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Positive motivational experience over a three-day outdoor adventure trek in Peru

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the motivational and emotional experience of an experienced outdoor activity participant during a three-day guided adventure trek in Colca Canyon, Peru. The research adopted a qualitative autoethnographic approach which provided unique data in the form of diary entries, experiential diagrams, field notes and email content. An established theoretical model (reversal theory) was used to analyse dynamic psychological states and emotions that occurred in relation to changing circumstances during the trek. Overall, the data indicated increased positive motivational experience over the course of the adventure trek. Achieving trekking goals, experiencing scenery, views and the natural environment, and social interaction with other trekkers, guides and local people were key aspects found to positively influence the subjective outdoor leisure experience. The present autoethnographic study provided an in-depth prospective account of the participant's increasingly pleasant positive experience as the trek advanced.

KEYWORDS

Colca Canyon trek; outdoor adventure trek; outdoor motivational experience; autoethnographic method; reversal theory

Introduction

Literature searches reveal that Latin American outdoor leisure and tourist industries have received less academic scrutiny in comparison with those in North America or Europe. For example, a tourism studies textbook entitled *Critical Issues in Tourism: A Geographical Perspective* (Shaw & Williams, 2002), which proposed a comprehensive worldwide approach, includes little mention of the Latin American countries in relation to outdoor leisure activities. Just over a decade later, although published English language research remains scarce, the literature on adventure leisure activities and outdoor learning and recreation in Latin American countries is growing (e.g., Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012, 2013; Ospina, 2006; Uvinha, 2010; Xie & Schneider, 2004). The present study reflects this growing research base and focuses on the psychological experience of an outdoor adventure leisure activity in South America. More specifically, it investigates a three-day guided trek in Colca Canyon near Arequipa, in southern Peru. Colca Canyon is reputedly the world's deepest canyon at 4160 metres and is known for its spectacular, steep terrain and the Andean condors that soar in the vicinity of the canyon.

Despite the prevalence of North American, Australasian and European discourses in adventure literature, Latin American tourism literature is diverse and comprehensive. Themes range from sustainable development and elements of tourism operations to conceptualisations and impacts of nature-based sport tourism, tourist–host interactions and guiding experiences in Latin America (e.g., Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012, 2013; Pérez-Vivar, González-Guillén, & Valdez-Lazalde, 2012;

Pretes, 2002; Toro Vega, González Romero, & Hernández Moreno, 2010). Pretes (2002) examined interactions between tourists and host communities in a well-known Bolivian mining community and concluded that tourism may be an effective means of narrating indigenous discourses in that region. Myriad Latin American studies have focused on evaluating sustainable approaches to developing nature-based outdoor activities (e.g., Franco-Maass, Osorio-García, Nava-Bernal, & Regil-García, 2009; Pérez-Vivar, González-Guillén, Valdez-Lazalde, de los Santos-Posadas, & Ángeles-Pérez, 2013; Valle, Baena-Extremera, & Granero-Gallegos, 2011), particularly in countries that are reliant on adventure and nature-based tourism (López, 2005; Mok, 2005). In addition, issues surrounding the need for safety standards and best practices in nature-based and adventure tourism (Beltrán & Bravo, 2008; Valle et al., 2011) and explorations of liability and risk in the adventure tourism industry have been examined (Spink, Galindo, Cañas, & Souza, 2004).

Although fewer Latin American studies have examined motivations and psychological experiences associated with adventure activities, the findings parallel North American and European discourses. The desire to escape stresses of urban life by participating in outdoor activities and connecting with natural environments has been found to motivate outdoor activities, such as long-distance hiking (e.g., Gallegos, Ruiz Juan, & Montes, 2007; Granero & Baena, 2010). Optimal experiences such as flow have also been documented as a motivation for adventure tourism activities, as in white-water rafting in Brazil (Strassburger & Macke, 2012). These findings suggested that auto-telic experiences and enhanced self-understanding were important adventure motivations in that context. Conversely, Carnicelli-Filho, Schwartz, and Tahara (2010) studied the emotion of fear across a range of adventure activities in Brazil. These authors highlighted the need for further study of the complex relationships between fear and adventure motivations and behaviours, as well as the need to elucidate affective–emotional aspects of adventure activities. The present manuscript contributes to that further study in two ways. First, it adds original research findings to the sparse English language literature on South American tourism experiences. Second, it employs a theoretical framework (reversal theory), which has not yet been used in the South American adventure literature and therefore has the potential to contribute to that discourse.

