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Reconceptualising adventure tourism

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Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to assess the conceptualisations of adventure tourism offered in the literature, and to ascertain if they reflect contemporary adventure tourism. Definitions and conceptualisations of adventure tourism tend to be framed around three dichotomies: hard and soft; commercial and “original”; and home and away. Whilst these are still relevant today, new research directions are emerging focusing on more relational and reciprocal forms of adventure tourism. In this chapter, we explore three emerging areas of research. First, the interrelationships between the human and non-human worlds, namely active engagement with the natural environment. Second, the reciprocal nature of adventure tourism and enhanced subjective wellbeing. Third, the increasing desire to do good and give back, through philanthropic adventure travel, to charitable causes at home and in the destination.

Chapter learning outcomes

1. Assess current conceptualisations of adventure tourism

2. Examine emerging research directions to demonstrate the importance of continually reconceptualising adventure tourism
3. Become sensitive towards diversity in adventure tourism and attentive towards non-human voices in adventure
4. Appreciate the role of subjective wellbeing in adventure tourism and its reconceptualisation
5. Define adventure philanthropy and appreciate its increase in popularity

Introduction

What is adventure tourism really about? Shared images of adventure tourism often capture someone conquering a mountain top, rafting down a river, or visiting a remote village and engaging in cultural activities with the locals. Lately, this imaginary of “active doing” has been complemented and extended with products and services related to slowing down, for example, forest bathing (discussed in Chapter 14). The Covid-19 pandemic has also broadened our ideas of adventure tourism. For instance, sleeping in a tent in your garden, or geocaching in your neighbourhood, are now regarded as adventure activities (see Gaetano, 2023). Reflecting this wide-ranging view of adventure, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) (2020) suggests that this form of tourism comprises three elements: being in nature, doing physical activity, and engaging with culture. Individuals can be classified as adventure tourists if they participate in one or all of these three elements. Therefore, adventure tourism organisations should focus on delivering ‘specific types of experiences for travellers who are motivated by goals such as transformation, challenge and wellness’ (ATTA, 2020). Unlike conventional delineations of tourism (e.g., UNWTO, 2023), the definition adopted by this association does not consider travel distance from tourists’ home and time taken to reach the adventure destination. It therefore recognises that adventure tourism can take place “on your own doorstep”, a view which aligns with the concept of microadventures (Houge Mackenzie & Goodnow, 2021).

Even though the ATTA’s definition has been widely used in the research and practice of adventure tourism (e.g., Adventurati Outdoor, 2023; Business Finland, 2023; Pomfret et al., 2023), scholars acknowledge a need to understand more extensively the scope and dimensions of adventure tourism. For example, a recent review by Janowski et al. (2021) suggests that aside from the dimensions of natural

environment and physical activity, risk, danger, thrill, excitement, and challenge are at the core of adventure tourism. Sand and Gross (2019) emphasise the growing importance of health and wellbeing in adventure tourism. Furthermore, Janowski et al. (2021) claim that even though the ATTA endorses cultural experience as a key adventure tourism dimension, this is not fully reflected in academic research. Therefore, the aims of this chapter are to firstly outline some of the most commonly used definitions and conceptualisations of adventure tourism. Secondly, we introduce some new research directions in adventure tourism, and, thirdly, conclude why we need to continually conceptualise adventure tourism.

Current conceptualisations and definitions of adventure tourism

Definitions and conceptualisations of adventure tourism have primarily evolved from the fields of adventure recreation and adventure education (Varley & Taylor, 2013). Aside from tourism, adventure is also strongly connected with leisure studies, outdoor education, sociology, and consumer behaviour (Varley, 2006). There has been plentiful discussion on the scope and dimensions of adventure tourism since the 1990s (see e.g., Hall, 1992; Sung et al., 1997; Walle, 1997), and this topic continues to provoke considerable debate (see e.g., Janowski et al., 2021; Sand & Gross, 2019). One way to capture the differing perspectives of adventure tourism conceptualisations which feature in academic research is to categorise these into three dichotomies. These are 1. hard and soft, 2. commercial and “original”, and 3. home and away dimensions of adventure tourism (Rantala et al., 2018).

First, the dichotomy between hard and soft dimensions of adventure tourism has been addressed in many studies (see e.g., Buckley, 2012; Cater, 2013; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016). Within this dichotomy, soft adventure ‘refers to activities with a perceived risk but low levels of real risk, requiring minimal commitment and beginning skills’ (Hill, 1995, p. 63). Motives include escapism, experiencing new environments, self-discovery, novelty, excitement and socialising (Lipscombe, 1995; Pomfret, 2006). In contrast, hard adventure activities involve ‘high levels of risk, requiring intense commitment and advanced skills’ (Hill, 1995, p. 63). Hard adventure motives include risk and challenge (Lipscombe, 1995; Pomfret, 2006). Hard and soft dimensions of adventure tourism have also been distinguished by

referring to 'real' risks in hard adventures and 'perceived' risks in soft adventures (Williams & Soutar, 2005, p.250). See Chapters 15 and 16 for more detailed accounts of the role of risk in adventure tourism, and the risk management process.

