

Adventure Tourism Study: Implications for Nepal

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Abstract



This study has assessed the definitions, historical development and scope of adventure tourism globally and its implications for Nepal. It is based on the secondary literature review and analysis that refers to some of the imminent text books and reports. Further, it has focused on the economic prospects associated with the adventure tourism activities and its benefits to the destination and nation. The study has suggested some of the essential pre-requisites that are needed to be maintained for the establishment of Nepal as a destination of adventure tourism at a high ranking spot in the developing world.

Keywords: Adventure, tourism, economy, tourists, travel

Introduction

In the growing arena of niche tourism, when people want to experience new and different things which are thrilling and yet exhilarating, adventure tourism is an exponentially growing sector worldwide (WTO, 2014) and it is a segment that is highly valued in the international tourism economy sector (McKay, 2014). Also titled as the "new tourism cash-cow", adventure tourism has evolved to be one of the fastest growing sectors across the globe, attracting high valued customers, supporting local economies and promoting the environment (Global Data, 2018). Hence, the scope and opportunities of adventure tourism as a potential business and tourism promoting activities are wide ranging in the context of Nepal. The history of starting adventure tourism activities is no older than six decades. Now, it is imperative and worthwhile to also note about the scope and opportunities of adventure tourism from an economic point of view with a futuristic lens.

Defining adventure tourism

Adventure tourism is defined as travel outside a person's normal environment for more than 24 hours and not more than one consecutive year (Adventure Travel Development Index Report, 2010). The Adventure Travel Trade Association

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(ATTA) defines adventure tourism as a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environment, and cultural immersion (WTO, 2014). According to Millington, Locke and Locke (2001), adventure travel is a leisure activity that takes place in an unusual, exotic, remote or wilderness destination. It tends to be associated with high levels of activity by the participant, most of it outdoors. Previously, Sung Morisson and Leary (1997) have defined adventure tourism as the sum of phenomena and relationships arising from the interactions of adventure touristic activities with the natural environment away from the participant's usual place of residence area and containing elements of risk, the outcome is influenced by the participation, setting and the organizer of the tourist's experience. From these specific definitions, it can be understood that adventure tourism is a special form of tourism and it requires a natural setting that also includes factors of risk and also physical actions.

Further, in the year 2003, a group of scholars had made an early attempt to deviate from the conventional notion of adventure tourism that was accepted by many researchers, scholars, academicians and tourism practitioners globally. Therefore, in terms of elaborating on the concept of adventure tourism, Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie and Pomfret (2003) have highlighted that adventure tourism involves travel and leisure activities that are contracted with the hope that they will produce a rewarding adventure experience. It will height the nature and involve a range of emotions and excitement. It will entail intellectual, spiritual, physical or emotional risks and challenges. Both adventure and tourism have been reflected in Figure 1 Swarbrooke et al. (2003) have put forward the newer classifications of adventure tourism elements, such as, artificial environments, urban exploration, charity challenges, conservation expeditions, hedonistic tourism, spiritual

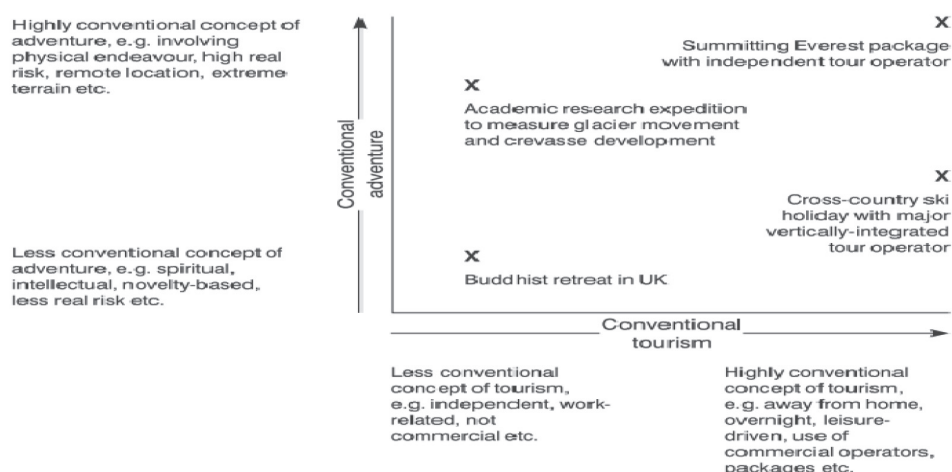


Figure 1: Positioning adventure tourism products in relation to their perceived conventionality (Source: Swarbrooke et al., 2003).

