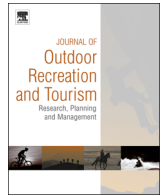


Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jort

Research on personal risk in outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism



1. Introduction

The subject of this special issue, “Risk in tourism and outdoor recreation” is of increasing relevance. Over the last decades, the popularity of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism has increased dramatically (see e.g., [Cordell, Green, & Betz, 2002](#); [Cordell, 2008](#); [TNS Opinion & Social, 2010](#); [Lamprecht, Fischer, & Stamm, 2014](#)) and the associated activities have become a hallmark of modern and healthy lifestyles in developed countries (see e.g., [Bell, Simpson, Tyrväinen, Sievänen, & Pröbstl, 2009](#); [Kux & Haider, 2014](#); [Pröbstl-Haider, Haider, Wirth, & Beardmore, 2015](#)). The [Outdoor Industry Association \(2013a\)](#) reports that in 2012, almost 143 million Americans—49% of the U.S. population—participated in an outdoor activity at least once in that year. This growing trend is also reflected in the steady growth of the outdoor recreation industry. Outdoor recreation related business in the United States experienced steady growth of approximately 5% annually between 2005 and 2011 and represents a substantial portion of the U.S. economy ([Outdoor Industry Association, 2013b](#)). Furthermore [Kuenzi and McNeely \(2008\)](#) state that nature-based tourism is the fastest growing sector of the global tourism industry.

Within this general trend, the segments of adventure tourism and adventure sports have been exhibiting particularly steep growth. Adventure tourism has been described as the process by which tourists purposefully seek specific activities with dangerous or uncertain outcomes to satisfy their desire to engage in adventurous behaviors ([Buckley, 2010, 2012](#); [Morgan & Fluker, 2006](#)). Similarly, [Breivik \(1996\)](#) defined adventure sports as those in which participants accept the possibility of severe injury, or even death, as an inherent part of engagement. According to the [Adventure Travel Trade Association \(2011\)](#), adventure tourism has contributed approximately one trillion U.S. dollars of global production value. The global report on adventure tourism by the United Nations World Tourism Organization states that about 40% of all 2013 travelers departed on adventure trips and that the global value of adventure tourism in that year was 263 billion U.S. dollars, an increase of 195% over the preceding two years ([United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2015](#)).

Examples of outdoor activities that are typically associated with adventure recreation and tourism are rock and ice climbing, mountaineering, backcountry skiing and mountain snowmobiling, white-water kayaking and rafting, canyoneering, mountain biking, surfing, skydiving, paragliding and BASE jumping. The personal risks experienced by participants in these activities can range from the risk of an unsuccessful trip due to changing or unexpected environmental conditions (e.g., unfavorable weather, unpassable glacier route) all the

way to the risk of injury or even death due to personal error or equipment failure. Even though the public generally does not consider nature-based recreation activities outside of adventure sports as risky (e.g., hiking, trekking, cycling, trail running, lake swimming or boating), they can be associated with considerable risks and uncertainties depending on conditions and circumstances.

Regardless of the personal reasons for participating in these activities and the magnitude of the risks involved, all recreationists aim to enjoy their activities to the fullest and return home safely. Research in the area of personal risk in outdoor recreation and tourism aims to comprehensively improve our understanding of the risks involved in these activities and to transform this knowledge into effective programs that can help recreationists and recreation providers to make informed choices when pursuing their activities. This editorial provides a general introduction to the topic of personal risk in recreation and tourism to set the stage for the papers included in this special issue of the *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism (JORT)*. After introducing each of the papers, we conclude by summarizing the emerging themes and offering a few thoughts on future research.