Adventure motivations and experiences

The term ‘adventure’ in North American, European and Latin American leisure, sport, tourism and outdoor literature is a term that has acquired multiple meanings. However, the common element in most adventurous pursuits is the positive valuation of some level of risk and the active pursuit of risk-taking opportunities (e.g., Brannigan & McDougall, 1983; Brymer, 2010; Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002; Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989; Kerr, 1991; Lupton & Tulloch, 2002; Lyng, 1990; Priest & Baillie, 1987). Ewert and Hollenhorst (1989, p. 125) further described adventurous recreational activities as: ‘a variety of self-initiated activities utilising an interaction with the natural environment, that contain elements of real or apparent danger, in which the outcome, while uncertain, can be influenced by the participant and circumstance’. Typically there is a personal challenge involved in outdoor adventure activities for participants, which lies in encountering, minimising and mastering subjectively perceived physical risk through use of personal skills and competencies.

Adventure activities are motivated by aspects ranging from goal achievement, risk-taking, pushing personal boundaries, overcoming fear and bodily sensations to desires for deeper connections with other people and the natural environment (Kerr & Houge Mackenzie, 2012). Many of these desires align with the well-established basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000). Outdoor adventure experiences can fulfil psychological desires to feel connected to others and the natural environment, experience freedom and control, experience solitude or gain insight and fulfilment (Brymer & Gray, 2009; Hall, Seekamp, & Cole, 2010; Loeffler, 2004; Sproule et al., 2013; Walle, 1997). Although solitude is a frequently identified as a motivation for visiting outdoor areas, this is often achieved in small group visits (e.g., Hall, 2001; Long, More, & Averill, 2006). Thus, a range of psychological needs, including the seemingly

opposed needs for solitude and relatedness, may be sought and fulfilled through outdoor adventure experiences.

Given the diverse interpretations of the term 'adventure', the question arises of whether a guided three-day trek in the outdoors qualifies as an outdoor adventure experience. Some adventure activities (e.g. bungee jumping, tandem skydiving, mountain biking) are of short duration, have a relatively high risk of injury and provide many of the participants with intense feelings of thrill and excitement (e.g., Varley, 2011; Willig, 2008). Compared with these leisure activities, a guided three-day trek is longer in duration and may seem relatively 'tame' in terms of risk levels. In this sense, a trek may be comparable with other longer-duration outdoor adventure leisure activities (e.g. mountain climbing, sea kayaking, ocean sailing or rowing) and provide similar motivational rewards, without the necessary long-term planning, organisation and high-risk levels involved in those activities (e.g., Woodman, Hardy, Barlow, & Le Scanff, 2010). On a trek, the psychological rewards are more likely to include feelings of achievement or competence, autonomy, solitude and connections to others and the natural environment through prolonged engagement with natural elements and unfamiliar environments. Because of the physical demands of trekking down and up steep, uneven terrain while dealing with the debilitating effects of altitude, the three-day Colca Canyon trek is a physical and mental outdoor challenge with some elements of risk for most non-expert trekkers. The present authors propose that this trek is a longer-duration outdoor adventure activity that can help participants fulfil a range of psychological needs.

Research suggests that the psychological needs and experiences fulfilled by outdoor experiences are multi-phasic and multifaceted in nature (e.g., Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Houge Mackenzie, Hodge, & Boyes, 2013). The complex interplay of thoughts, feelings, sensory information, physical activities, interactions with others and internal reflections all influence motivational experiences in outdoor settings, particularly those of longer duration such as multi-day treks. Thus rather than defining outdoor adventure experiences based on specific outcomes, researchers have identified the dynamic and emergent nature of these experiences based on psychological elements such as attentional focus, activity and space, and mood measures (e.g., Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Lee, Datillo, & Howard, 1994; McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998). Rather than a singularly 'positive' or 'negative' experience, studies indicate that fluctuations in positive and negative emotional states regularly occur throughout outdoor adventure experiences (e.g., Jones, Hollenhorst, & Perna, 2003). Hull, Stewart, and Yi (1992, p. 250) found that people 'set out to consume an extended sequence of relaxing feelings dotted with peaks of excitement', rather than a singular experiential outcome. These authors also highlighted the 'considerable need' to identify and operationalise meaningful and salient dimensions of leisure phases. Based on this literature, the current study sought to further investigate fluctuations in psychological states during outdoor adventure experiences to better elucidate their holistic nature. The study adopted the same methodological and theoretical approach used by Houge Mackenzie and Kerr (2012) in their study of motivational and emotional patterns during a multi-day mountaineering tourism climb. This approach was used to provide an in-depth longitudinal exploration of a three-day outdoor adventure trek experience. Reversal theory (Apter, 1982, 2001) was used to explain the psychological processes underpinning the trekker's experiences.