enlightenment, virtual reality, sex tourism, round the world travel.

New definitions of adventure tourism

Viren and Murray (2017) have introduced a new concept of defining adventure tourism from an activity and the traveler's perspectives. The graphic below demonstrates the new definition of adventure tourism derived as a result of the recent research by Viren and Murray (2017).



Figure 2: Essential Elements and Travel Experience as Components of an Effective Adventure Trip (Source: Viren and Murray, 2017)

On the left, the components of an adventure trip from the provider perspective are elaborated: nature, culture, and activity, with experience at the core. For adventure travel providers, recognizing how the individual elements come together to deliver an overall experience underscores the importance of considering the components of a trip as individual ingredients, and of staying attuned to how they all fit together. This might mean considering carefully the sequencing of activities, the duration, and the time given for talking about or reflecting on the experience. In addition, the components of adventure travel are located within the concept of impact. For developers of adventure travel products, impact is an important consideration. Considering and planning for impact is a basic, foundational concern; all travel providers are operating in an environment in which they have impact on the places they visit.

From the activities perspective, the traveler conception of “adventure” is always shifting. A sampling of activities associated with adventure travel could include joining an archaeological expedition; backpacking; bird-watching; camping; caving; climbing; getting to know the locals; hiking; horseback riding; kayaking; whitewater rafting; learning a new language; orienteering; joining a research expedition or safari; sailing, scuba diving; snorkeling; skiing and snowboarding; surfing; trekking; and many others.

From the traveler’s perspective, on the right side of the graphic, research indicates that adventure travel is motivated by a variety of longings and desires that

influence how travelers consume and emotionally process their trip. Travelers are seeking mental and physical wellness, novel and unique experiences, challenges adventure and thrill, whether physical or cultural and often, ultimately, transformation.

Travelers are also keenly aware of their impact and have a desire to have a positive impact on the environment and communities they visit.

Finally, the definition of adventure travel, a trip must take an individual outside of his or her regular environment for more than twenty-four hours and for no longer than one year and include at least two of the following three experiences: participation in a physical activities, a visit to a natural environment, and a culturally immersive experience (Trips longer than one year are not considered “travel” in the research context).

Categorical understanding of adventure tourism

As from the above definitions, it has been understood that the scope of adventure tourism is far and wide. As such different scholars and researchers have made their own attempts to bring forward categories or so to say the various typologies of adventure tourism which has further been discussed in this section. As early as in the year 1999, Addison has produced a typology of adventure grid based on two axes. Along one is the level of adventure determined by the danger element and the technical skills needed and thus interpreted as the degree of challenge. The other axis is based on the level of independence i.e. the degree of participants rely on others to organize the experience, basically reflects the degree of tourists for that they are reliant on suppliers to organize and manage the experience. Each axis is also continuum, going from low to high. Figure 2 shows the four categories developed by Addison, plus some proposals as to the type of activity or product that might sit in each quadrant.

