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# New Trends in Adventure Tourism: A Lesson from 6th International Adventure Conference, 30 January- 2 February 2018, Segovia, Spain

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## Abstract

*This article tries to assess new trends in adventure tourism with the review of 6th international adventure conference-2018 organized by Adventure Tourism Research Association (ATRA). For the review, the 'book of abstracts' which includes 41 abstracts of papers is studied and analyzed to come up with the findings and gaps in the studies. The study found some new trends and ideas in adventure tourism related to adventure activities, adventure challenges and adventure travelers' motivation. Further, the article identifies gaps in the conference papers and suggest applicable research areas for extending and developing the subject area in such future events.*

## Introduction

Adventure tourism is a unique segment of tourism industry which is experience-based and related to adventure or risk. The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA, 2013) defines adventure tourism as a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environment, and cultural immersion. It entails that an adventure activity is distinct from other tourism activities. Walle (1997) stated that the distinction between adventure activities and other recreational tourism activities rely on the manner of accomplishing it and the emotions

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that the person experiences while performing it. According to him "Adventurous quests rely on thrilling the person through risk taking."

Adventure tourism is one of the young but growing segment of tourism. Its significance lies in attracting high value customers who are willing to pay a premium for 'extraordinary experience'. In addition, adventure tourism is attracting attention for its emphasis on rural areas, local culture, and because it can often be developed within existing infrastructure (UNWTO, 2014). So, the development and management of adventure tourism is crucial for the growth of industry as well as a nation. There is increased demand as well as supply of adventure tourism. In emerging and developing markets, the growth of the sector is attractive with the increase of disposable income in that markets. Chezch, Israel, Poland, Korea Republic, Chile, Romania etc. are the new emerging markets for adventure tourism. Similarly, the use of information sources and technologies helped to access the destination and adventure activities easily. On the other hand, there is growth in the supply of adventure tourism with the development of trained and professional adventure providers and the brand identity focused marketing of the destinations. It is a niche market but has good opportunities to develop and expand.

This article aims to assess new trends in adventure tourism with the review of 6th International Adventure Conference (30 January- 2 February 2018), Segovia, Spain. In addition, new avenues to be considered in adventure tourism will be explored. So, the study will have two contributions: to find out new trends in adventure tourism which can be a lesson for the stakeholders for the growth of the industry; and to suggest the forum for the consideration of fulfilling the gaps in adventure tourism research when conducting such events in future.

### Adventure tourism

Humans have been engaging in adventurous travel for hundreds of years via exploration by the likes of Marco Polo, Captain James Cook, and Sir Ernest Shackleton, who had primarily scientific, geographic, or colonial motives. However, commercial adventure travel is a relatively new phenomenon, in which travelers hire a professional guide to provide a range of technical support and equipment, as well as culture and nature interpretation (UNWTO, 2014). Adventure tourism definitions vary from authors to authors. It is defined as 'thrilled and perhaps frightened but not actually endangered' (Cater, 2006); 'travel to unusual, exotic and remote wilderness destinations' (Kane & Tucker, 2004; Millington, Locke, & Locke, 2001); 'quest for excitement' (Standeven, 1999); 'any number of leisure pursuits which provide exposure to physical danger (Meier, 1978).

Adventure travel may include any of the following 34 activities: joining an archeological expedition; attending local festival/fairs; backpacking; bird watching;

camping, caving; climbing; taking a cruise; participating in cultural, educational or environmentally sustainable activities; fishing/fly-fishing; getting to know the locals; hiking; horseback riding; hunting, kayaking; whitewater rafting; learning a new language; orienteering; joining a research expedition or safari; sailing, scuba diving; snorkeling; skiing and snowboarding; surfing; trekking; walking; visiting friends and family; visiting a historical site; and participating in a volunteer tourism program (ATDI, 2016). Those activities can be divided into two broad categories: soft adventure and hard adventure. Since the risk is associated with adventure tourism, the extend of perceived or physical risk is studied to analyze whether an adventure activity is hard or soft adventure. Bhattacharya (2013) stated, for soft adventure, perceptual risk is there but physical risk is less but in case of hard adventure tourism, the perceptual as well as the physical risk both are high. However, according to UNWTO (2014), the easiest way to identify an adventure trip as hard or soft adventure is by its primary activity. It further said adventure will always be a subjective term for travelers, because it is related to one's individual experience. Adventure to one traveler may seem mundane to another.

### History of international adventure conference

International Adventure Conference is organized annually by Adventure Tourism Research Association (ATRA). ATRA is a consequence of the relationships and consensus built during the first two adventure conferences in Scotland - in 2012 and 2013. It aims to create a forum for the creation and dissemination of research into adventure tourism. ATRA has previously organized conferences in Scotland, Norway, England and Ireland with participants from 30 more countries over the years. Previous proceedings of conference covered many areas of adventure tourism.