Second, the dichotomy between commodified and "original" adventure tourism is prominent in academic studies. For instance, Buckley (2010) proposed that adventure tourism has become commodified from originally being a set of activities that only a minority of "hard core" individuals engaged in, to a form of mass tourism which almost anyone can participate in. Further reflecting this perspective, Varley (2006) constructed an adventure commodification continuum, which stretches from the realm of the original, "deep" adventures to the realm of highly saleable, "shallow" adventures. This continuum is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3. Here the dichotomy lies between "ideal-original" adventures and the "bulk" adventures made to be consumed.

Third, the dichotomy between home and away is something that is pertinent to any tourism study. For instance, Weber (2001) suggested that the study of adventure tourism should deal more clearly with the tourism aspects of adventure. Cater (2013) referred to adventure tourism as something different to everyday life, and Varley and Taylor (2013) discussed the inner journey related to adventure tourism. This third dichotomy is highly relevant to the current era of environmental crisis and climate change. Furthermore, recent conceptualisations such as microadventures or proximity tourism (Höckert et al., 2022) aim to challenge the notions of nearness and farness by emphasising the diverse scales of movement and different possibilities for the spatial ordering of tourism practices.

It should be noted that categorisations tend to build borders instead of highlighting connections. Hence, rather than these three dichotomies being clearly defined categories, we should view them as interconnected with overlapping dynamics. These dynamics have tended to focus on the production and consumption of adventure tourism, whereas tourism employees, host communities, non-human participants and, for example, philanthropy have often been given limited attention in previous conceptualisations. Therefore, in the following section we introduce some new research directions that complement the previous discussions on the

conceptualisation of adventure tourism, and illustrate why the three above described dichotomies are still relevant today.

New research directions in reconceptualising adventure tourism

Relational approaches to adventure tourism

It could be argued that even though the natural environment or our interaction with nature has been, and is, at the core of adventure tourism, nature itself has been regarded more as a resource rather than as something which would have agency within adventure. When we see nature as a resource, we conceive of it as a manageable entity, which can be managed in a sustainable way (Jóhannesson, 2019). However, in this current environmental crisis epoch, where we are experiencing mass extinction of species, climate change, increased pollution and overuse of resources, we should no longer perceive nature as a mere resource for adventure activities. Instead, we need to understand how inextricably intertwined humans and non-humans are and the implications of this strong connection. Relational approaches, which suggest that the world exists in a continuous state of “becoming”, adopt this viewpoint. Such approaches propose that humans and non-humans make their way in the world in unfolding relations with each other (Ingold, 2011; West et al., 2020). Relational approaches often enhance post-anthropocentric thinking – that is, thinking that is not human-centred – since they decentre the human as the “master of nature” and observe instead the agency of multiple other beings. They acknowledge the way that all earthly creatures are entangled with each other and how they live together (Valtonen et al., 2020).

Within tourism research, relational approaches were originally used in conceptualising the ordering of ‘non-human objects, systems, machines, bureaucratic processes, times, timetables, sites, photographs, tents, flows, desires, visitors, businesses, locals’ (Franklin, 2004, p. 284) and the constantly shifting networks of relationships in making tourism, for example by describing how cultural traditions, touristic commodification, modern mass production and small-scale entrepreneurship come together in food in tourist destinations (Ren, 2011; van Der Duim, 2007; van der Duim et al., 2017). Since then, tourism scholars have applied relational approaches to a range of adventure tourism contexts, for example by

discussing the role of weather in wilderness guiding work (Rantala et al., 2011); the intertwinedness of nature and culture in nature experiences (Lund, 2013); the healing agency of trekking (Olafsdottir, 2013); the materiality of camping (Rantala & Varley, 2019); the ethical relations enacted in mosquito-tourist encounters (Valtonen et al., 2020); and the agency of sled dogs in making tourism landscapes (Äijälä, 2021). Case study 1.1 provides an illustrative example of a relational approach using the Sleeping Outdoors campaign.

Acknowledging and addressing the entangled relations of humans and non-humans means that we do not see nature as separate. We do not view it as something humans go to visit and consume while having an adventure holiday, or as something they could fully control during their adventures (see Lund, 2013). Instead, the core idea of relationality - the intertwinedness of lives - opens up new possibilities for conceptualising adventure tourism. For example, relational approaches enable us to address issues related to safety, skills, ethics, responsibility, and animal rights in new ways, which is very much needed now that the environmental crisis is deepening.

For example, related to the pre-mentioned dichotomy between soft and hard adventures, Hanna et al. (2019) have applied the relational approach within outdoor adventure tourism in the context of pro-environmentalism and eco-psychology. They argue that 'much of the research concerning outdoor adventure activities in the leisure context has generally theorised "nature" as something to "conquer" or "overcome" by the participants' (p. 1356). Their findings demonstrate that the dominant notions of risk, excitement, and thrill are clearly central to outdoor adventure tourists' understandings of their experience and are the driving motivations for future engagement with adventure activities. However, Hanna and colleagues illustrate how these notions also enable reciprocal understanding and active resistance to the dominant discourse of conquering nature.