Theoretical framework: reversal theory

In addition to the need for further study in Latin American contexts of how outdoor adventure experiences unfold, the development of theoretical frameworks to interpret and understand these experiences is required. Psychological models may improve our understanding of trekkers' perceptions, emotions, motivation and behaviour patterns throughout a trek. This is particularly relevant for Latin American countries with developing trekking industries and activities geared towards a wide range of international participants. The current study employs reversal theory (Apter, 1982, 2001), an established psychological model, to guide data analysis and identify key motivational

states that may influence adventure trek experiences. This theory has been previously developed and applied to adventure sports and activities (e.g., Apter, 1992; Chirivella & Martínez, 1994; Cogan & Brown, 1999; Houge Mackenzie, Hodge, & Boyes, 2011; Pain & Kerr, 2004).

Reversal theory explains the structure of experience and resulting emotions by identifying underlying motivational states. It proposes that one's current frame of mind (i.e. meta-motivational state) dictates how we interpret somatic feelings and interpersonal transactions (Apter, 1982, 2001). It was expected that this psychological model would assist in understanding dynamic individual experiences; specifically the motivation and resulting emotions induced by changes in the adventure trek environment and interpersonal transactions during the trek.

Reversal theory posits that four pairs of opposing motivational states influence our felt emotions. Table 1 outlines the key characteristics of each state. In the telic state a person feels serious, goal-oriented and arousal-avoidant, while feeling spontaneous, playful and arousal-seeking in the opposing paratelic state. In the conformist state a person feels compliant and agreeable, while feeling rebellious, unconventional and defiant in the opposing negativistic state. A person in the mastery state is competitive and dominating, while desiring harmony and cooperation in the sympathy state. A person in the autic state is self-focused and concerned with the self, while feeling altruistic and concerned with others in the alloic state. Regular reversals between these paired motivational states are predicted to produce significant changes in a person's motivations and emotional experiences. Reversal theory predicts 16 primary emotions that are produced by different combinations of motivational states (see Table 2). Positive emotions result from a matching of a person's preferred way of feeling and current experience, and negative emotions occur when there is a mismatch between a person's preferred way of feeling and his/her current experience.

Three conditions are proposed to precipitate motivational reversals: contingent events, frustration and satiation (e.g., Apter, 1982). Contingent events may be internal or external (e.g. sudden chest pain, poor weather, criticism from a colleague). Frustration occurs when a person's needs in a particular state are not being met (e.g. a goal or activity cannot be completed or enjoyed in the telic state). Reversals due to satiation result from remaining in one state for an extended period (e.g. preparing for an examination for a long period in the telic state).

Table 1. Motivational state pairs in reversal theory.

Telic:	Paratelic:
Serious, outcome-oriented, arousal-avoiding	Playful, process-oriented, arousal-seeking
Conformist:	Negativistic:
Rule-abiding	Rebellious
Mastery:	Sympathy:
Domination-oriented	Relationship-oriented
Autic:	Alloic:
Self-focused, concern for self	Other-focused, concern for others

Table 2. The 16 primary emotions associated with the motivational state combinations.