### 6th International Adventure Conference-2018, Segovia, Spain

The conference included 41 papers along with 3 keynote speakers and 1 after-dinner speaker. The conference tried to answer the questions such as how does the changing climate impact on our engagement with 'the great outdoors?' what can the role of adventure tourism and outdoor education play in addressing these areas of change? What does 'the great outdoor' means for these different peoples living under shifting climates? (Book of Abstracts, 2018) and so on. I have included the following areas in adventure tourism covered in the 'book of abstracts' which is presented later in the finding section:

- Adventure Management/Development: Adventure tourism is a growing field in tourism. For its development and management, all the stakeholders engaged need to focus on issues by identifying the challenges and developing strategies. There should be a good enabling environment which encompasses many interrelated conditions that affect the success of sustainable and responsible adventure tourism. Those conditions are sound policies, tourism

infrastructure, innovative marketing, training and so on. UNWTO (2014) suggests adventure companies need to be encouraged to work across three major areas: strategy, operations and marketing.

• Consumer behavior or motivation: Consumer behavior or motivation plays a central role to understand the travel behavior and decision- making process while travelling. Travelers' behaviors such as choice of adventure activities or destination, repeat visitation and intention to recommend etc. are highly based on their satisfaction of the activity or destination. Specifically, tourist satisfaction is described as how well a destination fulfilled a tourist's specific needs (Meng et al., 2008), and motivation has been acknowledged as one of the antecedents to satisfaction (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

• Technology: Technology adaptation in adventure tourism helps to reduce costs, enhance operational efficiency and most importantly to improve service quality and customer experience (Kim & Ham, 2007; Singh, Kim, & Huh, 2006; Winata & Mia, 2005). Technology has not only impacted traveler behavior in each phase of the buying process but also the manners in which adventure companies and destinations position and market their products (UNWTO, 2014). Similarly, the internet and online marketing has intrinsic impacts on the adventure tourism. For instance, travelers get access to a wide range of information. Meantime, technology allows travelers to get customized services; businesses to reach to wider market.

• Adventure Challenges: Adventure tourism safety has received attention and the risks associated with adventure activities are very high (Bentley, Page & Macky, 2007). With a series of widely publicized incidents in recent years, risk management has become a major issue for organizations involved in all areas of adventure tourism- including adventure sports centres, specialist tour operators and trekking companies (Bentley, 2005; Bentley et al., 2007; Smartt and Chalmers, 2009). Another challenge in adventure tourism is for its future. For instance, challenges such as carrying capacities, environmental fragility and limitations and climate change (UNWTO, 2014).

**Methodology**

In this article, the 'book of abstract' from the sixth international adventure conference is reviewed. It includes altogether 45 contributions comprising 3 keynotes, 1 after-dinner speech and 41 abstracts of studies. The study covers only the 41 abstracts of studies since they are the research studies contributed by the participants for the conference.

Foremost, abstracts' content analysis was performed to find out the focused subject or theme of the adventure tourism. Thereafter, studies were identified

individually whether related to 'development or management' or 'technology' or 'consumer behavior or motivation' or adventure challenges'. These areas along with 'adventure activities' were assessed to find out the types of activities. In addition to this, abstracts/studies were classified based on the country of study location. By the analysis of findings, I came to pinpoint some of the new trends in the adventure tourism as covered in 6th international adventure conference, 2018, Segovia, Spain. For the methodology, the data were first coded and classified using table. Thereafter, simple quantitative tool frequency distribution was used, and the resulted figures are plotted in the tables, bar charts and pie chart.

### Analysis and findings

I have classified the identified studies by the focused area of study, country of study location, and types of adventure activities to assess new trends and ideas in adventure tourism. The new trends are discussed in the discussion section later.

### Focused area of the abstracts/studies

The figure above presents the distribution of abstracts/studies by the focused subject area. It can be seen that 'consumer behavior or motivation' is the most focused area, being mentioned in 41.46 % of the studies' abstract (i.e. 17 out of 41 selected abstracts), while the second is 'development or management' (36.59%, 15 out of 41). However, technology and adventure challenges area of adventure tourism receive less attention. Some of the studies' abstract showed a combination of more than one subject area, comprising 5 out of 41 abstracts.

### Adventure activities

| S. N. | Adventure Activities | Type |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Bird watching | Soft |
| 2 | Hiking/trekking/walking tours | Mixed |
| 3 | Cultural activities | Soft |
| 4 | Safaris (salmon safari/snow mobile safari) | Soft |
| 5 | Kayaking (sea/white water) | Soft |
| 6 | Horse riding | Soft |
| 7 | Cycling | Mixed |
| 8 | Fishing/whale watching | Soft |
| 9 | Climbing (rock/mountain/ice) | Hard |
| 10 | Caving (ice) | Hard |
| 11 | Canoeing | Soft |
| 12 | Diving (scuba) | Soft |

| S. N. | Adventure Activities | Type |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | Snorkeling | Soft |
| 14 | Skiing/ snowboarding | Soft |
| 15 | Foresting | Soft |
| 16 | Surfing | Soft |
| 17 | Educational programs (workshops/learning programs) | soft |

In the table above, 17 different adventure activities are mentioned which were included in the 'book of abstracts' as identified in 20 abstracts/studies out of 41 abstracts/studies. It needs to be noted that 21 studies did not mentioned the adventure activities; these were focused elsewhere. Subsequently, these different adventure activities are categorized by the types such as 'soft' or 'hard' adventure. Some of the activities are categorized as 'mixed' as these include both 'soft' and 'hard' type of adventure. As shown in the pic chart, soft adventure activities account 76% of the activities mentioned in the 'book of abstracts'. On the other hand, hard adventure activities account 12% of the activities. Similarly, mixed types of activities also represent 12% of the studies.