Both hard and soft adventure can lead to feelings of becoming part of nature and include elements of reciprocity. Thus, the wellbeing of the non-human world may become a central issue when our practical concerns with, and care for, the non-human world are made tangible in outdoor contexts (Rantala, 2019). This can happen, for example, through becoming ready to interrupt one's own learned ways of

doing things and being open towards different ways of being, doing and knowing with nature (Höckert, 2018). Or, by acknowledging how one cultivates care towards the equipment and other non-human beings involved in adventure. Furthermore, adventure and tourism should not be seen as escaping from everyday responsibilities, but rather as being anchored in the materialities and social responsibilities through concentrating on the 'micro-geographies', on the very intense moments of being-with (Olafsdottir, 2013, p. 228; Rantala & Varley, 2019). This means that rather than engaging in romantic ideas of the wild, the surrounding world with its materiality and beings is experienced and regarded as an active co-habitant (Olafsdottir, 2013).

In line with this, in her doctoral thesis Farkić (2018) combines adventure tourism research with hospitality studies and explores the commodification of nature on guided multi-day journeys in the outdoors. She examines, for example, the sensitivities – such as belonging, cosiness, sharing, intimacy or togetherness – that are constructed by engaging with the diverse accommodations, when preparing food together, or when handling technologies, such as GoPro cameras, kayaks, wetsuits, and waterproof clothes. The research applies a relational approach by focusing on the embodied experiences of the outdoors and on the entanglements of human bodies with human as well as non-human worlds. Farkić shows how the range of human and non-human beings and objects contribute to humans becoming comfortable through the engagement with diverse materialities (e.g. equipment mentioned above) as well as through their interactions with one another.

The relational approaches enable us to examine critically the capitalist tourism systems and practices inherent in the development of adventure tourism, both near and far. For example, Jukes and Reeves (2020) have challenged the human-centred gaze in the context of outdoor environmental education by exploring possibilities for prompting students to understand how human and non-human relationships currently influence and might shape the future of different places. They do this by engaging students in more-than-human storytelling, with an aim to illustrate how places become co-storytellers – and with an intention to expose the students to the messiness of relationality. They wish to show how a new understanding of cultural, political and environmental relations impacting place development can be created by

writing and drawing stories from, for example, a ski-tourism journey. In a similar vein, Rantala and Höckert (2024) explore possibilities to include non-human voices in place-making through storytelling, and show how slowing down and attuning to alternative rhythms and tempos of familiar places can mobilise activism and hope, and provide alternative perspectives for capitalist tourism development - such as highlighting justice instead of growth. They also warn that storytelling does not offer an easy solution. Certainly, finding creative possibilities to include non-human voices or relational perspectives do not provide straightforward alternatives for existing conceptualisations of adventure tourism since these tend to aim to understand and describe rather than categorise. However, they can help scholars become sensitive towards diversity when conducting research on adventure tourism and planning the future of adventure tourism.

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Case Study 1.1 Sleeping Outdoors

A master's thesis by Henna Nevala (2021) on the Sleeping Outdoors campaign illustrates well the possibilities of relational approaches in addressing the contemporary issues related to environmental crises and consumerism in the context of adventure tourism. The campaign is an annual, recreation-oriented initiative organised by Suomen Latu – The Outdoor Association of Finland. It aims to encourage and challenge people to sleep outdoors for one night in their desired location, in whichever way they prefer. This can entail sleeping in a national park, a campsite, or in one's own backyard in a tent, a hammock, or under the night sky (figure 1.1). The organisers especially want to support first-time campers since the aim of the campaign is to help people discover their preferred way to enjoy nature and make outdoor camping as accessible as possible for everyone.

According to Nevala (2021), the campaign contributes to the development of alternative tourism practices in several ways. It brings forth incommensurable 'commons' such as wellbeing, communality, and biodiversity, by forming an economic space where these commons can be shared, maintained, and created. The term commons refers to a wealth of valuable assets that belong to everyone (Walljasper, 2010; see also Nevala, 2021). Commons can be both material and immaterial assets that arise whenever a community decides to share and manage a

resource in a collective way with the emphasis on equitable access and use (Bollier, 2014, p. 11). These can include things like soil and minerals of public lands, clean air, sunlight, the atmosphere, water, fisheries, nature preserves as well as knowledge and cultural resources (Bollier, 2014; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Walljasper, 2010). Overall, the core idea of commons is that anyone can use them, as long as they are managed in a way that they will maintain themselves and offer equal benefits for people in the future (Walljasper, 2010).

Thus, the campaign illustrates how non-governmental organisations are altering economic structures of tourism via establishing reciprocal connections between people and nature in local communities, sharing alternative ideologies, teaching people about sustainable use of commons, as well as fostering alternative, low-threshold outdoor tourism practices. Their work is based on premises of care, cooperation and nature-appreciation and their pursuits show how treating humans and non-humans with respect and care supports their wellbeing. In addition, the campaign contributes to the rise of proximity tourism and microadventures as an example of alternative adventure practices, which support rethinking what adventure could entail in local contexts, while also shifting the focus from personal benefits to the wellbeing of others by strengthening, e.g., reciprocal ways of being and thinking. All in all, Nevala's study shows how seemingly marginalised actions can have profound effects.