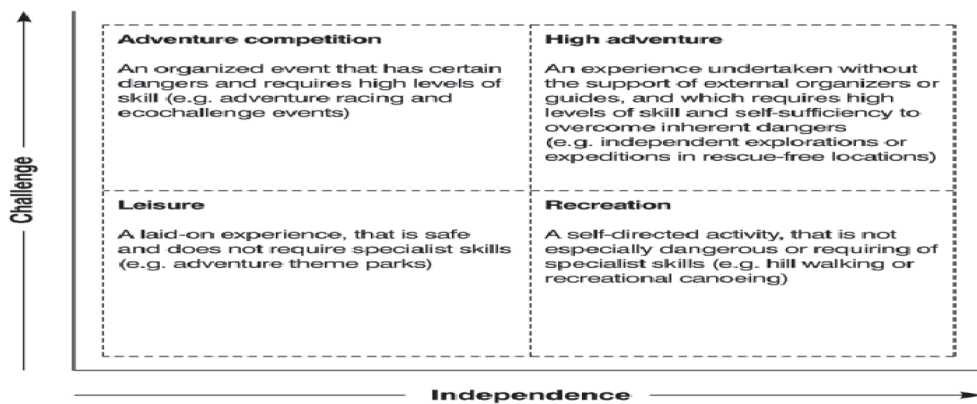


Figure 3: Adventure Quadrants developed by Addison (1999) (Source: Swarbrooke et al., 2003).

Next, the hard and soft adventure which are the often used terms by researchers who have devised a continuum to explain the diversity of behavior, beginning with mild adventure (termed as 'soft adventure') at one end of the scale and progressing to 'hard adventure' at the other extreme. This continuum, which is illustrated in Figure 3 involves differing degrees of 'challenge, uncertainty, setting, familiarity, personal abilities, intensity, duration and perceptions of control' (Lipscombe, 1995).

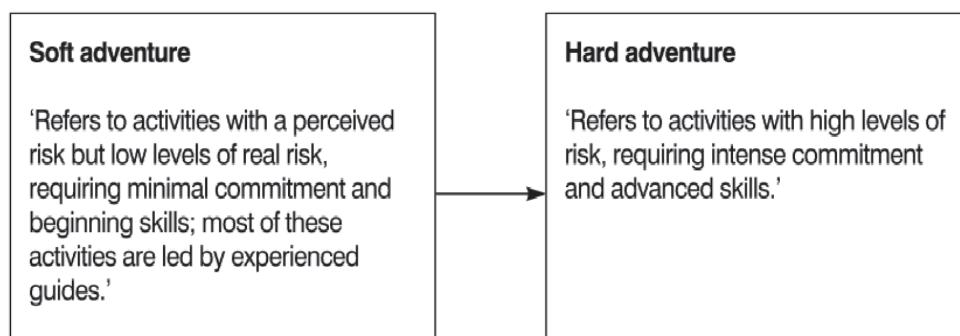


Figure 4: The continuum of soft and hard adventure (Source: Swarbrooke et al., 2003)

In his study of adventure tourism, Buckley in the year 2006 has discussed about the following types of adventure tourisms: river journey, whitewater kayaking, whitewater rafting, sea kayaking, sailing, expedition cruises, diving, surfing, Heli-ski and snowboard, cross-country skiing, ice climbing, mountaineering, hiking and bushwalking, horse riding, mountain biking, off-road safaris, wildlife, and Ariel adventures. Adventure tourism by Global Data (2018) has been typified on the basis of medium that are three forms of adventure activities: land, water, and air-based activities.

Furthermore, it is clear that the type of adventure tourism differs on the understanding of individuals. It is true that adventure to one traveler may seem mundane to another. Regardless of how tourism professional organize categorically the adventure tourism that will always be subjective term for travelers themselves, because it is related to one's individual experience (WTO, 2014).

Buckley, in his study of the adventure tourism management (2010) has considered wildlife, marine, board sports and heli-skiing as the representative subsectors of adventure tourism.