State combination	Somatic emotions	
	Pleasant	Unpleasant
Telic-conformity	Relaxation	Anxiety
Telic-negativism	Placidity	Anger
Paratelic-conformity	Excitement	Boredom
Paratelic-negativism	Provocativeness	Sullenness
	Transactional emotions	
	Pleasant	Unpleasant
Autic-mastery	Pride	Humiliation
Autic-sympathy	Gratitude	Resentment
Alloic-mastery	Modesty	Shame
Alloic-sympathy	Virtue	Guilt

Over the last 30 years, supporting evidence for reversal theory has come from a number of psychology sub-disciplines, including experimental psychology, clinical psychology, health psychology, sport psychology, psychophysiology and psychometrics. It has been applied to explain human motivation and emotion in, for example, humour, art, sport, sexual behaviour, gambling and alcohol addiction, smoking cessation and weight loss.

Central to the theory is the notion of human behaviour as inherently inconsistent. For example, whereas other theories of personality focus on hard-wired preferences, reversal theory focuses on a person's changeability and flexibility. Personality is conceptualised as patterns of change that characterise people over time, rather than fixed positions on personality dimensions or traits (Cattell, 1986; Eysenck, 1970). In fact, many other psychological theories can be encompassed by reversal theory's broader, more complete structure. For example, as Apter (2005) has pointed out, the work of McClelland (e.g., 1988) on motivation and Bandura (e.g., 1984) on self-efficacy can be integrated into reversal theory's larger structure. McClelland's theory of motivation encompassing the need for achievement (telic state), need for power (mastery state) and need for affiliation (sympathy state) represents three of the eight reversal theory states. Bandura's self-efficacy model (autic and mastery states) represents two more of the broader range of eight motivational states. In similar fashion, other major theories of motivation can also be integrated into the more general reversal theory structure.

The value of using reversal theory in the present study was that it could provide a meaningful understanding of a trekking experience in terms of cognitions, motivational states and emotions. Using reversal theory concepts allowed investigators to track motivational dynamics as they unfolded during the three-day multi-phasic adventure experience. In addition, it provided an opportunity to assess a primarily European model in a Latin American context, thus helping to build bridges between the two respective bodies of research.

Method

Qualitative research has been used to advance our understanding of leisure (e.g., Anderson & Austin, 2012; Weber, 2008) and outdoor adventure experiences, such as white-water rafting (Jonas, Stewart, & Larkin, 2003), mountain guiding (Beedie, 2003) and ocean kayaking (Varley, 2011). Adopting a qualitative approach allows nuanced aspects of subjective outdoor adventure experiences to be examined. The present study focused on the motivational and emotional patterns experienced by a participant during a three-day guided adventure trek in Colca Canyon in Peru. It adopted a qualitative autoethnographic approach in which the first author joined the trek as a participant observer. Her research role was unknown to the trek guide and other participants. The first author had a background in psychological research (including reversal theory research) outdoor activities, guiding and Spanish language. As the autoethnographer, she provided unique data in the form of ongoing personal diary entries, experiential diagrams that visually summarised key motivational and emotional changes as the trek unfolded, and field notes from conversations with accompanying trekkers. These qualitative data were recorded in a private location on the evening of each day. The data were supported by email message content sent to friends and colleagues during the five-day period immediately following the trek.

In contrast to evocative autoethnographic studies, the current study used an established theoretical model (reversal theory; Apter, 1982, 2001) to analyse psychological states and emotions, and can thus be considered analytical autoethnography (e.g., Snow, Morrill, & Anderson, 2003). While evocative narrative is presented, the analysis is framed by theoretical interpretations (Anderson & Austin, 2012). This approach entailed using theory to explain the autoethnographer's motivational and emotional dynamics as motivational reversals occurred and the importance of these psychological fluctuations to her overall outdoor adventure experience. This use of reversal theory to analyse autoethnographic data has been used successfully in previous outdoor adventure research (e.g., Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012, 2013).

To ensure the integrity of the data collection and interpretation process the authors complied with Anderson's (2006) autoethnographic research guidelines, which included: ensuring the autoethnographer maintained her trekking group member status throughout the trek; consistently engaging in analytic reflexivity regarding her trekking experience; situating the autoethnographer's experience at the forefront of descriptions and analysis (see Results and Discussion sections); engaging in dialogue with other informants (e.g. participants and guides); and showing commitment to theoretical analysis (in this case through reversal theory). Data analysis, for example, followed established procedures for qualitative research (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The autoethnographer and the second author, working independently, used all four data sources to identify items related to reversal theory constructs (e.g. arousal levels, motivational states, reversals, emotions) for each particular phase of the trek. Their individual analyses were then compared and discussed to ensure agreement was reached. A third external reviewer audited the data analysis process and verified the consistency of reversal theory interpretations in the data analysis. This triangular process decreased the possibility of researcher bias and enhanced the trustworthiness of data analysis (Biddle, Markland, Lilbourn, Chatzisarantis, & Sparkes, 2001).