<Figure 1.1 about here>

Figure 1.1 Original microadventure? Camping in one's own backyard in a tent.
Photograph by Outi Rantala.

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Subjective wellbeing and adventure tourism conceptualisations

Given the growing importance of wellbeing-related motives and benefits of adventure tourism referred to in the introduction (Sand & Gross, 2019) and in Case study 1.1., it is useful to outline the wellbeing concept here. The word "wellbeing" is commonly used in everyday society, particularly by health services, to refer to a

person's state of being healthy and happy, both mentally and physically ([Wellbeing People](#)). Wellbeing is also concerned with contributing to the community and maintaining a flourishing society where citizens are healthy, happy, engaged and capable (Marks & Sha, 2004). Scholars (e.g., Diener, 2006; Dodge et al., 2012; Ryff, 2014) propose various definitions of wellbeing yet they disagree on how it should be defined. This is most likely due to the complex nature of wellbeing and the plethora of other terms, such as happiness, quality of life, and life satisfaction, which are used interchangeably to describe this concept.

Subjective wellbeing is an umbrella term which describes different types of individual wellbeing, for instance psychological, emotional and social wellbeing (Sirgy, 2010). Diener and Suh (1997, p.200) suggest that subjective wellbeing comprises three elements: 'life satisfaction, pleasant affect, and unpleasant affect. Affect refers to pleasant and unpleasant moods and emotions, whereas life satisfaction refers to a cognitive sense of satisfaction with life.' Attention has also been given to the distinctive dimensions of subjective wellbeing (Dodge et al., 2012). These include positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment for a flourishing life (Seligman, 2011), and self-acceptance, positive functioning, autonomy and equilibrium (Linley & Joseph, 2004). Subjective wellbeing involves interactions between multifaceted elements, including psychological resources, coping styles to manage challenges, personality, personal circumstances and cognitive evaluations of life events (Ryff, 2014; Sirgy, 2010).

Adventure tourism researchers tend to examine subjective wellbeing as a set of activity participation motives and beneficial outcomes (e.g., Buckley, 2020; Pomfret, 2021), and, therefore, focus on the consumer. The increased scholarly interest in the role of adventure tourism in subjective wellbeing represents a move away from traditional research approaches, which only investigate aspects such as risk, conquering nature, and deviant personalities (Houge Mackenzie & Brymer, 2018), to exploring the 'holistic social nature of the [adventure tourism] experience' (Varley & Semple, 2015, p.77). A growing positive tourism movement has also prompted more interest in subjective wellbeing, alongside a departure from established recreation theories (Cheng et al., 2016), which argue that risk and danger are integral to adventure experiences (Priest & Gass, 2018).

While this chapter focuses on subjective wellbeing from a consumer perspective, Houge Mackenzie (Chapter 12) extends the discussion by providing a comprehensive overview of extant research (e.g., Brymer & Houge Mackenzie, 2015; Houge Mackenzie et al., 2021) on the role that adventure tourism plays in the psychological wellbeing of consumers, guides, adventure destinations and their host communities. Chapter 12 proposes key mechanisms underpinning the psychological wellbeing outcomes of adventure activity participation, and makes recommendations for future research and practice in this field. Both chapters serve to illustrate how subjective wellbeing is starting to gain traction as an integral element of adventure tourism conceptualisations (Houge Mackenzie & Hodge, 2020).

Notably, Janowski et al.'s (2021) conceptualisation of adventure tourism, referred to in the introduction, found that wellbeing was a recent consumer-based dimension which featured in existing research. Yet, although there were many positive effects of adventure tourism cited in the literature, participation could also negatively impact on individual wellbeing, e.g., over exposure to real risk, leading to injury or abject terror. This could lead to illbeing, which receives much less attention in adventure literature but it is an important consideration in conceptualising this form of tourism. Illbeing can be triggered by stressful events or circumstances (see Figure 1.2) and dissatisfaction with one's health. It involves degrees of negative affect, such as feeling nervous, lonely, or helpless, depressive symptoms, feelings of anger and anxiety, and somatic complaints (Diener, 2006). Janowski et al. (2021), therefore, concluded that the 'diverse range of adventure-related catalysts and deterrents for well-being thus reflect the multidimensional nature of adventure tourism' (p.7). This discussion reflects the three dichotomies in that adventure tourists potentially encounter feelings of illbeing and wellbeing before, during and after their activity experiences, whether they are participating in hard or soft adventure pursuits, commodified or original experiences, at home or away.

<Figure 1.2 here>

Figure 1.2. A Scuba diver experiencing illbeing. Photograph by Carl Cater.

The value of adventure tourism-related literature reviews in conceptualising adventure tourism

Extant systematic literature reviews which examine subjective wellbeing in the context of adventure (e.g., Boudreau et al., 2020; Pomfret, Sand & May, 2023) can be helpful in conceptualising adventure tourism from a wellbeing perspective.