Holding on the two major categorical theme of hard and soft adventure, ATTA (2013) has indicated various activities and their adventure classification as shown in Table 1.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Type</i>
Archeological expedition	Soft
Attending local festival/fairs	Other
Backpacking	Soft
Bird watching	Soft
Camping	Soft
Canoeing	Soft
Caving	Hard
Climbing (mountain/rock/ice)	Hard
Cruise	Other
Cultural activities	Other
Eco-tourism	Soft
Educational programs	Soft
Environmentally sustainable activities	Soft
Fishing/fly-fishing	Soft
Getting to know the locals	Other
Hiking	Soft
Horseback riding	Soft
Hunting	Soft
Kayaking/sea/whitewater	Soft
Learning a new language	Other
Orienteering	Soft
Rafting	Soft
Research expeditions	Soft
Safaris	Soft
Sailing	Soft
Trekking	Hard
Walking tours	Other
Visiting friends/family	Other
Visiting historical sites	Other
Volunteer tourism	Soft

Table 1: Adventure classification of activities by ATTA (2013) (Source: WTO, 2014)

Therefore, the above categorical analysis of the adventure tourism clearly justify the wide ranging and the scope of adventure tourism itself. The different types and categories are proposed and verified by different experts and agencies. However, one important evidence to internalize is that adventure tourism includes various types of activities in land, water and air.

Historical development of adventure tourism

The history of adventure tourism dates back to many years since the human beings started in engaging in adventurous travel and different exciting activities.

It has been already high-lighted by the exploration of Marco Polo, Captain James Cook, and Sir Ernest Shackleton, who had primarily scientific, geographic, or colonial motives. Adventure tourism has always been presented in the society, even though the participants of that time did not see it as adventure tourism, it was discovery of places. For them it was a way of life, instead of a leisure activity (Van der Merwe, 2009). Tourism dates back as far as ancient Greece and ancient Rome, there are the evidence of tourism from these eras in terms of travel writing.

According to Swarbrooke et al. (2003) the groups that are seen as the pioneers of the adventure tourism industry historically are hedonists, explorers and adventurers, mercenaries, pilgrims, seasonal migrants, missionaries, romantic era mountain sports, natural historians, travel writer adventurers.

Nonetheless, the commercial modifications of adventure tourism can be considered as a new phenomenon in which the traveler pays for the tourism based experiences and avails the services. In the mid-1800s, adventurers began to push the limits of mountain climbing and river rafting, with the first ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865 and descent of the Colorado River in 1869. Shortly thereafter, two key institutions were formed. The National Geographic Society (NGS) was formed in 1888 to “increase and diffuse geographic knowledge” and the Explorers Club (EC) was formed in 1904 to “promote the scientific exploration of land, sea, air, and space”. Both institutions continue to support adventures and expeditions today. In the mid-1950s, many first ascents and descents attracted global attention and inspired many people to attempt their own expeditions. Maurice Herzog’s ascent of Annapurna in 1950, Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay’s ascent of Mount Everest, and others’ successes were hailed in the media around the world. The transformation from information exploring to commercial guiding in the United States can be traced back to the 1920s when Don Hatch and his brothers decided to build wooden rafts to explore the Green River in what is today known as Dinosaur National Monument. Hatch eventually formed a company, Hatch River Explorations, which was the first business to receive a national park concessioner permit for rafting in 1953. Other seminal adventure companies formed during this time, such as Ker and Downey in 1946, Abercrombie and Kent in 1962, Micato Safaris in 1966 (luxury safaris), and OARS in 1969 (river rafting). OARS led several first river descents, including Bio Bio in Chile and the Zambezi in Zimbabwe, blending exploration with commercial adventure (WTO, 2014).

Brief history of adventure tourism in Nepal

Nepal has a history of no more than five-decades of commercial adventure tourism. It was a British army officer, Lieutenant Colonel James Owen Merion Roberts (Jimmy Roberts), who laid the foundations of commercial adventure

tourism in Nepal. Roberts founded Nepal's first trekking and mountaineering outfit, Mountain Travel Nepal, in 1964 to offer the opportunity for wealthy travelers to enjoy the experience of trekking or climbing in Nepal without problems (New Business Age, 2017)

The history of adventure tourism in Nepal is also related to the time (around 6 decades ago) when the early attempts to ascend the world's highest peak, Mt. Everest was started. According to Shrestha (2017), it was in the year 1953 when Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary became successful in ascending the Mt. Everest that the adventure tourism sector of Nepal caught a motion track. In the late 1960's and 1970's hippies had started to flow in Nepal. During those days Nepal was famous for hippies as marijuana and hashish were easily available. But in 1973, the then government of Nepal banned on the selling of marijuana and hashish which became a turning point in the tourism history of Nepal as after that time Nepal developed as a hot spot for commercial adventure seekers and cultural tourists.

