decisions, is important to success in mountaineering. Mountaineers are constantly involved in making decisions, such as whether to continue up a mountain or retreat from it when the weather deteriorates, or where to move next when leading a rock climb.

2.6. *Lifestyles of mountaineers*

In the second part of Fig. 1, lifestyle factors represent influences on mountaineering participation. Lifestyles reflect personalities and are “unique patterns of thinking and behaving (including daily life routine, activities, interests, opinions, values, needs and perceptions), that characterise differences among consumers” (Decrop, 1999, pp. 106–107, cited in Pizam and Mansfield).

Ewert (1985) proposes that people’s past experience of mountaineering influences their motives. Experienced mountain climbers have more internally oriented motives for participation such as personal testing, challenge, locus of control, decision-making and exhilaration. Less experienced individuals express more externally oriented motives such as escapism, social activities and recognition.

A correlation between previous adventure experience and risk perceptions also exists. More experienced mountain recreation participants view risk positively, as a challenge and as an element that can be controlled, rather than as a danger and an aspect that cannot be controlled (Johnston, 1992, cited in Weiler & Hall, 1992). Moreover, experienced adventurers perceive risk more accurately (Priest, 1999, cited in Miles and Priest). More experienced risky sports’ participants become less preoccupied with the perceived risks and more concerned with improvement of their performance. This is known as the need for efficacy, “a desire to develop technical skill for both personal satisfaction and social status within the (risky sport) community” (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993, p. 10).

Continued participation in risky sports, such as mountaineering, provides an opportunity for individuals to develop new identities. Identity construction is an important motive for continuous involvement in risky sports (Celsi et al., 1993) and is developed in various ways. For instance, individuals who become experienced in mountaineering begin to use the appropriate jargon, signalling their membership in the mountaineering community and helping them to become accepted by other mountaineers.

2.7. *Personal perception of adventure*

The second part of Fig. 1 indicates that individuals’ personal perception of adventure influences their propensity to participate in mountaineering. It is suggested that mountaineering push and pull factors, personality characteristics and lifestyles all contribute to personal perceptions. Despite this, “individual differences in perception of challenges and risks resulting from variations in people’s personalities and previous travel experience have not yet entered the discussion on adventure tourism” (Weber, 2001, p. 370).

Different people view adventure in different ways. Therefore, “an adventure for one person, in a particular place, at a given time, may not be an adventure for another, or for the same person in a different place or time” (Priest, 1999, p. 160, cited in Miles and Priest). For example, some people experience non-conventional forms of adventure as adventurous and a cultural tour of Italian cities would require them to confront challenging situations of a psychological and social nature (Weber, 2001). Such individuals are telic dominant arousal seekers (Murgatroyd et al., 1978) who express low levels of sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1979).

The Adventure Experience Paradigm (Martin & Priest, 1986), Fig. 4, is a conceptual model that illustrates how people’s perceptions influence their expectations and experiences of adventure. The Paradigm illustrates the interplay between competence and risk. Exploration and experimentation indicate adventure situations where competence is high and risks are low, as occurs when a relatively experienced mountaineer practises the use of an ice axe and crampons on the edge of a glacier. Adventure, peak adventure or misadventure result as the level of risk rises and/or competence declines. For instance, adventure is ascending a mountain via a non-technical route, peak adventure involves using technical skills to successfully reach a mountain summit and misadventure is falling off rock whilst seconding up a climb. With the exception of the latter, all of these scenarios relate to the skills’ development required for successful mountaineering. Devastation and disaster, whereby competence is low and risks are high, result in injury or even death.

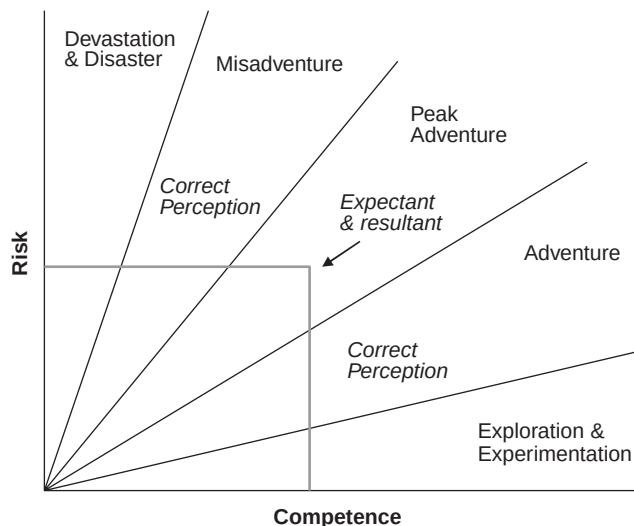


Fig. 4. The adventure experience paradigm. Source: adapted from Martin and Priest (1986).

The Paradigm's risk and competence elements are perceived or real. Novice adventurers tend to misperceive risk and competence due to lack of experience. As such, "timid and fearful" (Priest, 1999, p. 160, cited in Miles and Priest) novices view adventure as risky, feel incompetent and anticipate misadventure. Exploration and experimentation can occur if the "real" value of competence and risk determines the outcome. By contrast, "arrogant and fearless" (p. 160) novices regard adventure as low risk, feel overly competent and predict adventure. In this case, devastation and disaster can result if the "real" value of risk and competence dictates the outcome.

