An Extra Dimension: Conceptualising Risk, Competence and Experience within the Adventure Experience Paradigm

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Abstract : With adventure tourism expanding rapidly (Mintel, 2008) it is important to understand customer needs, especially perceptions of risk, which is a vague concept and has detrimental effects upon participation and satisfaction (Bergfjord, 2009). The aim of this study is to critically analyse adventure tourism and whether consumer attitudes and demographics have an effect upon perceptions of risk. The development of a new conceptual model links directly to indings and proposes an extra depth to the adventure experience paradigm.

A mixed method approach is used to establish opinions around risk perception. This study finds that tourist typologies are not as expected from the literature, and from a limitation to the adventure experience paradigm, the concept of flow and primary research results, a new conceptual model is proposed considering perception of risk, competence and level of experience. This enables a consumer to identify more accurately the balance (flow) between all three variables.

Keywords: Adventure Tourism, Risk, Perception, Sport Tourism

Introduction

During the past 10 years, the travel and tourism sector has developed variations in the products and services offered to the customer (Shephard and Evans, 2005); adventure tourism is one of these developments that has grown rapidly due to increased commercialisation. However, the distinction between adventure tourism and many other niche trends such as; nature tourism, eco-tourism and outdoor recreation (Robinson, Heitmann, and Dieke, 2011) makes the area difficult to define because of its wide variety and opportunities dependant on participant's characteristics (Buckley, 2006). It generally involves an activity, usually outdoors with the use of specialist equipment; common activities include climbing and sailing (Buckley, 2007).

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"Adventure tourism today is the result of a number of streams of thinking ... some of which are hundreds and even thousands of years old" (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003, p.38). An example of this is hedonism which can be described as pleasure seeking. Romans travelled for sensual pleasures and gambling, similar to the 18-30 market today who have the same motivations of pleasure and gambling but an up to date model has been created to meet their needs (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003). Consequently it could be argued that some elements of niche tourism existed before mass tourism and therefore adventure tourism although not labelled or recognised by the tourism industry existed many years ago (Marson, 2011).

The skill level within adventure activities has a major impact upon participation, ranging from very unskilled to extreme adventure where a high skill level is required as well as supervision and specific equipment (Buckley, 2007). Adventure tourism involves numerous elements of risk and in some circumstances develops completely around the thrill of risks (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003). Cater (2006) suggests that there is an indication that the level of high-risk takers is increasing in the modern tourism world, therefore essential to consider. Within the concept of risk, there are a number of key theories, all of which conclude that it very much depends on personal preference and previous experience within an activity. Therefore, risk is a multidimensional area which is affected by a number of issues for each individual (Cater, 2006).

Sung (2004) expresses the importance of motivation for participation through identifying categories of adventure tourism considering different reasons for taking part. Williams and Soutar (2009) discuss value and satisfaction within adventure tourism, identifying a limitation to their study. When looking at the satisfaction and behaviour of adventure tourists, perceptions of risk and its relation to demographics affects results, thus further research is needed (Williams and Soutar, 2009). Further research will provide an understanding of motivations and types of tourists regarding participation in adventure tourism. Williams and Soutar (2009) also discuss that risk has an immediate effect upon emotional reactions which are identified as a driver for participation and satisfaction. However, Bergfjord (2009) states that risk is a difficult concept to research due to vague and individual perceptions, but recognises the importance of the area to study for future

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understanding of customers. Williams and Soutar (2009, p431) state that "further research is also needed to explore the 'adventure' dimension in more detail" concentrating on risk as a component which may result in increased levels of participation and satisfaction.

Adventure Tourism: A Modern Typology

The birth of adventure tourism within the modern day tourism industry is a subcategory of mainstream sport tourism, and through mass marketing and media attention more people become "immersed into the sport and adventure tourism phenomena" (Roberts, 2011, p. 149). Butler's Tourism Lifecycle can be used to explore the current state of the adventure tourism sector, which would fit into the development stage, as an activity undergoing rapid growth (Moore and Whitehall, 2005). This is demonstarted by an adventure tour operator, KE Adventure (2010) who have grown and developed their services over the last few years and are experiencing an increasing number of customers. Another organisation, Headwater has been trading for twenty-six years and recently expanded to operate in over thirty countries (Headwater, 2011).