1.1. What is risk?

Risk has been defined in many different ways. Traditionally, scholars conceptualized risk from the perspective of the physical sciences where it is defined as the probability of an adverse event times the magnitude of its potential consequences (e.g., [Kaplan & Garrick, 1981](#)). However, extensive research in psychology and other social sciences (see e.g., [Slovic, 1987](#); [Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001](#); [Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor, 2004](#)) has shown that the concept of risk goes far beyond the physical dimension and is ultimately a complex social construct ([Johnson & Coviello, 1987](#)) that helps us deal with uncertainty. The International Organization for Standardization defines risk most generally as the “effect of uncertainty on objectives”, with the effect being a negative or positive deviation from the expected ([ISO, 2009](#)).

1.2. Personal risks in outdoor adventure sports and tourism

It is valuable for our discussion of personal risks in outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism to distinguish between adventure sports and other nature-based recreation activities, where personal risk-taking is not a defining aspect of the activity. Of course, this classification is a crude simplification since the transition between the two types of activities is gradual and each individual activity can be pursued at a range of risk levels. The most extreme forms of adventure recreation activities are commonly

referred to as 'extreme sports' (see, e.g., Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013).

The personal risks experienced during outdoor adventure sports have a particular set of characteristics (after Fischhoff, Slovic, Lichtenstein, Read, & Combs, 1978): they are voluntary, the sources of the risk are generally known (and mostly obvious), personal knowledge and technical skills can be used to control the risk (at least to a certain degree), the potential consequences of the risk are known, can be severe (potentially fatal) and are normally imminent in case of a mishap. However, the personal and social benefits associated with taking these risks can be tremendous. This tension between risk and reward makes outdoor adventure activities a unique area for self-expression, personal growth and skill development. Research by Lyng (1990, 2005) on 'edgework' and Stebbins (2005) on 'serious leisure' provide insightful perspectives into these worlds.

Academic research on personal risks in adventure outdoor sports spans many disciplines. Extensive accident investigation research in the medical and sport science literature aims to better understand the injury and fatality risks associated with these activities and the factors contributing to accidents (e.g., Bentley and Page, 2008; Boyd, Haegeli, Abu-Laban, Shuster, & Butt, 2009; Brighton, Sherker, Brander, Thompson, & Bradstreet, 2013; Haegeli, Falk, Brugger, Etter, & Boyd, 2011; Mei-Dan & Carmont, 2013; Monasterio, 2005; Windsor, Firth, Grocott, Rodway, & Montgomery, 2009). A related body of literature describes best treatment methods for critical injuries encountered in these activities (e.g., Brugger et al., 2013; Luks et al., 2010). Yet another branch examines the reliability and effectiveness of safety equipment (e.g., Vogwell & Minguetz, 2007; Haegeli et al., 2014).

Research in the social sciences offers a different perspective on risk in adventure sports by trying to better understand why people participate in these activities. Research grounded in psychology has studied how participants perceive the risks involved in these activities (e.g., Delle Fave, Bassi, & Massimini, 2003; Demirhan, 2005), explored their attitudes and motivations (e.g., Kerr & Mackenzie, 2012; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013; Gilbertson & Ewert, 2015) and examined how participation is possibly associated with personality traits (e.g., Brevik, 1996; Slinger & Rudestam, 1997; Goma-i-Freixanet, 2004; Zuckerman, 2006; Castanier, Le Scanff, & Woodman, 2010). Research by Weber, Blais, and Betz (2002) shows, however, that personal risk-taking might not necessarily be a personality trait, but rather a context-dependent choice that balances perceived risks and expected benefits. Broader studies in sociology, recreation studies, leisure science and tourism research have further improved the academic understanding of the nature of these activities and what draws people to participate in them (e.g., Ewert & Hollenhurst, 1989; Ewert, 1994; Creyer, Ross, & Evers, 2003; Pomfret, 2006; Rupf, 2014). Among the many findings, research in this area has established that risk itself might not necessarily be a primary motivator for participation in adventure outdoor sports, but rather a means for accessing intense experiences like 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), 'rush' (Buckley, 2012) and "the ability to maintain control over a situation that verges on complete chaos" (Lyng, 1990, p. 859).