2.8. Tourism push factors

The third part of Fig. 1 illustrates key motivational push factors (Dann, 1977; Iso-Ahola, 1984; Pearce, 1988) which apply to tourism situations. Although many tourist motives exist, for the purposes of this framework only a limited number have been selected that apply to mountaineer adventure tourists.

It is suggested that mountaineer tourists express not only specific mountaineering motives but also generic tourism ones. The mountaineering motives of the catharsis dimension (Ewert, 1985) are closely allied to escapism from everyday environments, routines and responsibility. Escapism is one of the most commonly cited motives for tourists (Iso-Ahola, 1984). Mountaineering demands dynamic participation and as such, participants have the opportunity to experience escapism. Spatial separation from the home environment and overnight stays in the mountains further enhance the escapism benefits for mountaineer tourists.

The Travel Career Ladder (Pearce, 1988), based on Maslow's (1976) pioneering work, recognises that

tourists' motives change as they strive to fulfil higher-level needs with increased travel experience. The Ladder comprises five motivational levels with higher-level motives incorporating lower-level ones. In ascending order the levels are

A concern with biological needs (including relaxation), safety and security needs (or levels of stimulation), relationship development and extension needs, special interest and self development needs, and fulfilment or deep involvement needs (Pearce, 1996, p. 13).

It is suggested that these five motivational levels influence tourists to participate in mountaineering. Mountaineers are motivated by complex motives (Elmes & Barry, 1999; Ewert, 1985; Loewenstein, 1999; Walter, 1984), and hence the fulfilment of high-level needs plays an important role. However, low-level needs also influence mountaineering participation. The biological needs motivational level, and its relaxation element, correspond to the mountaineering catharsis dimension (Ewert, 1985). The safety and security needs level reflects risk reduction in mountaineering (Walter, 1984). The relationship development and extension needs level involves identity construction (Celsi et al., 1993) and locus of control (Ewert, 1985). Higher up the hierarchy, the special interest and self-development needs level includes prestige (Loewenstein, 1999), challenge and risk (Ewert, 1985). The highest motivational level, fulfilment or deep involvement needs, incorporates multiple mountaineering motives including goal completion, mastery and meaning (Loewenstein, 1999).

2.9. Tourism pull factors

Generic tourism pull factors that facilitate tourism participation are identified in the third part of Fig. 1. Marketing stimuli are tourism pull elements, comprising the marketing mix promoted by the producers, including the supply of services and facilities, and the brands, advertising and symbols (Goosens, 2000).

Throughout Europe, it is mainly small and medium-sized specialist tour operators that arrange adventure holidays and these are predominantly "soft" adventure experience. Larger operators are starting to develop adventure programmes as the sector experiences further growth (Mintel, 2003). These operators offer mountaineering trips as "add-ons" to special interest holidays, e.g. a safari trip followed by a climbing expedition up Kilimanjaro in Tanzania (Mintel, 2001). Destinations strongly influence adventure tourism participation. For many adventure tourists, "it is the destination which is most important: it is crucial that they experience the landscape and culture of somewhere unusual, remote or exotic" (Millington et al., 2001, p. 77).

Changing lifestyles have influenced the packaging of mountain adventure tourism. As people work longer hours and have increasingly complex social lives (Chaney, 1996; Jenkins, 1996) they are becoming attracted to packaged adventure experiences (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). In relation to the provision of adventure tourism, there has been substantial growth and the volume of small operators emerging in the market has proliferated (Millington et al., 2001). This growth has opened up opportunities for inexperienced individuals to participate in adventure tourism (Cater, 2000).

Promotion and advertising have become prominent features of the adventure tourism industry, to the extent that there has been a rapid growth of promotional media (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). The Internet is becoming a popular medium through which to sell adventure holidays. Many small tour operators do not have the financial resources to market or distribute their products through travel agencies, and therefore promote them using the Internet. Travel shows are another method used by specialist adventure operators to advertise their holidays. Such shows are becoming more popular as increasingly experienced tourists seek out more extensive information when organising trips (Millington et al., 2001).

2.10. Emotional states experienced during mountaineering

The fourth part of Fig. 1 highlights the emotional states experienced during mountaineering. Any form of adventure participation results in individuals experiencing contrasting emotions (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). It is suggested that mountaineering and tourism push and pull factors, personality attributes, lifestyles, and perceptions of adventure influence these states. For instance, “timid and fearful” novice mountaineers (Priest, 1999, p. 160, cited in Miles and Priest) could experience emotional turmoil during a rock climb yet feel relief and elation at reaching the top.

Mountaineering participants experience emotional peaks and troughs throughout the duration of the activity. In particular, “hard” mountaineers undergo “long periods of stultifying boredom punctuated by brief periods of terror” (Loewenstein, 1999, p. 320). In his account of a climb in the Alps, Jo Simpson recalls that conditions were

Harshly uncomfortable, miserable and exhausting.’ Yet ‘on the summit my memory edited out the anxiety and tension and fed me happy recollections of the superb climbing, the spectacular positions we had been in, feeling confident and safe, knowing we were going to succeed (Simpson, 1993, p. 137).

