

Micro Adventures

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Microadventures

Adventure travel has undertaken a huge transformation in the past few years, changing from grand expeditions to smaller more localized adventures known as micro adventures. This shift, mainly being caused by the pandemic, caused people to still want to explore and adventure while following travel restrictions and safety guidelines. In this essay, we critically assess microadventures, exploring them as a compelling alternative for both current and post-pandemic conditions. Using Mackenzie and Goodnow's article, we view how microadventures offer a local alternative to traditional adventure travel, that is accessible for all abilities and priorities. This essay dives into the sustainability viewpoints for microadventures considering environmental impact, accessibility, and local sustainability. Viewing potential future trends, we seek to find out if micro adventures are here to stay or if large scale adventure travel will take the podium again.

Overview of Microadventures:

Microadventures is a broad title, and they are user-specific; the most generally shared meaning is an opportunity based on more localized, low-carbon adventures. This form is currently defined as a more sustainable alternative to extensive adventure travel. For this reason, Microadventures are intended to be small events within simple access to local outdoor locations. It implies that adventures are relatively based and can automatically be in any scenery and accessible location.

For example, Mackenzie found trails around her neighborhood. Mackenzie and Goodnow talked about how this resulted in “her attention was drawn to ‘pre-schooler paced’ exploring the local stream, learning birdsongs, and practicing outdoor travel skills associated with her family bubble” (p. 4) . This example shows that microadventures might be simple and can be adapted to personal preferences, abilities, and possibilities. This showcases how the concept of microadventure breaks the barriers of

ability to be close and meaningfully connected to nearby nature without excessive planning, mobility and skills.

Extension to the Broader Field of Sustainability:

The concept of microadventures showcases its advantages, one being sustainability. Having an approach to travel and exploration that aligns with environmental conservation and sustainability not against it is foundationally the goal of microadventures.

Low-Impact Exploration:

Microadventures typically involve activities and locations that require small amounts of resources and infrastructure, thus reducing the environmental footprint compared to traditional adventures and travel. People participating in microadventures would typically travel smaller distances, utilize human-powered methods of transportation, and are instilled with the leave no trace mentality. These factors contribute to minimizing their impact on the ecosystems and minimize effects of climate change. According to Mackenzie & Goodnow (2020) “While this pandemic may be resolved with a vaccine, climate change will not” (p. 5). The microadventures prioritize exploration of nearby natural areas, reducing the need for long-distance travel and minimizing carbon emissions that are correlated with transportation. This results in zero or close to zero carbon emissions, comparatively a large-scale adventure to Mount Everest base camp would create roughly 500 Kg CO₂ emissions per person. (Monkey Mountaineering, n.d.). By encouraging individuals to engage with their local environment vs going to large scale locations, microadventures build a sense of environmental awareness. Fostering an appreciation for the natural landscapes, and showcasing how the most basic levels of environmental stewardship can have an impact.

Supporting Local Economies and Communities:

Microadventures focus on exploring nearby locations and as a result support local businesses. The support can be to small hotels, restaurants, and operators. Aiding the communities fosters connections and aids in the sustainability of the environment and community. (Anon, 2017) By aiding local businesses, microadventures contribute towards the economic sustainability of said communities to allow the microadventures to take place

Accessibility and Inclusivity:

Micro adventures aid in not only being more sustainable but they break restriction barriers for adventures that would normally be in place. People with restrictions of mobility and health concerns aren't able to participate in the large-scale adventurous settings. (Williarns et al, 2004). By removing barriers to participation and promoting diversity in outdoor spaces, microadventures contribute to the social sustainability of communities and promote greater equity in outdoor access. These local adventures that are not so large scale give the options for those who may not have the ability to travel or have as much movement to reap the benefits the outdoors have to offer. The benefits have been proven to be beneficial, having the option to get into the outdoors is proven to be good for your health, “greenspace exposure is associated with wide ranging health benefits” (Tourism Recovery Plan Update on Delivery, 2023) Micro adventures are opening the doors to those who may not have had the option or ability to begin with. Microadventures is a real method as an alternative for both current and post-pandemic conditions that prioritizes people, and sustainability.

Will Micro adventures stay?

Mackenzie and Goodnow predict a shift towards microadventures as the primary means of adventure in a post-pandemic world. Having the world ever changing some factors that influence this shift include, economic uncertainty. The post COVID-19 pandemic created large growth for microadventures, showcasing how it's a viable and fun alternative to traditional adventure travel.

