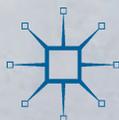


ADVENTURE AND SOCIETY



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Adventure and Tourism

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Chapter Aims

- After reading this chapter, you will be able to:
- Describe the key historical factors that contributed to the development of tourism in the Global North
- Define adventure tourism and describe some of the factors that motivate adventure tourists
- Understand and apply the concepts of McDonaldization and Disneyization to adventure tourism and other adventure practices
- Explain how experience, motivation, social factors, and the market interact to produce a wide range of commercial adventure experiences
- Use a range of examples to explain the different ways in which guides and companies facilitate adventure tourism experiences

The sun is rising over the lake near Pokhara in Nepal. On the hilltop of Sarangkot, 2000 feet above the city, people are strapping into paraglider harnesses and launching themselves into the clear Himalayan air. Most are visitors to the region who are flying as a passenger with an experienced pilot who skilfully navigates the thermals rising from the valley in order to provide their client with the promised views of three of the world's highest mountains. Throughout the 45-minute flight, a small camera captures the client's excitement and the guide's confident narrative, which will be downloaded when they land outside the paragliding company's office and shop. Here they can drink a mango lassi, buy a branded t-shirt, and start telling their friends about their flight on social media while the video of it is being processed.

None of these clients could have had this experience without paying for the services provided by the pilots, who have spent years developing the skills, purchasing the equipment, and gaining the qualifications necessary to fly commercially. For the client, it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience; the pilot will do it all again tomorrow. This scene encapsulates many of the elements that characterize adventure tourism.

In this chapter, we focus on adventure tourism as a particular form of practice that is closely related to key topics we have already introduced, such as identity, capitalism, and technology. We will consider how adventure tourism has evolved alongside wider social changes; how we may experience adventure differently as paying customers; and examine how various market forces have influenced contemporary forms of adventure tourism.

10.1 The Emergence of Adventure Tourism

Tourism can be defined as the activities undertaken by those who travel to places outside their usual environment for any reason other than employment (United Nations World Tourism

Organization [UNWTO], 2018a). The economic and social activity associated with tourism has been estimated to account for 10% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 7% of trade, and 10% of jobs, across the globe (UNWTO, 2018b).

While it is hard to lay down strict boundaries for what constitutes adventure tourism, and many estimates come from trade bodies, the adventure travel market has most recently been valued at 683 billion USD and has grown significantly over the last decade (Adventure Travel Trade Association [ATTA], 2018). We do not have space for a full examination of the development of modern tourism here,¹ and much of the tourism literature is limited by its Eurocentric focus, but we do need to spend some time outlining where our contemporary understandings of the field come from before we can get into the detail of what adventure tourism looks like and means to different people.

Tourism is often about *negation*—seeking out the opposite of our day-to-day lives or a break from our routine experiences; the holiday is the antithesis of work and is often characterized by extraordinary conditions (hence the constant stream of northern Europeans and Canadians flying south for sunshine during their own dark winters). The rapid growth and normalization of adventure tourism activities that now seem so familiar to us, such as white-water rafting, bungee jumping, or guided mountaineering, is testament to the social changes of the last 50 years. As we have considered throughout this volume, demand for adventurous experiences (which, in the context of tourism, people can buy regardless of experience) is partly down to people's desire for elements that are perceived to be missing from their day-to-day existences. As highlighted in ► Chap. 1, the predictability of everyday life makes the feeling that one is taking risks particularly appealing, and the outdoor settings, slower pace, and feeling of control or engagement that are associated with some adventure activities contrast with the intensity, urbanism, and speed of late modern lifestyles (Beedie, 2016).

■ Early Roots

The very idea of the natural world as a separate place to escape to, or enjoy for recreation purposes, is a distinctly modern one. Prior to the urbanization and prevailing rationalism associated with the industrial revolution in the Global North, nature was part of an 'all-inclusive cosmological order' (MacNaghten & Urry, 1998, p. 10), where humans had very little understanding of their relationship to it, and had very limited power within it. This, along with the fact that all but the most wealthy people spent much of their time working and living outside, meant that the natural world and the risks that went along with it *were* everyday life.