Such emotions are associated with flow, an “optimal psychological state” (Jackson & Marsh, 1996, p. 18) that

builds up throughout activity participation. Flow is “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 4). Activities that generate flow require the setting of goals, demand skill, challenge, enhanced concentration, a sense of control and total immersion in the activity. Flow is experienced only when activity participation is voluntary, participants feel in harmony with their environment, and their skills match the challenges presented (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

Participation in mountaineering generates feelings of flow as the former is extremely engaging and results in intrinsic rewards, yet many consider it to involve life threatening risks (Delle Fave, Bassi, & Massimini, 2003, p. 83). Flow is inextricably linked with mountaineering motivation and corresponds with locus of control, challenge and risk motivational dimensions (Ewert, 1985), goal completion and mastery motives (Loewenstein, 1999).

A similar emotional state that is associated with adventure participation (Lipscombe, 1999) is peak experience, a condition resulting in “moments of highest happiness and fulfilment” (Maslow, 1968, p. 73) when “all fears, all inhibitions, all weaknesses were left behind” (Maslow, 1967, p. 9). The peak experience phenomenon is represented by 19 characterisations including no consciousness of time and space, effortlessness, loss of fear, total attention, and awe and reverence of the experience (Maslow, 1967). Peak experience has received notable research attention (Cleary & Shapiro, 1995; Davis, Lockwood, & Wright, 1991; Panzarella, 1980; Yeagle, Privette, & Dunham, 1989) although its relationship to high-risk recreation participation has not been widely examined (Lipscombe, 1999). It is suggested that mountaineer adventure tourists potentially enjoy peak experience during mountaineering involvement.

3. Conclusion

This paper presents and explores a conceptual framework that provides insights into mountaineer adventure tourists. Discussion of the framework centres upon key interconnected elements that influence mountaineering tourism participation and the actual experience of mountaineering. It examines previous research on mountaineering, mountaineers, adventure, recreation and tourism, and applies this to mountaineer adventure tourists. Specific mountaineering, and generic tourism push and pull elements, personality characteristics, lifestyle elements and perceptions of adventure primarily influence participation in mountaineering tourism.

Furthermore, these factors affect participants' experience of mountaineering during involvement.

The framework adopts a multi-dimensional approach through examining important inter-linked influences on mountaineer adventure tourists. As such, it is of value to those involved in the provision of mountaineering tourism. Discussion of the varied elements that influence mountaineer adventure tourists provides a detailed profile of this group of adventurers. It is suggested that mountaineering tourism managers use this information to gain an understanding of the mountaineering tourism market and to develop suitable mountaineering experiences that fulfil their clients' needs. For example, people's personalities affect their perception of adventure, and their motivation to participate in mountaineering. Individuals with high levels of sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1979), motivated by challenge (Ewert, 1985) and mastery (Loewenstein, 1999), are likely to express a positive perception of adventure. Mountaineering tourism providers need to develop holidays that encourage participation from such individuals, and offer opportunities to fulfil their sensation seeking needs through facing new challenges and mastering new skills. Additionally, tourism managers need to recognise the inextricable links between mountaineering tourism and mountaineering recreation, and work with recreation providers to develop high-quality experiences for their clients.

It is important that mountaineering tourism providers take into account the heterogeneous nature of mountaineer adventure tourists. Therefore, commercial tourism organisations catering for "soft" adventurers with limited skills and experience in mountaineering need to pitch their offerings at the beginner level. These companies need to prevent their clients encountering misadventure, devastation and disaster (Martin & Priest, 1986) through ensuring low real risk experiences that still retain "the intense emotional component that comes with adventure" (Holyfield, 1999, p. 3). The ultimate goal for mountaineer adventure tourists is to have a positive experience although they inevitably undergo mixed emotions (Swarbrooke et al., 2003) to reach this goal. Mountaineer tourism providers should therefore aim to encourage flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) or peak experience (Maslow, 1967). However, "there exists something of a paradox whereby the more detailed, planned and logistically smooth an itinerary becomes the more removed the experience is from the notion of adventure" (Beedie & Hudson, 2003, p. 627).

This paper highlights that there is a lack of research on mountaineer adventure tourists. The conceptual model proposes a new approach to investigating this group of tourists and suggests that the latter share similar characteristics to recreational mountaineers, although differ in relation to tourism push and pull influences. Future research should focus on investigating

mountaineers in an adventure tourism context. This would extend understanding of mountaineers from an adventure recreation to an adventure tourism context. Furthermore, it would establish whether fundamental differences between mountaineer adventure tourists and mountaineer adventure recreationists exist. Previous research on mountaineer recreationists has largely been confined to examining "hard" mountaineers, resulting in only a limited understanding of "soft" mountaineers. Therefore, further work needs to examine the whole spectrum of "hard" and "soft" mountaineer adventure tourists. Through conducting such investigative work, advances in mountaineer adventure tourism research will be made.

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