Traditional adventure travel typically has a large cost associated with it. This cost can come from transportation, housing, activities, and more resulting in a large portion of funds being needed. Comparatively, microadventures have a much lower or even no cost associated with nature exploration. “many people will reprioritise how they spend their time, money” (Mackenzie & Goodnow, 2020, p. 6). These financial accessibility adventures grew large and continue to stay popular due to the economic uncertainty of the world and peoples financial situation. Encouraging people to explore local nature, microadventures aid to the benefit of the local economies while providing opportunities for safe and convenient adventure experiences amidst ongoing uncertainties surrounding economic uncertainty.

Health concerns are also a factor that depicts how the pandemic affected the shift in values towards micro adventures and is even affecting the views of adventurers post pandemic. According to (Mackenzie & Goodnow. 2020) “They may also worry about health risks of long-haul travel for them or their families” (P. 6) The pandemic largely affecting the whole world actually created a gain in popularity for the outdoors as a result of the health concerns, “36% of people responding to the People and Nature Survey by Natural England said they were spending more time outside during the pandemic than before.” (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Having the growth in popularity due to the travel restrictions and due to heightened health concerns the pandemic forced people to resort to smaller, local adventures to fulfill their innate desire to adventure. This resulted in microadventures taking the world by storm. Once lockdowns and restrictions were lifted these excursions were routine and gained popularity, resulting in an increase of micro adventures post pandemic.

My opinion

As an outdoor adventurer, I enjoy the concept of micro adventures and find the approach to be unique and exciting. The idea of small local adventures while being more sustainable than larger scale trips creates a positive viewpoint on the concept. microadventures, while being more accessible, are enticing for both the current and post pandemic eras. The Micro adventures offer an alternative to large-scale adventures and creates opportunities and connections with landscapes as small as your backyard.

One of the key strengths I see of microadventures is their adaptability and accessibility to challenges. This style of exploring the outdoors allows all people to experience it, no matter wealth, location, perspective, and viewpoints. This style of adventure is feasible for all that try it, providing a safe and convenient option for satisfying the human desire for exploration and outdoor recreation. Moreover, microadventures showcase many environmental sustainability factors. This aspect has become an increasingly important consideration for traveler's post pandemic. Having low-impact exploration and minimizing carbon emissions due to long-distance travel, micro adventures aid in preserving the natural landscape whilst having the desire to explore being satisfied.

Looking ahead to the post-pandemic timeframe, while I wholeheartedly endorse the concept of microadventures as a valuable and beneficial alternative to large-scale adventures, I foresee the possibility of the popularity of micro adventures diminishing. This fall in popularity would be due to the rise of large-scale adventures once again. I agree with the fact that Mackenzie & Goodnow sees the closure of many small outdoor adventure operators "many adventure operators are small-to-medium sized businesses that may not survive travel restrictions and associated economic fallout" (Mackenzie & Goodnow, 2020). That being said, I believe that this will change, the businesses will reopen, or new ones will take its place and the media and other outlets will showcase large-scale travel and adventures once again.

One reason I see for this potential shift is the human desire for exploration. While microadventures provide opportunities for discovering hidden gems and seeing wonderful landscapes in one's own backyard. The want to travel and to see new things for some people trumps the benefits of microadventures. offering a sense of excitement and discovery is difficult to replicate on a smaller scale. Having the travel industry already recovering from the pandemic. There are now signs that tourist numbers are starting to recover as limitations on movement are eased (Masterson, 2022). The desire for humans to travel and go on large scale adventure has never been bigger. I believe now that borders reopen, travel restrictions ease, and confidence in health and safety measures grows, many travelers may once again lean towards traditional adventure destinations and iconic landmarks rather than the microadventure concept.

Despite these potential challenges, I remain confident about the resilience of micro adventures as a meaningful and sustainable form of outdoor recreation. While the grand expeditions may capture the media once again, the simple joys of local nature and smaller scaled adventures will continue to allure individuals seeking accessible, and smaller scale experiences in the great outdoors. Ultimately, I personally believe that post pandemic will result in a cohesive showcase of both large scale and micro adventures for the population.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of microadventures is an alternative for large scale outdoor adventures. This concept allows people seeking sustainable, accessible, and local adventures to thrive. The concept works in both current and post pandemic states by emphasising low-impact, accessible, local adventures. Microadventures work alongside the principles of sustainability. Microadventures have gained significant popularity in recent years, especially with the aid from economic uncertainty, health concerns, and social media influence, their future may face challenges as interest in large-scale adventures rebounds. Nonetheless, the adaptability of microadventures allows for its resilience to shine

as a functional and good form of outdoor recreation. Mackenzie & Goodnow (2020) said it best “Microadventures are not a stop-gap novelty ‘for (global) emergencies only’” (p. 4). Ultimately microadventures have created a safe space for everyone to experience the outdoors in the smallest of locations with the least number of resources which gives everyone a chance to experience the outdoors now and, in the post, pandemic future.

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