1 For more detail, readers might refer to Swarbrooke and Horner (2007), Sharpley (2003), or Inglis (2000), for example.

The following history is obviously skewed towards a European context. This is partly because in newly colonized countries, few were making money from tourism before the nineteenth century, and most travel for pleasure would have been primarily linked to maintaining social and familial connections. While accounts from outside the Global North have been notably absent in the tourism literature until recently (Chang, Teo, & Winter, 2009), there is increasing light being shone on outdoor practices around the world (see Humberstone, Prince, & Henderson, 2016), and a significant heritage of adventurous travel which is relevant to our discussion, but recounted in different disciplines and languages other than English. Southeast Asia, for example, offers wonderfully lyrical histories, from monks retreating to inaccessible mountains, poets heading out on wandering adventures, to writers, such as the prodigious seventeenth-century traveller Xu Xiake. There is a wealth of related material that we encourage you to seek out.

■ The Romantics, Industrialization, and the Victorians

Between the mid-seventeenth century and nineteenth century, most people would not have considered going to wild places, particularly mountains, for pleasure (MacFarlane, 2003). Travel purely for pleasure and learning had always been a preserve of the elite, while other adventurous journeys, such as religious pilgrimages, involved a lot of discomfort and hardship. In Europe, accounts show that tourism was a distinct part of upper-class culture as far back as ancient Greece and the Roman Empire (Lomine, 2005). Indeed, the fifth-century Greek historian Herodotus is often cited as the first travel writer, and well-off Romans could escape to purpose-built spa resorts or visit important cultural 'sights' (Sharpley, 2003). However, the formation of a new, stable upper class in late eighteenth-century Britain meant that a generation of young men (and some women) travelled into continental Europe in search of education, culture, sex, and drink, and crossed the European Alps by various passes *en route* to the great cities of Paris, Rome, Venice, Naples, and Florence.

This 'Grand Tour' which emerged in the 30-year window of relative peace and stability in Europe from 1763 is often cited as the start of tourism as we know it today (Buzard, 1993; Inglis, 2000). The Grand Tour is frequently described as a type of 'finishing school' for upper-class youths, who were usually accompanied by a guide and equipped with books stipulating where to go and what to see. They returned having accrued the cultural capital that came from learning about food, art, wine, and architecture, through direct experience. When war broke out again in 1793, many of these travellers were limited to focusing on domestic journeys, thus channelling their aesthetic and cultural activities into the emerging Romantic movement. These changing social

patterns laid the foundations for an emerging kind of tourism that was becoming more accessible to a broader cross section of the population in Europe (Inglis, 2000).

The rapid effects of industrialization and urbanization in the early 1800s led to a counter-cultural movement which saw modern life as unhealthy and opposed the dominance of reductionist scientific thinking that ignored the spiritual and subjective elements of experience. In Europe, these Romantic movements in art, literature, and philosophy looked to ‘wild nature’ as a salve to the sores caused by urban living, which even then, was hectic, dirty, and stressful. Nature was also seen as a source of creative inspiration and awe. The art and poetry of this period began to showcase the natural landscape as something powerful and unknowable, which should be embraced in its raw, unfettered state. This contrasted starkly with the dominant culture of the time, which presented the natural environment as a neat, sterile, and picturesque backdrop, as well as something that should be understood from a scientific perspective. This emerging creative direction, which captured the strong emotions elicited from natural beauty, was the cultural kindling for the burgeoning tourism industry.

■ The Roots of Contemporary Tourism

The technological advances and socio-political shifts of the Victorian era created a market for forms of tourism that appealed to a much wider customer base, which eventually led to the international industry that is such a core element of our globalized society. British workers secured paid holidays and the middle classes grew; railways and bicycles connected them to seaside resorts, Highland towns, and spas—much in the same way that affordable air travel opened up parts of the world to the middle classes in the late twentieth century.