Results

This section begins with the presentation of representative verbatim autoethnographic data, in the form of chronological daily diary-entry excerpts and subsequent email-content excerpts. These are presented to illustrate the emotional dynamics experienced by the autoethnographer as she encountered a range of outdoor conditions and personal challenges (e.g. terrain, altitude, climate) during the three-day Colca Canyon trek. Discussion and theoretical analyses are then presented along with representative quotes, which are presented in parentheses to support these analyses. To assist readers in developing a more intuitive understanding of the theoretical analysis provided, motivational states in this section are referred to by their defining characteristics rather than using traditional reversal theory terminology (i.e. the telic state is serious and the paratelic state is playful; the conformist state is rule-abiding and the negativistic state is rebellious; the mastery state is domination-oriented and the sympathy state is relationship-oriented; and the autic state is self-focused and the alloic state is other-focused).

Day 1 diary entry: 3 am pick-up and start of trek

Mixed in with clients from other companies in the bus.
 VERY early pickup and start and still had to drive and pick others up.
 Uncomfy cramped seats—hard to sleep.
 Breakfast was a highlight.
 There were a lot of people at the start.
 When we arrived at the first lookout it was packed and there were no condors to be seen—the whole reason for getting up so early.
 We started out walking with a lot of people.
 We had to wait for our guide to arrive from somewhere else, after already waiting for ages. We also didn't know who our guide was for a bit.
 Wasn't sure our guide was as fit as we were—so [it] felt a bit unprofessional in that way.
 The tour seemed disorganised on the first day.
 We want to go and not get stuck walking with a bunch of other people.
 Very difficult steep walk down—hard on knees with big pack—no let-up really.

As can be seen from her diary entry, the start of the trek was a somewhat negative experience for the autoethnographer and her level of experienced pleasure was low. A number of factors contributed to her state of mind: the early start, the discomfort of the bus trip and the waiting time. One major contributing factor was the absence of the condors, a proposed highlight of the first day. Another factor was the large groups, the disparity in trekking ability within the group and

the autoethnographer's perception that the guided trek was not well organised and potentially unprofessional. These quotes indicate that most of her morning was experienced as unpleasant due to the factors mentioned. Although she does not mention particular emotions, her frustration is evident. In reversal theory terms, her serious goal-oriented motivation reflected a desire to begin the trek and see the morning highlight: condors. However, delays at the start and the absence of condors upon arrival meant that her goals were not achieved ('We want to go and not get stuck walking with a bunch of other people'; 'When we arrived at the first look out it was packed and there were no condors to be seen'). She underwent a reversal from the serious and rule-abiding (telic-conformity) states to the serious and rebellious (telic-negativism) states and experienced feelings of annoyance, or perhaps slight anger (telic-negativism) as a result of her frustration. This contributed to her general lack of satisfaction early in the trek.

Day 1 diary entry: on trail and first evening

Enjoyed ourselves a lot more [after we begin hiking].
 Got chatting to other group members at one stop.
 Found our guide to be nice and knowledgeable about the area.
 Found out she had training for 3 years to get this job! And she was a local who grew up in the canyon.
 However—after lunch I was still hungry this put me in a less happy mood.
 Helped out cooking dinner which was a lot of fun—
 Enjoyed meeting the locals and helping them cook—getting to know them and about their lifestyle—they seemed like genuinely enjoyed talking to us—there were no ulterior motives.
 Had a nice dinner with everyone in a beautiful place.

Email content regarding Day 1

Then we walked back up a bit to a tiny village called San Juan, it is a small farming village and we stayed in clay and thatched roof bungalows overlooking the valley and river. This village was so pretty, lush and green, a stark contrast to the dry, dusty yellow canyon walls. The people were so nice, we even got to help make dinner on a clay stove with some basic Quechua lessons (the native language). There was no electricity, which was great. Our guide, Ana,¹ showed us all the native fruits and plants, they have everything there, from avocado to mango to figs, you name it and it is right there. They really live off the land so all the food was so fresh. They even gave us native plants for our various stomach and skin ailments, no need for a pharmacy there!