Importance of adventure tourism

As tourism continues to occupy an important position in the global economy, it has been called the greatest voluntary transfer of wealth from rich to the poor countries (Ashley, 2009) and it is apt to remark that in both the developing and developed parts of the world, the sector commands attention as a means of sustainable economic growth. Adventure as a way of travel, appeals to travelers, allowing for the fragility of places and is more often views as a "guilt-free" holiday option that money spent can penetrate more deeply into communities, contributing to local economies (ADTI, 2010). Hence, the economic importance of adventure tourism is bringing a lot of optimism to contemplate upon Nepal which is to a large extent driven by tourism based industries towards sustaining the economy.

Going by the statistics at a global level, a 2010 study completed by The George Washington University, Xola Consulting and the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), it has been found that 26% of travelers engage in adventure activities on vacation and valued international adventure tourism as an US\$ 89 billion industry (The George Washington University, ATTA and Xola, 2009). As per the information provided by the ATTA, a closer from December 2009 till December 2010 further showed that adventure tourism was accelerating out of the recession with an estimated growth rate of 17% annually.

From such statistical descriptions, it is clear that the adventure tourism industry has entered a new stage with industry participants experimenting with a range of new strategies. For instances, introducing new forms of adventure sports and brands, the travel and tour organizers to attract the adventure enthusiasts. This

will be next generation activities in future tourism in Nepal and the world. Therefore, adventure tourism relies on innovation of entrepreneurs, who are continually developing and introducing the diverse set of products and the destinations.

Adventure tourism competitiveness

According to the latest report published by ATDI in 2018, highlights the top ten developed and developing countries with strong potential for adventure tourism competitiveness. Rank wise they have been listed below.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Developed Countries</i>	<i>Developing Countries</i>
1	Iceland	Czech Republic
2	Switzerland	Israel
3	Germany	Estonia
4	New Zealand	Slovak Republic
5	Norway	Poland
6	Sweden	Chile
7	Canada	Romania
8	Finland	Bulgaria
9	United Kingdom	Slovenia
10	Australia	Jordan

Table 2: Top Ten Countries for Adventure Travel (Source: ADTI Report, 2018, pp. 9-10)

It would have been expected for Nepal to be listed at the topmost tiers of the adventure destination, due fact that there are some extremely adventurous destinations and sports based activities that have been consumed by the adventure enthusiasts all over the world. Some of such destinations include the Everest Base Camp, the bungee jump at Bhotekoshi, Pokhara as Aerial Adventure destination and other various base camp trekking and peak climbing activities. Therefore, it is important to also gather a deliberate knowledge upon the various pillars of adventure tourism market competitiveness that enables any destination to be established as a desired spot to pursue adventure tourism developed by the Adventure Tourism Development Index (ADTI).

The ADTI's 10 pillars of adventure market competitiveness are principles of market development that drive benefit, celebrate culture and protect the environment. It also offers practical information for global tour operators about country/regional resources attractive for adventure tour development. The 10 pillars are: government policies supporting sustainable development, safety, natural resources, health, adventure resources, entrepreneurship, humanitarian, infrastructure, cultural resources and adventure image/brand.

1. Government policies supporting to sustainable development

Government policies which support and foster sustainable and rural tourism development. They are crucial to adventure tourism market competitiveness. It safeguards the destination's natural, heritage and cultural resources and provide a positive investment environment to the private sector. When public and private sector actions are coordinated, the private sector flourishes, attracting investment and development to a region. One such instance for the attraction of new tourism products could be the system of tax rebate in the adventure destinations.