Tourism developed along similar lines in North America, where spa resort towns and the new national parks were opened up to broader markets by an improved steamboat and railway infrastructure (Weiss, 2004). On both continents, entrepreneurs met the emerging tourism demand by working to remove much of the anxiety-inducing uncertainty that accompanied new places and practices by offering packaged excursions and holidays; guides took visitors to the ‘must-see’ locations and photographers captured the visitors’ experiences, which could be shared with others. While at Niagara Falls in the nineteenth century, this might have been captured in the posed photographs of couples in their waterproof capes, now we see international tourists ‘checking in’ and streaming their experiences live on social media from the end of a selfie stick (see ► Chap. 6 for more on this).

These elements of the tourism industry—packaging socially desirable experiences, developing associated infrastructures, sup-

plying guiding services, and documenting and representing tourist experiences—are central to the rest of this chapter, as they encapsulate the inherent tensions around selling, consuming, and sharing tourist experiences. Motivation to participate in (and share) these experiences can be both intrinsic (e.g. it makes you feel personally fulfilled) and extrinsic (e.g. to accrue forms of capital or consolidate identities through recognition from others). Another way of understanding tourist motivation is from a *functionalist* perspective, which considers how society needs to achieve a stable social order through regulating hedonistic behaviour and maintain a productive workforce (Holden, 2005). There are multiple ways of understanding tourist motivation, just as we have seen in relation to adventure, and it is important to remember that individuals will be simultaneously influenced by a range of factors to varying degrees. Providers consider these motivations as they develop and market their products, and the key components that we are interested in here relate to how ‘adventure’ can be packaged and sold.

10.2 Consuming Adventure: Definitions and Two Shifts

10

We can begin our theoretical examination of adventure tourism by recognizing that the experiences provided are about much more than the activity itself. Each consumer comes with a distinct set of motivations, from seeking nature connection, to thrill, to connection with other people (Arnould & Price, 1993; Buckley, 2010; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016). It is these motivations that the market both creates and seeks to meet.

The academic field of adventure tourism draws primarily from the parallel perspectives of social science and business. In terms of specific literature and research, adventure tourism has only really been investigated as distinct from the related fields of adventure recreation, outdoor education, and other forms of nature-based tourism, since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Buckley, 2006).

In 2006, Buckley provided a clear-cut definition of adventure tourism as ‘guided commercial tours where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialized sporting or similar equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients’ (p. 1). The strength of this definition is its emphasis on subjective lived experience. Buckley’s (2010) later statement that ‘[f]rom the perspective of the individual tourist, anything which they personally consider adventurous can be counted as adventure tourism’ (p. 7) suggests that the key features of adventure tourism become the commercial aspects, the setting, and the experience of something that is perceived as adventurous by the paying customer. They do not need to be active, or skilful

participants, but they do experience the activity directly. We now consider the importance of this direct experience with discussion questions below.

? Discussion Questions

1. Which of these examples do you think are adventure tourism, and which are adventure recreation or education?
2. If the answer is not clear, then what extra information would push you either way?
 - A multi-day white-water rafting trip with eight paying customers, two river guides, and a chef.
 - A married couple undertaking the classic Haute Route ski tour in the Alps, staying in catered alpine huts and a hotel at the end. They have their own equipment and one is an experienced ski mountaineer who takes the technical and navigation decisions.
 - A series of high-ropes challenges and zip-lines through a forest, where one follows a prescribed route, and is supported by a member of staff.
 - A long weekend spent skiing, eating, drinking, and shopping at a ski resort with restaurants, shops, gondolas, and instructors.
 - A week of guided scrambling in Grand Teton National Park based out of a mountain lodge.
 - A three-day residential trip for primary school students at a multi-activity centre.
 - A person solo hiking the Pacific Crest Trail over three months

For each example, summarize the distinguishing features that emerged from the 'extra' information you needed to decide which field each example belonged to.