As the trek progressed on Day 1, the autoethnographer's mood improved as a result of positive social interactions with fellow trekkers. She also realised that her initial judgmental perception of the guide was incorrect ('Found our guide to be nice and knowledgeable about the area'). When she discovered some of the guide's background, training and experience she completely changed her mind about the guide's professional approach. At the end of the day, her congenial interaction with the guide and local residents as they cooked a meal together made it a very positive psychological experience ('Enjoyed meeting the locals and helping them cook'; 'The people were so nice'). Her email comments underline the pleasure she experienced as a result of this cross-cultural experience with her hosts and guide, and directly contrast with her unpleasant perceptions and experience early the first morning. Reversal theory principles suggest that she reversed from the serious (telic) to the playful (paratelic) state and her motivational experience improved as a result of her playful (paratelic) enjoyment of the local environment ('This village was so pretty, lush and green'). In addition, her comments about positive interactions with locals illustrate pleasant other-focused and relationship-oriented (alloic and sympathy) states and feelings of gratitude, which resulted from her successful interpersonal transactions during dinner preparation.

Day 2 diary entry: trek to the oasis

Great day!

We were able to walk on our own and were not surrounded by large groups.

A lot of up and down walking so I got a workout but it didn't feel too tough.

I love the museum where we met this lady who told us all about [the local] way of life—we tipped her but didn't feel pressured.

The arrival at the oasis was amazing—we had been so hot and dry and thirsty—just wanted to get there in the end and when we arrived it exceeded all expectations. Beautiful clear fresh water pool, nice bamboo hut, beautiful flowers all over, hammocks to lay in—it was like reaching paradise after a long hard walk—reversal here I think.

We played volleyball with the guides and had a great time—again they seemed genuine. I was in a paratelic [playful] state playing against the guides in the volleyball 'tourney' we organised.

Email content regarding Day 2

The next day we got up and had banana pancakes! yum! and walked to another small village with a tiny one-room museum that explained all the plants, animals, tools and culture of the Colca villages. They are a pre-Incan culture (whose native language is Quechua, but they also speak Spanish). Here we also saw all the Guinea pigs they raise (to eat, not as pets!) It's called 'Cuy' and is a popular dish here. After a few more hours walking in the hot sun atop windswept narrow, winding tracks lined by towering cacti, we arrived at this amazing oasis in the middle of this barren canyon, so it was truly paradise! There was a fresh water pool, beautiful gardens all around, palm trees, etc..! Wow. We played volleyball with the locals (very competitive) and had a traditional drink, pisco sour, for our mate's birthday.

Starting with breakfast, followed by the museum visit and on into afternoon sports and an evening meal, Day 2 was a pleasant experience for the autoethnographer. While she mentioned being allowed to walk freely and reflected on the terrain and vegetation, her narratives focused intently on her interaction with locals at the museum and playing volleyball with the guides. Reversal theory interpretation showed a positive motivational experience for most of the day as a result of being able to satisfy her serious (telic) goal of completing the trek without being inhibited by other trekkers on the undulating pathways. However, on arriving at the Oasis she reversed from the serious (telic) to the playful (paratelic) state where all of her senses were engaged in the 'paradise' Oasis. This playful (paratelic)-oriented experience continued later in the volleyball game with the guides and the celebratory birthday drink. During the volleyball game the other-focused (alloic) and domination-oriented (mastery) states also influenced her motivational experience as she cooperated with her teammates and, at the same time, competed against the opposing guide team. The autoethnographer reported having benefited from her interactions with local people (e.g. 'I love the museum where we met this lady who told us all about the local] way of life their way of life—we tipped her but didn't feel pressured'; 'We played volleyball with the guides and had a great time—again they seemed genuine').

Day 3 diary entry: reaching the summit

HUGE challenge—got up at 5 am and walked 1200 meters straight up in 2 hours!! 3,200 meters at the top! Didn't stop at all.

Wanted to pass people so I could make good progress and walk at my own pace.