2. Safety

In the context of safety, qualitative examination of the adventure operators can provide the safety of travelers, and the existing facilities are sufficient to cope the travel-related injuries. For example, in destinations where scuba diving is a popular draw, do hyperbaric chamber facilities for decompression exist? Are rescue operations available in mountaineering? Do guides have first aid training? Generally, do safety measurements of clients meet the international standards? Therefore, briefing and pre-event training in adventure activities must be made compulsory with insurance coverage in order to ensure proper safety.

3. Natural resources

Adventure travelers want to enjoy in untrammelled and well-managed natural resources. The rare natural resources, unusual destination, well-managed and naturally protected destination will earn high praise from adventure travelers. These destinations will be the best product of competitive tourism market. Along with this strict regulations for conservation of nature and natural resourced should be implemented for the proper management.

4. Health

A healthy local population is more likely to be able to foster and nurture new businesses, and to care for its resources responsibly. Countries where healthcare is readily available are better able to support adventure travelers.

5. Adventure resources

Adventure sports span a range of outdoor nature-based activities: bird watching to mountaineering; whitewater rafting to rock climbing; caving to paragliding. Destinations with resources lending themselves to the development of a particular sport. For example, cliffs excellent for ice

climbing, or forests with a wealth of bird species, get the earnest opportunities of sustained and competitive advantages of tourism market.

6. Entrepreneurship

An adventure market's vitality and strength originates from the so-called "fringe" - those pioneering businesses with unusual offerings that would seem to appeal only to a small subset of niche enthusiasts. Activities which begin outside the mainstream, or which seem too eccentric to appeal to a broader adventure travel market, reliably seem to end up as mainstream activities: the surging popularity of snowboarding is a case in point. Given this reality, destinations in which entrepreneurship in the business sector is thriving more likely to become competitive in the adventure travel market.

7. Humanitarian

The Humanitarian pillar is concerned with human development in a country - the presence of basic services: for example sanitation, and with the potential for blended adventure and volunteering trips. The trend toward volunteer tourism and its appeal to adventure travelers will continue to build, find destinations that volunteering will be available competitively.

8. Infrastructure

Adventure travelers, unlike mainstream package tourists, are frequently less sensitive to deficiencies in hard infrastructure. Perhaps, more sensitive than other travelers when it comes to conservation and soft tourism infrastructure. While hard infrastructure may take substantial capital investment and years to develop, sometimes the soft infrastructure required by adventure travelers can be developed with comparatively little capital outlay.

Adventure tourism infrastructure includes:

- Hard infrastructure such as roads, airports, lodging facilities, trails;
- Soft infrastructure such as:
 - o Trail maps
 - o Accessible information on heritage and culture
 - o Ground operators/ outfitters
 - o Training programs for adventure tourism including guides/ interpreters, Eco lodges, etc.

9. Cultural resources

Adventure travelers are as keen to learn about new cultures as they are to explore nature. For the adventure traveler, being able to experience local culture in an authentic way is a sought-after outcome of the travel investment.

Destinations which encourage local people to preserve their culture - even as modern influences continue to shape and evolve local customs - fare well with adventure travelers. It does not however imply the local people to become living museums to the past or actors staging outdated customs, but to acknowledge and honor their customs, recognizing their unique contribution to the world stage.

10. Adventure image and brand

A destination's image can be one of the most malleable aspects of market competitiveness. Image is also important in guiding and influencing sustainable market development. A destination's image for sustainability and adventure opportunity will attract travelers who value these aspects. Through their visitation and expenditures, these people will in turn further support the country's ongoing sustainable.

Conclusion

From the definitions, scope, economic possibilities and the pre-requisites for development of adventure tourism it has to be concluded that Nepal as a country which seeks to promote tourism with a special focus on adventure based tourism activities in the upcoming years, remarkably from the 2020 to 2030 needs to further develop its resources in this regards. Inadequate of adventure tourism based literature and authentic researches have been seen as the major issues and challenges of authentication in the adventure tourism destination. As such, the initiative took forward by the Nepal Mountain Academy under the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of the Nepal Government to launch a university degree of Masters in Adventure Tourism (MATS) could be a milestone setting for the enhanced and assertive prospect of adventure tourism in Nepal.

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