We know that adventure tourism features a wide variety of commercial offerings that are designed to meet the needs of customers with a diverse range of experiences and motivations. Historically, this spectrum has been used to segment adventure tourism activities from 'soft' to 'hard', with the bulk of the market occupying the 'soft' end, which comprises accessible, low- or no-skill activities, such as hiking, bicycle touring, and animal watching (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret, 2003). These are the sort of adventure activities that one can do with no prior experience or specialist equipment, the latter of which may be provided by the company organizing the activity. Towards the 'hard' end of the spectrum, tourist numbers and guide-to-client ratios decrease, as the skill, commitment, and cost increase (Buckley, 2006). Examples of these activities include high-altitude mountaineering, heli mountain-biking, and white-water kayaking.

In the past, the sort of activities on the high skill/experience end were only accessible to those people who had served a long apprenticeship through years of participation in adventure recreation. This involved learning from more experienced practitioners and investing time and money to build a collection of skills and equipment that permitted taking on increasingly difficult challenges, at a deep level of sustained commitment that Bob Stebbins (2007) refers to as ‘serious leisure’. A major shift in adventure leisure practices is that the adventure tourism market increasingly facilitates more people operating in the high skill/experience area, because they are managed and coached by a more experienced, knowledgeable, and skilled expert.

We urge caution with the ‘hard and soft’ language used above, as this may create barriers to participation, regardless of whether the context is commercial or recreational. Instead, we prefer speaking of a spectrum that has low versus high levels of skill, experience, and commitment. Both ends of the spectrum can cost lots of money, but activities at the high skill/experience end may be much more likely to incur higher financial demands and may involve a higher likelihood of being harmed. Whatever kind of adventure we are willing to pay for, it is undeniable that the factors surrounding what people value most and what they are willing to pay have become very complex. The shift towards an ‘experience economy’ is the other notable feature of contemporary adventure tourism.

With their book, *The Experience Economy*, first published in 1998, Pine & Gilmore popularized the idea of the ‘progression of economic value’, from commodity to goods, services, experiences, and, most recently, transformation (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Take coffee, for example. At its cheapest and simplest, we can trade it as an interchangeable *commodity*, in the form of bulk-bought unroasted beans. If we want to use these green beans, we have to invest our own time processing them or pay for a pre-packaged *good* (roasted beans or instant coffee) that is more convenient and saves us time. If we are happy to pay even more for someone else to make us that coffee, then we can make use of the *services* provided by staff in a coffee shop. However, we know that people do not value coffee shops equally: many people are happy to pay much more for a specific type of coffee drinking *experience*, of the sort that you get in your local artisanal coffee house, where the coffee is served in a mug made by a local potter, local art is for sale on the walls, and the wifi signal is strong. Here, the customer is not just consuming the coffee or extracting value from the caffeine boost, but from the whole experience, which is effectively a site where they can play out their identity roles with others (see ► Chap. 8 on identity for more on this).

More recently, the *transformative* potential of the experience economy has been emphasized (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Indeed, there are increasing examples of yoga holidays and guided treks

that focus specifically on somehow developing, healing, or improving individual clients.

While it has been criticized as oversimplistic and for not acknowledging similar frameworks in parallel fields, Pine and Gilmore's (2011) progression of economic value illustrates three key points that are relevant to our consideration of adventure tourism. First, it is clear that, as the late modern economy has developed, consumers have become increasingly 'cash rich and time poor'. Where people might have previously invested time rather than money to create memorable experiences for themselves and others, the highly fragmented nature of our social and work lives means that we are now more likely to pay for the convenience of a pre-defined experience at a time and place which suits us. Second, experiences are inherently direct and multi-sensory, even when the participant has little active control. Consumers want this because it feels 'real', and producers make the most of this through the ways they curate and stage their experience. Third, the demand for direct experience, when and where it is convenient, means that successful providers need to be able to dependably offer memorable experiences when it suits the customer, which creates a paradox for the adventure tourism field. Paul Beedie captures this paradox, by explaining how "adventure" is defined as uncertainty of outcome, and "tourism" as a systematic organisation of people's leisure time' (2016, p. 473). This points to an extraordinary challenge facing adventure tourist operators, as they need to find ways to provide experiences that are perceived as unique and thrilling, while keeping their clients safe and organizing equipment and transport logistics in a predictable manner.