Pursuing an adventure sports or tourism activity safely also requires an in-depth understanding of the physical hazard, the primary source of the risk. This is particularly relevant for hazards that vary substantially in space and/or time, which allows recreationists to manage their risk by choosing when and/or where to engage. Many of the natural hazards involved in adventure sports are well known (e.g., weather, rock fall, currents, etc.) and only limited adventure sport related natural science research is currently being conducted in these areas. An exception to this is avalanche hazard, which continues to be an active area of research directly related to recreation (see e.g., Haegeli & Schweizer, 2015 for overview of recent developments).

The development of effective safety initiatives requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the knowledge about the physical hazard, participants and accident patterns. A small body of research in this area has focused on examining recreationists' general preparedness for managing the risks associated outdoor adventure sports (e.g., Procter et al., 2013; Mason, Suner, & Williams, 2013). Behavioral research on backcountry skiing and mountain snowmobile riding, for example, has combined the perspectives from both the natural and social sciences to better understand how recreationists make decisions and manage their personal risk when travelling in avalanche terrain (e.g., McCammon, 2002; Haegeli, Haider, Longland, & Beardmore, 2010; Haegeli, Gunn, & Haider, 2012). McCammon (2004a, 2004b) and McCammon, Haegeli and Gunn (2008) provide examples of how lessons learned in health and prevention sciences can be used to develop effective prevention campaigns to reduce accidents and fatalities in outdoor adventure sports. Local knowledge about the recreation activity can be combined with research on warnings (e.g., Wogalter, 2006) to develop evidence-based, location-specific warning systems (e.g., Short & Hogan, 1994; Statham et al., 2010). Finally, social science research on recreationists' response to prevention initiatives and the effectiveness of warning systems (e.g., Sherker, Williamson, Hatfield, Brander, & Hayen, 2010; Hatfield, Williamson, Sherker, Brander, & Hayen, 2012) can provide valuable information for further improving such programs.

1.3. Personal risks in other nature-based recreation and tourism activities

While risk is not an essential part of the experience in non-adventure sport nature-based recreation and tourism, these activities can still involve personal risks. Relevant examples include risks from uncertainties in infrastructure and access (e.g., transportation network), political unrest or possible disease epidemics (for an overview see Glæfær, 2005). One of most researched uncertainty on nature-based tourism relates to the expected impacts of anthropogenic climate change. The latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states "warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, and sea level has risen." (IPCC, 2014). This development clearly poses a considerable threat to tourism in general and nature-based recreation in particular (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2008). The issue is multifaceted and there has been a considerable body of research in this area in recent years. Scott, Gössling, and Hall (2012) and Kaján and Saarinen (2013) provide detailed overviews on the topic that highlight the far-reaching consequences of climate change for the entire tourism system. Research on the effect of climate change on outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism most directly related to personal risks experienced by recreationists include studies examining the direct impact of climate change on recreational opportunities (e.g., Kääb, Reynolds, & Haerberli, 2005; Abegg, Shardul, Crick, & de Montfalcon, 2007; Hendriks, Zammit, Hreinsson, & Becken, 2013; Neuvonen, Sievänen, Fronzek, Lahtinen, Veijalainen, & Carter, 2015) and studies investigating recreationists responses to these changes (e.g., Unbehaun, Pröbstl, & Haider, 2008; Landauer, Haider, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2013; Brownlee & Verbos, 2015; Paudyal et al., 2015; De Urrioste-Stone, Scaccia, & Howe-Poteet, 2015; Pröbstl-Haider, Haider, Wirth & Beardmore, 2015; Tapsuwan, & Rongrongmuang, 2015). The results of these types of studies reveal how recreationists might manage the expected personal impacts and risks associated with climate change. This information is critical for assisting nature-based tourism destinations in the development of meaningful

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/92349>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/92349>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)