### Country of study location

The figure above shows the distribution of articles based on the country of study location. Out of 41 studies, Spain was the most common study location, included with 7 studies. Norway, Portugal and UK were the study location for 5, 4 and 4 studies, respectively. Each one of the countries such as New Zealand, Germany, USA, South Africa, Canada, Tanzania, Iceland and Ireland was studied in each of a study. However, two studies were based on more than a country. A greater number of abstracts i.e. 11 did not include the country of study location.

### Discussion and implications

New trends in *'consumer behavior or motivation'* covered in studies related to the 'role of shelf', 'shelf identity', 'learning' which are new motivation for why travelers intend to go for adventure tourism. Travelers want to discover themselves with adventure. At the same time their learning in such contexts has encouraged them towards adventurous activities. Understanding their motivation should be a primary objective of adventure providers. When it comes to *'technology'*, today consumer decision making processes are highly influenced by digital technologies and other information sources. Similarly, many new tools and technologies are used to facilitate the adventure travelers. Spanish tourism companies used MIDE system, a system including four aspects: environment, itinerary, movement and effort which is useful when conducting the risk management planning for a route proposal and helps to realize an objective valuation of the difficulty of a route. In another study, for the

people who cannot move by themselves (physically challenged), the concept of 'Joelette' and 'directional bar'-two articulated and facilitated technologies- is stated which facilitates them to access to the natural environment with the support from travel guides. A study stated a new data collection method supported by technology which can be a useful methodology for researchers. Data from text messages or SMS as a near synchronous method was used in a study together with an interactionist approach through supplementary mobile telephone conversations, to understand the lived experiences of participants.

There were some new trends related to *'adventure challenges'* as well. A study discussed the power relations between inbound and outbound adventure operators and partners. It is important to have balanced power relations which reinforces the effect of partner irreplaceability on the acquiescence of inbound operators and subsequently on conflict. A less focused subject elsewhere about the constraints on women's participation in mountaineering tourism was studied which showed there are four dimensional constraints such as intra-personal, inter-personal, structural and family constraint. Those three new constraints along with family constraint are important to understand. Some papers raised the issue of adventure accidents and hazards as well as climate change impact on glacier tourism and others. These are the top and burning challenges in adventure tourism today. Similarly, in *'management or development of adventure tourism'*, some new trends were stated. Musical games in nature, bike-ball, indoor climbing learning for outdoor education, alternative tourism, micro-adventure, employer-university liaisons for the growth of adventure tourism etc. have opened the door to expand and explore the adventure tourism further. In addition, new *adventure activities* such as salmon safari, whale watching, workshops or indoor learning activities for outdoor adventure, foresting etc. were included. The ancient concept of foresting is another new idea which we can develop relating it to the health.

### Research Gaps and Potential Research Areas

A considerable number of studies in the 'book of abstracts' focuses on the 'consumer behavior or motivation' and 'development or management of adventure tourism' whereas 'technology' and 'adventure challenges' have given less attention. Nonetheless, these are equally important in adventure tourism. The paper also finds that the country of study location was not well-balanced. The dominant presentation of European countries and a non-significant presentation of rest of the continents cannot provide an overview of world's adventure tourism. The major adventure destinations such as Australia, Nepal, Israel, Korea Republic and many more in Asian continents are not included in the conference which is another major gap. In other words, almost developed countries are studied whereas developing countries are not given an attention. The emerging adventure tourism destinations and market growth comes from the developing countries in these days.

Based on the gaps present in the studies, I have recommended some potential research areas for further research in adventure tourism. The first potential area relates to the emphasis on technologies in adventure tourism. The tourism sector is one of the sectors most impacted by the Internet. The Internet and the development of online portals have drastically changed the landscape of mass tourism; however, the impact to the adventure tourism sector is more on the demand side than the supply side. Consumers are empowered through access to a wide range of information and tools, including a massive and ever-growing number of consumer-generated reviews (UNWTO, 2014). The application of technologies and innovation could widen up the scope of adventure tourism. There could be many new uses and advantages of technologies in adventure tourism. The researchers are needed to assess whether there are opportunities to adopt innovation and technology in the supply side too.

The second potential area for future research is the consideration of adventure challenges. The challenge is for the tourism sector to use its best efforts to reduce the negative impacts of tourism, while safeguarding and/or enhancing local environments, biodiversity, and culture (UNWTO, 2014). Similarly, safety standards and issues are important in adventure tourism as it is associated with risks. Several studies have shown that safety is an important consideration when people undertake adventure activities (Carr, 2002; Hall & Mcarthur, 1994). Carr (2002) suggested that most international tourists are giving considerable importance to safety, as they are seeking guided mountaineering experiences, which means they are seeking the safest wilderness experience possible.

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