Discussion Question

Go on the internet and note down five experiences that people have identified as being on their 'bucket list' of things to do before they die. For which of these activities would the 'average' person need a paid guide or expert help with their adventurous pursuits?

10.3 McDonaldization and Disneyization: Providing Safe, Repeatable, Memorable, and Profitable Adventures

The two parallel shifts that have been outlined above, the move from small numbers of people engaged in 'serious leisure' to lots of less-experienced customers looking for adventure, and the shift from a service economy to an experience economy have had significant impacts on the development of adventure tourism. This has led to tensions, and the identification of a paradox

(Beedie, 2016; Holyfield, Jonas, & Zajicek, 2005) or ‘public secret’ (Fletcher, 2010) around the notions of risk, and arguments that adventure is becoming increasingly commodified (Varley, 2006), McDonaldized (Loynes, 1998, 2013) and Disneyized (Beames & Brown, 2014, 2017).

At the heart of these discussions is the fact that, because adventure tourists do not necessarily have the requisite skills, experience, or equipment to have the adventures they desire, they pay other people to manage these shortcomings. While uncertainty of outcome and risk are defining elements of adventure, the people in the guide role clearly have a vested interest in keeping their customers alive and well, and therefore do everything they can to minimize the *real* risks and keep their clients as safe as possible (2006). This means that the responsibility of managing risk, and for the outcome of the activity, lies predominantly with the guide rather than the customer.

An important theoretical approach to understanding what Martinkova and Parry (Martínková & Parry, 2017) call ‘safe danger’ in adventure activities draws on the work of the German sociologist Max Weber. Weber argued that the rational, scientific way of seeing the material world was increasingly dominating many aspects of social life. Seen this way, systems, structures, and processes are becoming more and more carefully designed and managed in order to ensure that all aspects of social life operate in ways that maximize efficiencies. This has been considered in relation to various forms of adventure in order to understand how the application of these increasingly rationalizing processes affects the nature of experience (Loynes, 1998, 2013; Varley, 2006, 2012).

In his 1993 book, *The McDonaldization of Society*, the American sociologist George Ritzer identified the fast-food restaurant as a prime example of Weber’s concept of rationalization, and argued that key dimensions of McDonald’s approach to business can now be seen throughout wider society due to global capitalism’s broad reach. The five key aspects are *efficiency* (stripping out all but the essential processes), *calculability* (quantifying the operation wherever possible), *predictability* (reducing the chance of unexpected outcomes), *control* (of both customers’ and staff’s behaviour), and using *technology in place of human labour* (valuing the dependability of mechanization over ‘fallible’ humans).

It seems counter-intuitive to apply this thinking to adventure experiences, where calculability and predictability appear contradictory to our earlier definitions of adventure, but aspects of McDonaldization are increasingly obvious in some commodified forms of adventure experience. If we return to our example of bungee jumping, we can see that efficiency is needed to smoothly move people around the site, quickly sell tickets, and rapidly

determine bungy to weight ratios. Calculability is used to foresee precisely how much income from the revenue streams will be gathered and what overhead costs exist. Predictability is essential for both customer satisfaction and sustainable business (an impeccable safety record is essential). Control over what staff and clients do is critical, as deviating from established operating procedures could be fatal. And, finally, technology is used to reduce the likelihood that staff and customers do not accidentally harm themselves. These are only some initial examples of how a theoretical framework can permit a much deeper analysis of social phenomenon.

A related, and equally illustrative, set of concepts exists in Eric Bryman's (2004) Disneyization framework. In 1999, Bryman first developed a complementary framework to McDonaldization, which brings additional and very useful concepts for interrogating the experience economy. Bryman (2004) defines Disneyization as 'the process by which the principles of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world' (p. 1). According to Bryman, Disneyization has four principal features. First, there is *theming*, which refers to the overarching narrative that defines the experience. Indoor ski slopes with cafes named after iconic ski-hill names, food, wallpaper, staff uniforms, and antiques—all relating to the Swiss Alps—are an example of a place being themed, so that consumers are 'transported' to another place. Second, is *hybrid consumption*, 'which entails the buying of merchandise, food and drink while being engaged in the actual leisure activity' (Beames & Brown, 2017, p. 856). An example of this might be purchasing a baseball hat and video of the days' adventure, halfway through the river rafting experience. *Merchandising*, is the third feature, and concerns the goods directly related to the company logo being sold. This would include water bottles, t-shirts, sweatshirts, and other goods being sold on site. The fourth feature is *performative labour*, and refers to company employees following 'scripts' that dictate what they should say to, and how they should act in front of, paying customers.