Boudreau et al. (2020) define adventure recreation as

‘self-initiated nature-based physical activities that generate heightened bodily sensations (e.g., vestibular sensations arising from quick acceleration in varying dimensions of space) and require skill development to manage unique perceived and objective risks’ (p.2).

This definition includes, or at least hints at, elements of subjective wellbeing as it palpably reflects hedonic wellbeing, which involves short bursts of positive affect and momentary emotional states (Diener, 1984). Notably, this review examines adventure recreation flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), such as happiness and natural highs. Flow in an adventure context refers to an optimal state of happiness that participants enjoy when engaged in activities. It represents ‘the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p.4). Therefore, it is unsurprising that ‘heightened bodily sensations’ (Boudreau et al., 2020, p.2) feature in the adventure recreation definition. The authors found that the flow outcomes of adventure recreation participation facilitate numerous positive consequences, such as improvements in wellbeing, motivation, skills and performance. They conclude that there is a ‘positive relationship between happiness (a form of hedonic well-being) and flow in adventure recreation’ (p.10). This supports the inclusion of subjective wellbeing in reconceptualising adventure tourism.

Another systematic literature review (Pomfret et al., 2023) explored the interplay between adventure activity participation, and subjective wellbeing. The authors defined adventure as ‘participating in nature-based outdoor adventure tourism or recreation activities which may be challenging and may include perceived or real risk’ (p.2). Although this definition reflects a more traditional perspective of adventure, it suggests that challenge and risk are optional elements. Additionally, the literature search keywords adopt a broader view of adventure, and include wellbeing, wellness, optimal experience and friluftsliv (the Nordic concept of free-air-life (Gurholt, 2015)). The study established that much of the extant research does not specifically refer to subjective wellbeing in an adventure context. Instead, it alludes to

this concept when discussing the beneficial outcomes of adventure tourism or recreation participation. Figure 1.2. illustrates the five core subjective wellbeing themes and 16 subthemes of subjective wellbeing that appear in extant adventure-related research. The vertical lines underneath each metatheme and adjacent to each subtheme illustrate the most frequently cited themes within the reviewed literature, and the status of research in this field. Figure 1.2. shows that personal development (25%) is the most frequently cited core theme, followed by immersion and transformation (24%), physical and mental balance (22%), extraordinary experiences (18%) and community (12%). Although, to date, scholars have directed more attention towards core themes such as personal development, and specific subthemes such as individual identity, Figure 1.2. highlights the need to address underresearched areas in the future. For example, the immersion and transformation core theme, and its subtheme, human-nature, is particularly pertinent to our discussion around the reconceptualisation of adventure tourism, and reciprocity between humans and non-humans: ‘Natural environments facilitate our convergence with nature during activity engagement and we interact with it in real time using all our senses’ (Pomfret et al., 2023, p.7). It is the third least cited subtheme out of four within the immersion and transformation metatheme, palpably signalling the need for more research on this topic.

<Figure 1.3 here>

Figure 1.3: The subjective wellbeing metathemes and subthemes of outdoor adventure activity participation

Source: Pomfret et al. (2023)

While we are not suggesting here that adventure tourism is only concerned with subjective wellbeing, as it can lead to feelings of illbeing also, we propose that wellbeing should form an integral element of adventure tourism conceptualisations. Integrating subjective wellbeing into adventure tourism conceptualisations can help to develop ‘more robust, integrated models of adventure participation that can inform policy and practice’ (Houge Mackenzie & Hodge, 2020, p.4). Relatedly, this reflects the third dichotomy and the notion that consumers can enjoy adventure tourism in their home regions, in the form of microadventures and proximity tourism (Höckert et al., 2022), as well as away, in tourist destinations with adventure resources. Ideally,

therefore, tourists would participate in adventure activities both when at home and when away to continuously gain, maintain and enhance their subjective wellbeing. Researchers suggest this to be the case. For instance, Pomfret and Varley (2021) found that 'families embraced outdoor active lifestyles, regularly partaking in different activities at home' (p.501) and holidays 'provided opportunities to extend their hobbies through participating in their usual activities in different destinations' (p.501).

As noted earlier, some researchers do not specifically investigate subjective wellbeing benefits in relation to adventure tourism, but rather allude to these in their study findings. For instance, Gstaettner et al. (2018) conducted a systematic literature review on the interplay between risk and nature-based tourism and recreation. Although this research focused on how scholars conceptualised risk, it also explored the potential benefits of participating in risky nature-based pursuits. Findings revealed a broad range of intrinsic benefits, e.g., skill development, insight, self-reflection and self-actualisation, as well as extrinsic benefits, e.g., identity formation, being part of a group, and social status. Such benefits are labelled as beneficial wellbeing outcomes of adventure activity participation in other work (e.g., Pomfret et al., 2023). Therefore, exploring research which does not directly examine adventure tourism and subjective wellbeing also offers valuable insights into the inextricable links between the two concepts.