Also wanted to beat my friend up the hill.

HUGE buzz at the top when we admired our achievement

Felt alloic [other-focused] once I was up there. We were clapping other people in and encouraging them.

Had fun celebrating one girl's birthday.

Email content regarding Day 3

Yesterday we were up at 5 am to trek back up the canyon—no breakfast, just straight up! We did it in 2 hours and that was hauling butt as I had a very heavy pack, but we all made it through without having to hop onto any of the passing mules! It was very high altitude and the steepest trek I've ever done ...

The last day of the trek (Day 3) was the toughest physical day that tested the participants' fitness and determination. In reversal theory terms, the autoethnographer experienced serious (telic), self-focused (autic) and domination-oriented (mastery) states as she worked hard to achieve her goal of completing the trek as fast as possible and trying to 'beat' her friend to the top ('Wanted to pass people so I could make good progress and walk at my own pace.'). Her description of experiencing a 'HUGE buzz at the top when we admired our achievement' was due to the satisfaction and pleasure she felt at completing her serious (telic) goal. Also, until she finished the trek she was totally focused on herself. This changed as she reversed from the self-focused (autic) and domination-oriented (mastery) states to the other-focused (alloic) and relationship-oriented (sympathy) states. As a result, she began to identify with, and feel concern for, the other trek participants as they finished (and showed her appreciation of their efforts: 'We were clapping other people in and encouraging them'). Data indicated that her levels of positive motivation experience remained high as a result of both serious, self-focused states and, subsequently, other-focused and relationship states during the final stage of the trek.

Discussion

The present study provided an in-depth prospective account of the autoethnographer's subjective outdoor leisure experience. Overall, the data indicated a progressive increase in positive motivational experience over the three-day adventure trek. What began early on Day 1 as a generally unpleasant psychological experience changed to an overwhelmingly pleasant positive experience as the trek advanced. This was due to a number of factors, some of which have been recognised in previous outdoor research (e.g. sense of accomplishment or goal achievement, appreciation of the beauty of nature, meeting challenges, maintaining control, overcoming fear, acquiring skill and mastery, taking risks, experiencing exhilaration; Allman, Mittelstaedt, Martin, & Goldenberg, 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2009; Kerr & Houge Mackenzie, 2012; Willig, 2008). For example, achieving trekking goals was an important source of pleasure for the autoethnographer. When other trekkers unknowingly inhibited her progress, she experienced a degree of frustration and unpleasant motivational experience. Conversely, the beauty of Colca Canyon and experiencing this unique natural environment positively influenced her motivational experience. Once the trek was underway, her interactions with other trekkers and local hosts also played a key role in motivational and emotional experience. When completing challenging parts of the trek, she was self-focused and felt impatience towards others. However, when the autoethnographer had completed the daily trek she enjoyed reversing and engaging with fellow trekkers and hosts. The friendliness and genuineness of locals, such as the women she met in the museum and people she helped to prepare dinner, along with the informal sports played with guides in the evenings, also contributed to her pleasurable experiences.

The data clearly reflected opposing needs for solitude and autonomy, and relatedness with others. At the start of the trip, the volume of people in close proximity and her perceived lack of control and autonomy frustrated the autoethnographer. Outings to natural areas are often accompanied by the desire for solitude, freedom and autonomy or control (e.g., Brymer & Gray, 2009; Hall et al., 2010; Loeffler, 2004; Sproule et al., 2013). Therefore, situations that do not fulfil these expectations can result in negative emotional experiences, as evidenced in these data. Interestingly, perceptions of solitude do not always preclude the presence of others (Long et al., 2006). In this study, data indicated that the positive emotions often associated with solitude in outdoor settings were still experienced in small groups travelling together on the trail. The autoethnographer's need for autonomy within the group setting was also evident, particularly on Days 1 and 3. The trek was progressively structured in such a way that facilitated increased individual autonomy within the group setting, which allowed the autoethnographer to feel self-determined and overcome personal challenges within the travel group.