Discussion Questions

Indoor climbing walls, indoor ski slopes, and high-ropes courses are also often cited in relation to McDonaldization.

1. Consider one kind of adventure tourism, where clients pay for the experience (this could be for an hour or a month). To what degree can you find evidence of Ritzer's five themes of efficiency, calculability, efficiency, predictability, control, and replacement of human labour with technology?

2. Consider another kind of adventure tourism and consider the degree to which it is Disneyized. The four features are theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, and performative labour.
3. Which of all of the above themes seems most prevalent to you in the kinds of adventure tourism that you've witnessed and experienced?

10.4 The Impacts of Commodification on Adventure Tourists

It should now be clear that providers of adventure experiences (where the ultimate responsibility for the outcome does not lie with the participant) put various measures in place to manage the inherent risks while creating the memorable experiences their customers want. The emergence of these services and experiences as distinct products which can be exchanged for money is called *commodification*. If you have read ► Chap. 5, you will see a subtle distinction in terms of what is being commodified in these different contexts. Note that in this tourism chapter, we are discussing the commodification of adventure *experiences*, whereas the capitalism and corporation's chapter explored the marketing and selling of adventure-related material *products*. Varley (2006) sought to make sense of how the more commodified forms of adventure tourism, as well as those which are apparently resistant to commodification, exist within a model that he called the 'adventure commodification continuum'. For Varley, the most commodified and rationalized products are simply 'adventure-flavoured' experiences (p. 175) that cater to consumers who may not be especially skilled and who seek a novel experience that is tightly orchestrated and managed by paid staff.

Contrastingly, adventurers operating at the 'deep' end of the continuum possess experience, skills, and knowledge and, because of this, are more responsible for their actions—even if being guided. This perspective provides an explanation for why increasingly rationalized 'packageable' adventures (such as indoorized adventures—see Van Bottenburg & Salome, 2010) have come to form such a large segment of the tourist market, and why more committing, less easily controllable and predictable activities (e.g. ice climbing coaching) remain more resistant to commodification.

If we think back to our discussions around identity (► Chap. 8) and risk (► Chap. 4) earlier in the book, we see how where adventure activities sit on this commodification continuum is directly related to our social and personal identities and our perceptions of risk. For someone who does not aspire to gain full membership to a particular adventure subculture, doing a bungy jump, getting the t-shirt, and sharing the photos on Instagram might consolidate their identity as a risk-taking extrovert within their relative social

groups, whereas a skier interested in developing their own avalanche safety skills through a week of training with a guide may not necessarily be at all interested in the idea of a bungy jump. Both, however, are technically adventure tourists, but inhabit very different spaces on Varley's (2006) commodification spectrum.

Continuing this discussion on tourists' varying skill levels and motivations also involves perceptions of risk. Drawing on findings from his fieldwork in Queenstown, New Zealand, which is marketed as 'The adventure capital of the world', Carl Cater (2006) states that '[r]eal risk is quantitative, but perceived risk ... is an essence, and hence profoundly qualitative' (p. 322). From this perspective, the tourist experiences a feeling of riskiness or consequence that is greater than the objective risk (which is managed by the guide) and is left feeling that they have lived, negotiated, and survived an authentic adventure, which in turn feeds the myth of the hero that underpins much of the mainstream adventure tourism industry (see Kane, 2013). The feeling of riskiness and being on 'the edge' can be deliberately manipulated by the guide and her ability to orchestrate the route, setting, and level of challenge (Beedie, 2016). Beedie also notes that this kind of adventure management may have the converse effect of leading people to believe that they are safer than they actually are.