Another example is in the area of health-related research. Scholars (Britton et al., 2020) examined literature on the health benefits of blue space therapeutic interventions for facilitating or restoring psychological wellbeing and physical health. Although not specifically focused on adventure tourism, the reviewed studies include adventure activities such as canoeing, surfing and sailing. The authors note that the most frequently assessed indicators of wellbeing in extant research 'included self-esteem, self-efficacy, social confidence, resilience and other psychological indicators (e.g., stress, mood) using self report measures' (p.60). Furthermore, improved psycho-social wellbeing and mental health were the most commonly cited positive outcomes. This research therefore confirms the value of blue space water-based adventure activities for subjective wellbeing, and provides further evidence for the inclusion of wellbeing in emergent conceptualisations of adventure tourism.

Philanthropy through adventure tourism

Classic understandings of philanthropy refer to goodwill towards fellow humans (Novelli et al., 2016). In contrast, contemporary meanings of the term equate to helping humankind through donating money and time, and charitable gift-giving. The notion that one can “do good” through “giving back” whilst travelling has increased in popularity, especially through volunteering (Novelli et al., 2016), and has given rise to the wider term of travel philanthropy (Honey, 2011). Travel philanthropy is defined as donating money, in-kind resources (office equipment, flights, accommodation) or time (mentoring or volunteering), occasioned by or facilitated by travel (Goodwin et al., 2009). Both individual tourists and tourism businesses can be travel philanthropists and three distinct practices are commonplace (Goodwin et al., 2009):

1. *Monetary donations* by travellers (either directly or via an intermediary such as a tour operator) and travel companies where the charitable donation is secondary to the primary purpose (travel/holidaymaking and the commercial operation of travel businesses). For example, after travelling to locations affected by poverty or major health and environmental problems, a tourist might be inspired to sponsor a school place or assist a community or species in danger of extinction (Novelli, 2015; Novelli et al., 2016).
2. *Corporate and/or personal charity fundraising*. For example, challenges where travel is primarily motivated by the intention to raise funds for a charitable cause in their home country or in a destination.
3. *Volunteering* abroad or away from home, such as spending time on a conservation project whilst on holiday.

In each case, agents of travel philanthropy devote their skills, professional expertise and/or financial resources to individual community projects and/or organisations to foster environmental stewardship, development solutions, and sustainable social change (Goodwin et al., 2009; Honey, 2011; Novelli et al., 2016).

Adventure tourism as a vehicle for philanthropy is, for the most part, absent in scholarly literature. Adventure philanthropy is defined as combining altruism and humanitarianism with adventure travel (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Therefore, whilst it

could incorporate all three travel philanthropy practices, the limited academic literature has focused on the traveller's personal charity fundraising. For example, when arguing that adventure travel is part of broader trends in philanthropy, scholars (Coghlan & Filo, 2013; Goodwin et al., 2009; Rickly & Clouser, 2019) refer to the employment of alternative means of fund-raising, specifically charity challenges conducted by individual participants (see Box 1.2)

<box begins>

Case Study 1.2: Charity challenges

Charity challenges involve individuals partnering with charitable organisations to set travel goals and raise funds for specific causes in the originating market or destination. For example, trekking and paddling in the Amazon to raise funds for clean water in destinations, trekking to Everest Base Camp to support children's education or cycling around Sri Lanka to raise funds for homelessness in the originating market (Charity Challenge, 2023). The challenge duration is typically 1-14 days, it usually takes place in a tourist destination, although many participate in challenges close to home such as the Three Peaks Challenge in the UK (dichotomy 3), and they are usually commercially organised by an adventure tour operator (dichotomy 2). Whilst the challenges are of varying difficulty, for the most part, they are based on soft activities, such as trekking and cycling, they require basic skills and are low in risk. However, when done over consecutive days, they become more demanding and require commitment (dichotomy 1). Therefore, this form of adventure philanthropy exemplifies all three dichotomies explained earlier in the chapter.

Charity challenges may be specific to a charity, designed bespoke for a group of people to raise money for a chosen charity, or an open challenge where each of the participants is raising money for different causes (Goodwin et al., 2009). This can take the form of an event, whereby 'the charity promotes a pre scheduled event, chooses the amount of adrenaline, or creates a challenge which fits its charitable purposes' (p.66).

<box ends>

There are similarities between the adventure philanthropy practice of charity challenges and fitness philanthropy, which is defined as using sports events to raise money for, and awareness of health and social problems (Palmer, 2016; Palmer & Dwyer, 2020). Indeed, for some time now, charitable organisations have turned to sport-based events to engage communities and attract monetary donations (Ruperto

& Kerr, 2009), whereas the charity challenge is a relatively new phenomenon by comparison. The inclusion of more adventurous activities in the examples of sports-based events provided by Palmer and Dwyer (2020), such as epic hikes and long bike rides, implies there is convergence between these two forms of philanthropy. However, the exclusion of adventure travel and the inclusion of and focus on traditional sports such as swimming, fun runs, and multi-sport challenges highlights divergence. Like adventure philanthropy, fitness philanthropy is also experiencing a paucity of scholarly interest, despite its emergence as a social or sociological phenomenon (Palmer, 2016; Palmer & Dwyer, 2020).