In addition to the desire for solitude and autonomy, the autoethnographer expressed the desires to connect more deeply with the natural environment and with others. These results are supported by findings that connecting with natural places is often linked to perceptions of solitude and enhanced psychological states (e.g. subjective vitality) (Hall, 2001; Ryan et al., 2010). During trail walking, she experienced solitude and connection to the natural surroundings. Conversely, the trekking experience also afforded many opportunities to connect with diverse individuals on a more personal level than would have been possible in a different environment during stops and night activities. Thus she was able to fulfil the need for relatedness and connection to others (Deci & Ryan, 2000) at different points in the journey. Although the multi-day trek was characterised by phases of varied motivational states, the structure of the trek afforded opportunities to fulfil a range of psychological needs in relation to these states. Thus the dynamic and multi-phasic nature of this trek resulted in a primarily positive emotional experience overall by addressing a range of motivational states (see also Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998).

A potential limitation of the present study is the single-participant design which, in the traditional sense, limits the generalisability of the findings. However, the authors would argue that the findings may facilitate learning and naturalistic generalisation (Cresswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002, 2005). Based on personal experience, naturalistic generalisation derives from tacit knowledge of how things are and leads to expectations rather than formal predictions. It will be up to the reader to decide whether, on the basis of the detailed description of the autoethnographic study, the results can be applied to new situations and outdoor adventure experiences as they unfold (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). The advantage of incorporating reversal theory into the present study was that it enabled psychological interpretation of the autoethnographic data. The theory's systematic theoretical framework and its concept of reversals between motivational states allowed the authors to provide psychological explanations of how and why changes in the participant's state of mind occurred with changing circumstances during the trek. There were some clear examples of motivational reversals that resulted in, sometimes sudden, changes in the autoethnographer's experience of different feelings. Identifying the possible causal factors for these motivational reversals allows future studies to start with a number of known focus areas, even if individual responses within each focus area may vary.

The current study has implications for outdoor educators and researchers. It suggests that setting realistic expectations for trekking participants and careful matching of challenges with group member capabilities may enhance motivational and emotional experiences. It also suggests that allowing some freedom and self-determination within the trek parameters, and avoiding highly prescribed itineraries or schedules, may further enhance some participants' experiences. As social interactions with other trekkers appeared to have both positive and negative effects on experience, educators and guides should also strive to carefully balance opportunities for group interactions with opportunities for individual experiences and solitude. Learning about other environments and cultures through direct interactions greatly enhanced motivation and experience in this study. Because these may be essential tools for enhancing appreciation and understanding of Latin cultures, it would appear critically important to ensure that outdoor education and adventure treks in Latin American countries are conducted by local guides that can appropriately facilitate these educational experiences. Maintaining an emphasis on professionalism and training for adventure trekking guides in these regions may further enhance the educational value of these activities. Each of these strategies may enhance participant experiences during adventure treks.

Researchers may also find value in the methodology and unique framework used in this study as an additional tool through which to prospectively investigate outdoor adventure experiences as they unfold. In contrast to quantitative retrospective measures that sometimes obscure nuanced phases of adventure experiences, critical autoethnography allows the researcher to record detailed experiences as they occur, which may enhance the depth of the data and illuminate complex

relationships. It may also allow researchers to code psychological states during the data collection process. In addition, the theoretical framework used in this study may provide a useful tool through which to understand adventure experiences and could be used in future outdoor studies to identify or predict psychological state patterns. Finally, the authors hope that the present research can make a small contribution to the literature on leisure and outdoor adventure in Latin American settings and possibly stimulate others to undertake research in outdoor adventure in these regions that have abundant opportunities for outdoor adventure and education.

Conclusion

North American, Australasian and European-based research tends to dominate the English language adventure literature. Nevertheless, the growing research base in Latin American tourism literature, which is already wide ranging, has a strong contributory role to play in providing an understanding of tourism experience. In applying a primarily European model (reversal theory) in a Latin American context, the present study contributes to the leisure and outdoor adventure literature in Latin American settings. This autoethnographic study also provides a useful understanding of an individual trekker's dynamic subjective experience in terms of affect, motivational states and emotions. Seen through the lens of reversal theory, researchers could track the trekker's multi-phasic adventure experience as she interacted socially with other trekkers and the local people, as well as her experience of connectedness and pleasure in the natural environment. Tracking her ongoing motivational dynamics indicated some negative, unpleasant emotional experience, but the overall picture was one of a primarily positive, pleasant emotional experience.

Note

1. All names are pseudonyms.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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