The *authenticity* of tourism experiences has been a core interest of tourism scholars for over 40 years (Wang, 1999), whether in relation to object-related authenticity (such as whether the vase that you see in a museum is the original, or a replica) or subject-related authenticity (Timm Knudsen & Waade, 2010), which, at its root, pertains to feeling as though you are being your most authentic self (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Due to its focus on lived bodily experience, subject-related (aka *existential*) authenticity is the kind of authenticity most often linked to adventure tourism. Some contemporary discussions position the opportunity to be (or perform) this authentic self through tourism as an escape from typical existences, where technology, social roles, and obligations to increasingly constant social networks limit individuals' opportunities just to *be* (Timm Knudsen & Waade, 2010).

Hopefully it should be clear now that this strand runs throughout this chapter, and to some extent, through our whole consideration of adventure: where people are participating in embodied activities that they find challenging and enjoyable, and through which they find respite from their everyday existence, they find spaces in which they can inhabit their adventure identities. As our lives become ever more busy and isolated from nature, these experiences become increasingly valuable, and commodified forms of adventure tourism have emerged to fill this economic niche; this shift may have consequences for both the consumers and producers involved in adventure tourism, as well as the corporations that have vested interests in the market.

Recently, *slow adventure* has been put forward as one response to the speed and connectedness of twenty-first-century life, due in principal to it being a form of adventure tourism that contrasts with the commodified and rationalized products that we have discussed above (Varley & Semple, 2015). Drawing on elements of Scandinavian outdoor life and increasingly popular ‘slow movements’ (see Honoré, 2004), slow adventure has been characterized as emphasizing four key elements of ‘time, passage, comfort and nature’ (Varley & Semple, 2015, p. 82). The slow food movement emerged in Italy in the 1980s, but is now influential across the world, and promotes the importance of local seasonal food, with an emphasis on community, enjoyment, health, and biodiversity as a very deliberately fashioned contrast to ‘fast food’ (Slow Food, 2015). If we continue the analogy first put forward by Loynes (1998)—relating to the McDonaldization of adventure—we can see slow adventure as a similar cultural response to the ‘fast food’ forms of adventure tourism.

This shift from fast to slow illustrates the cumulative effects of hypermodern living, with its emphasis on speed and connectivity, and shows that people are increasingly willing to pay to find retreat from this. Slower adventures give individuals time to catch up with themselves, others, and nature through time spent in culturally and environmentally distinct local places. Examples of this, which have emerged from a recent development project across Northern Europe, integrate sailing, yoga, kayaking, and cycling holidays with local food, foraging, and even art activities (Slow Adventure, 2017)—all of which demonstrate the increasing range of what comes under the banner of ‘adventure tourism’.

Case Study: A Tale of Two Adventures

Over the course of this chapter, we have laid out the core elements of adventure tourism, and showed how these can be present in a broad range of settings and activities. In order to further illustrate this, we consider two contrasting adventure tourism experiences.

The Colorado River in a Wooden Dory

Compared to an inflatable raft journey, travelling through the Grand Canyon in flat-bottomed wooden rowboat (called a dory) is sold as being simultaneously more comfortable, relaxed, and thrilling.

Most commercial trips take at least a week, and involve sleeping under the stars every night after eating fresh food brought in an accompanying raft and prepared by your guides. Clients play no real part in the actual manoeuvring of the boat, and there is only one set of oars that is used by the expert river guides. As one client wrote on their blog, ‘Our guides won’t let us row. Why not? Because we couldn’t row a dory if our lives depended on it. And our lives do depend on it ...’ (St. John, 2013, para. 10).

Clients variously enjoy technology-free camp life and

lie back to watch wildlife on the flat sections, or hold still and keep calm as the guide skilfully navigates technical white-water rapids in order to avoid boat-devouring ‘holes’ and rocks that could smash the thin wooden hull. These guides are at the pinnacle of their field and have worked for years to build up the skills, knowledge, and experience required to convince their employer they can do the job at the required standard. As veteran boatman John Shocklee says, ‘[i]t’s definitely easier to get a PhD than it is to get a dory here in the Grand Canyon’ (Yeti, 2015, 1:35.)