This lack of academic interest is perhaps neglectful as demand for adventure philanthropy is buoyant, therefore presenting good business opportunities for tour operators, and it offers charities an additional fundraising strategy (Goodwin et al., 2009). Correspondingly, we know little about the negative impacts of adventure philanthropy, and its sustainability has been questioned. For example, travel philanthropy tends to be reactive, short-term, and often incidental charitable contributions, and relies on individuals who are constantly seeking new experiences (Novelli et al., 2016). Further, it can be inequitable, with specific geographic locations benefiting more than others from donations and increased tourism, which may, in turn, lead to an overreliance on the financial and human resources of foreign visitors (*ibid*). Major charity challenge events can also attract large numbers of participants and can result in negative environmental and social impacts (Goodwin et al., 2009). Therefore, there is significant scope for research in this emerging strand of adventure tourism. Furthermore, its increasing popularity implies that it has an important role to play in reconceptualising adventure tourism.

Adventure philanthropic motivations

Knowledge on adventure philanthropic motivations is largely limited to those participating in charity challenges, as this is where the scant literature lies. What is noticeable is that the charitable cause and the challenge are not independent of one another, but rather work together in forming a mutually reinforced motivation (Palmer & Dwyer, 2020). For example, the challenge is used as a motivation to get fit, yet the charity cause itself is used as a motivation to complete the physical task. Bunds et al. (2016) coined this embodied philanthropy. The body's activities become a means of raising money (*ibid*) and the challenge an act of solidarity with those who are in need (Rickly & Clouser, 2019). Therefore, like other humanitarians, adventure

philanthropists are motivated by a sense of responsibility, that they can personally make a difference and implore others to do the same (Rickly & Clouser, 2019).

Philanthropic motivations related to doing good and giving back are missing in conceptualisations of adventure tourism, probably due to its scholarly neglect, yet adventure philanthropy can lead to enhanced psychological wellbeing (Coghlan, 2015). Improving mental health whilst on an adventure holiday is now almost as important as improving physical fitness (Worthington, 2022), therefore, the inclusion of wellbeing in contemporary adventure tourism conceptualisations (see Janowski et al., 2021) is paramount. We would further argue for the inclusion of adventure philanthropy in emergent conceptualisations, as it provides an avenue to meet the growing demand to do good and give back whilst on holiday and at home, as discussed later in this chapter. Finally, and undeniably, adventure philanthropy often presents a travel opportunity of a life-time (Coghlan, 2015; Goodwin et al., 2009).

The commodification of adventure philanthropy

Drawing on Debord's (2009) theory of the society of the spectacle, which argues that commodification has transformed social life from *being*, to *having*, to *appearing*, Rickly and Clouser (2019) argue that the production of spectacle, and therefore commodification, is necessary in adventure philanthropy. To garner public attention, spread awareness, and raise funds, adventure philanthropists must use social media to create spectacle and reproduce the spectacular images that inspired their participation in the trip. This then turns attention away from aid recipients towards the personal journey of the adventurer, thereby commodifying the event. Utilising alternative means of travel in the challenge is interpreted as liberating and transgressive, thus setting the individual apart from the crowd of other humanitarians, and initiates an adventure story that enhances self-image and expression of values. Arrival at the destination is the culmination of the spectacle event, and the charity and adventurer implore the local resident and aid recipient to partake in the spectacle and to be a "guest" in their humanitarian performance. Thus, the recipients' poverty is commodified. This normalises inequality and reproduces the status quo, raising questions as to the effectiveness and the results of adventure philanthropy as a means of humanitarian tourism. They argue that such questions are relevant to stakeholders such as tourists/participants, audiences (e.g., those following the participant's challenge on social media or who has sponsored them),

recipient communities, corporate sponsors, and humanitarian organisations (i.e., the charities that are benefiting).

Through the application of the society of the spectacle theory, Rickley and Clouser (2019) exemplify the second dichotomy which we found in adventure tourism conceptualisations. By participating in a saleable and shallow (Varley, 2006) commercially organised adventure challenge, the participants are consuming the experience. Yet, to achieve their philanthropic intentions, they must further commodify their experience, as well as the aid recipients' plight. A more genuinely altruistic example of doing good through adventure might be found in the example of TYF in case study 3.1.

Finding demand in a crowded philanthropy marketplace

Nevertheless, market research shows that doing good and giving back is becoming increasingly important in everyday life and in people's holiday decisions. For example, in 2020, 62% of people in the UK gave to charity via donation or sponsorship (Charities Aid Foundation Report, 2021). Relatedly, preliminary desk research has found at least 20 companies in the UK that either specialise in or offer bespoke charity challenges trips, which are funded through sponsorship to raise funds for charity. This has, however, resulted in a crowded marketplace with many charities competing for the public's charitable interests and limited philanthropic spending. This is more acute when economies are stagnant or shrinking and consumer spending is constrained (Goodwin et al., 2009).