10.4 · The Impacts of Commodification on Adventure Tourists

It is not just about technical competency though, as one of the leading provider's website states, '[w]hat we're offering, really, isn't so much a trip as an experience. To most folks, the scenery, the thrills and the camp life are only a part of it. The rest of it comes from within' (Outdoor Adventure River Specialists, n.d., para. 29).

Point Five Gully on 'the Ben'

'Point Five Gully' on the north face of Ben Nevis is frequently named as one of the best winter climbing routes in the Scotland and is on many climbers' bucket list. While many will feel confident undertaking it independently with a climbing partner of similar ability, there are also numerous mountaineering instructors whose local knowledge, high skill level, and accredited certificate of competency are for hire.

A route like Point Five involves an early morning start, a long walk in before the sun rises, hours of technical climbing on frozen snow and

ice, and a long descent (also probably in the dark). In order to even think about this sort of mountaineering, one would need to have significant experience in similar settings, which would demand big investments of time and money. The climbers who employ guides do so for a range of reasons, such as getting one-to-one coaching to develop their skills, the lack of a climbing partner, or a desire for the richer experience that comes from being with someone with local knowledge. This type of adventure tourist is far more likely to arrange their own travel and accommodation, and invest in hiring a well-known guide directly. Package deals for this kind of tourist experience would be very uncommon.

Because of the low ratios and the nature of the relationship and conditions, the guiding role can be demanding. For example, Mike Pescod, an International Federation of Mountain Guide Associations (IFMGA) guide recounts the challenge of balancing customer satisfaction, safety, and

external variables such as the weather:

» Quite often my clients have time restrictions imposed on them by bus or flight timetables. With one such deadline of catching a bus at 1 pm, guiding Point Five Gully took just two and a half hours. It was the culmination of six days of climbing, enduring some prolonged thaw conditions before the weather and quality of the ice finally improved. (Pescod, 2017, para. 9)

- What are the key differences and similarities between the two above scenarios?
- How could you analyse these scenarios using one of the models that we have discussed in this chapter? For example, what does each scenario entail, in terms of client skill, experience, and commitment? How commodified is each scenario?
- Can you think of another adventure tourism experience that contrasts with both of them?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have provided a brief historical outline of tourism in order to identify key factors that have had a direct influence on the more recent development of adventure tourism. These factors included the influence of Romantic sensibilities on European culture and tourists' desires to visit wild natural places as an alternative to their day-to-day lives; the emergence of interrelated products, services, and experiences in response to tourist demand; and the enduring desire of tourists to perform and represent their identities through what they do during their holidays. Adventure tourism is a distinct field that has more recently materialized from this history and is an increasingly significant sector

within the global tourism industry. We defined it as a commercial exchange that typically takes place in a nature-related setting, with the focus on an activity experienced directly and perceived as adventurous by the paying customer, regardless of how much control they have over the outcome.

In order to understand how the market has responded to these developments, we introduced two key concepts: Ritzer's (1993) McDonaldization and Bryman's (2004) Disneyization—both of which have been used to interrogate adventure practices. These analyses demonstrate how profit often trumps authentic adventure, as rationalizing processes often control experiences that appear to be 'risky' on the surface. This also highlights the subjective nature of perceived risk, which has consequences for the forms of adventure tourism on offer, the ways that guide choreograph adventures, and how adventure tourism influences identity.

The wide range of adventure tourism experiences can be positioned on various spectra and continua depending on how we want to analyse them, and we have drawn on various perspectives to emphasize how more or less commodified and accessible forms exist which cater to a range of motivations, experience levels, and economic resources. Rather than attribute over-simplified value judgements to the different ends of the spectra, we encourage you to use these theoretical tools with a critical eye, as you seek to more deeply understand the different forms of adventure tourism that you encounter: Who are the main beneficiaries? Who may be less able to access certain practices? And, who (or what) loses out?

Key Reading

Varley, P. (2006). Confecting adventure and playing with meaning: The adventure commodification continuum. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 11(2), 173–194.

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