To attract philanthropic spending, charities must develop close relationships with philanthropists. Philanthropists, including travel philanthropists, want to see the impact and results of their charitable support to ensure their funds are invested well (Goodwin et al., 2009). This accountability and transparency are also demanded in the philanthropy of travel companies. Consumers are increasingly seeking ethically minded travel operators who make a difference to the communities in which they serve, as consumers look to give back through the travel products they buy and activities they take part in (Bryans, 2022). Further, the impact of the rising cost of living and consumers' preference for quality over the sustainability of a holiday means that it falls on operators to implement a range of sustainable practices, which include philanthropy, on tourists' behalf (Alexander, 2023). Therefore, it would seem now, more than ever, a tour operator's travel philanthropy presents a business

opportunity to gain greater market share and it strengthens its inclusion of contemporary conceptualisations of adventure tourism.

Further, despite the crowded charity marketplace, the desire for volunteering is rising amongst younger travellers (16-24 years olds) as many view it as an opportunity to become well-rounded global citizens (Alexander, 2023). Therefore, travel brands which appeal to the philanthropic consumer by providing experiences that combine volunteering with other holiday activities could access latent demand. Younger travellers are also increasingly interested in adventure holidays that enable them to achieve a personal challenge, make iconic journeys or expeditions, and spend time in the natural environment for its therapeutic value and to conserve and protect it. Adventure philanthropy offers this and operators that can leverage these motivations and activate philanthropic interests, could access further latent demand.

Conclusion – reconceptualising adventure tourism

It could be due to the multiple crises that we have been facing in recent years, including the ecological calamity, pandemics, and political instability, that the focus on adventure tourism research seems to be shifting towards relational and reciprocal approaches and themes. Until recently, emphasis within adventure tourism research has been on discussing the qualitative differences between hard and soft activities, commodified and “original” experiences and the role of tourism in adventure. Lately, the impacts of engaging in adventure have gained more space in these discussions. Hence, in future we need to more firmly acknowledge the intertwinedness of adventure tourism with the surrounding human and non-human worlds. For instance, we need to understand better the reciprocal nature of adventure tourism’s wellbeing impacts. We should facilitate the positive tourism movement, which supports the notion of adventure tourism for wellbeing. We need to comprehend the valuable contribution that adventure tourism makes to individual, community, societal and environmental wellbeing. For instance, previous research (Kaplan, 2001; Kuo & Sullivan, 2001; Maller, 2009) has shown that spending time in nature, e.g., increases self-esteem and mood, reduces anger, and improves general psychological wellbeing, with positive effects on emotions and behaviour. Despite these wellbeing benefits, we also need to acknowledge that adventure tourism can trigger feelings of illbeing. In some cases, negative emotions are integral to the adventure experience, particularly when there is an element of challenge within the activity. In other cases, they are unwanted and result in feelings of fear, despondency and an unenjoyable experience.

These impacts are not based on a one-dimensional relationship with nature, but rather they require active engagement with the natural environment. The notion of reciprocity draws attention to interpersonal relations between the self and the other and helps us to reflect on our responsibilities and openness towards the other (Viken et al., 2021). While the idea of reciprocity can be understood as the mutual exchange of gifts, Viken et al. (2021) approach it as a more fundamental care relationship, where both hosts and guests care for each other's wellbeing. Thus, we are only starting to understand the relationships of, for instance, the human body and mind with diverse non-human species such as microbes, plants and fungi. A step further is to also comprehend the impacts of human engagement on non-human species, and how mutual care should form the basis of all our relations (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017).

As discussed in this chapter, the environmental crisis requires us to care for the surrounding natural environment when experiencing and producing adventure tourism. Furthermore, increasing urbanisation and the hecticness of everyday life have underlined the need to care for oneself, and resulted in rising interest and awareness of the wellbeing impacts of adventure tourism on oneself. Recently, new themes such as philanthropy have pointed out the willingness to care for other human beings while engaging in adventure tourism. Indeed, adventure tourism can enable us to ethically engage with the culture and materiality of the destination or community, which furthermore offers potential to transform the habituated ways of practising adventure tourism from within (Ren & Rantala, 2022). The ethical engagement is based on increased sensitivity to one's surroundings, be it the non-human world, one's own ordinary life, other human-beings, or the inclusion of all genders in adventure tourism (Hall & Brown, 2022).

Review questions

1. Select one of the new research directions themes presented within this chapter: 1. Relational approaches to adventure tourism; 2. Subjective wellbeing and adventure tourism conceptualisations; 3. Philanthropy through adventure tourism. Design a table which includes examples of adventure tourism organisations that promote activity experiences and holidays on this theme. What can you conclude about how this theme is represented by the adventure tourism industry?

2. Reflect on how you take into account the environmental crisis when practising, studying or researching adventure tourism? How do you care for the non-human environment when practising, studying or researching adventure tourism?
3. Think about an adventure tourism experience that you have enjoyed, either home or away. What subjective wellbeing benefits did you experience both during and after taking part in this activity? Did you experience any illbeing effects? If so, would you consider these to be an important part of your adventure experience?
4. Attention has largely been given to adventure tourists as travel philanthropists, but how can adventure tourism businesses be travel philanthropists? Conduct desk-research and provide examples.

Further reading

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