Most tourists understand the type of adventure that suits them through looking at risk and competence, because the "interaction of perceived risk and competence is central to the perception of adventure in any situation" (McIntyre and Roggenbuck, 1998, p.407). The paradigm scale (Figure 1) helps with this and is created from analysing risk and competence against each other for category creation. To define competence, it involves many factors such as knowledge, skill and confidence; these need to be taken into consideration when applying this model (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003). At the lowest level of risk is exploration and experimental up to devastation and disaster which involves an individual's competence being outweighed by risk and therefore a disaster is likely to occur. The consumer chooses an activity that matches both the level of competency and risk; this should be around peak adventure because this "is the point where an adventure experience has the most value to the individual" (Morgan and Stevens, 2008, p.953).

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Figure 1: The Adventure Experience Paradigm

(Adapted from Morgan and Stevens, 2008)

A similar model (figure 2) is identified by Mortlock, (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003) and also uses risk and competence to show stages of adventure. It explores how the level of challenge within an activity "must be within the capacity of the participants but... there must also be some expectation that they can meet or overcome the challenge" (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003, p. 11). The model still requires the participant to decide upon the level of risk and competence they are capable of to match the type of adventure suitable to themselves.

Figure 2: Mortlock's Four Stages of Adventure
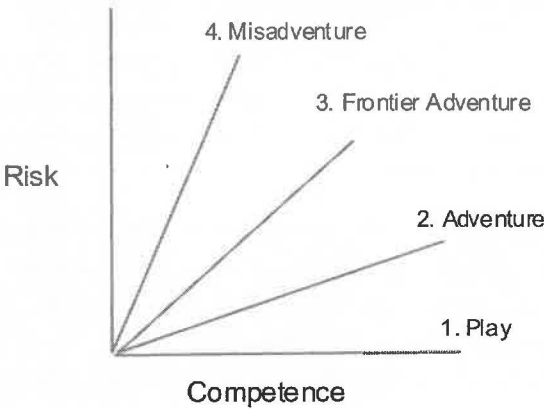
(Adapted from Mortlock, 1984)

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Within both of these concepts it is likely that some people will incorrectly predict their level of risk and adventure, "the novelty of adventure experience for the participants ensures that most individuals will have an inaccurate perception of risk and competence" (Kiklevich, 2010, p.16). This model presumes that individuals are capable of selecting their level of skill and risk. It is also common that after completing an activity for the first time the level of risk decreases dramatically and competence increases so individuals could move between segments of the model, therefore cannot fit into one specific area, which the graph implies (Kiklevich, 2010). The adventure experience paradigm (figure 1) and Mortlock's four stages of adventure (figure 2) are useful models to use because they could help split adventure travellers into categories in order to understand the types of customer. However they have limitations that need to be taken into account by using other theories alongside it for the most reliable research.

The UK Adventure Tourism Market

Adventure activities can be categorised to some extent using the soft vs. hard model. 'Hard' includes extreme activities such as rock climbing (Roberts, 2011). 'Soft' could involve adventurous tours, for example a snow coach tour around glaciers (Hudson, 2003). This shows the diversity of the adventure market and flexibility to suit a range of budgets (Mintel, 2008); it also has the ability to bring in high income and profits for organisations. In order to understand the types of tourists who participate in particular activities and why, it is necessary to explore Plog's tourist typology. The type of tourist that travels on adventure tourism holidays, according to Plog is the mid-centric to allocentric tourist, depending on location and how adventurous the holiday is. (Cooper *et al*, 2005).

Keeling (2003) concurs with this and identifies that the most popular typology of adventure tourist is a male aged under 34. However, market research statistics on Mintel (2008) regarding the age of visitors attending the 2007 London adventure travel show demonstrated that "over 27% of visitors were between 52-60, with more than 55% aged over 40" (Mintel, 2008). These statistics do not fit into the concept of the 'older tourist' psychocentric way of thinking. This is also demonstrated by tour operators high average ages of customers; for example Exodus, a well established

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and recognised adventure travel tour operator have an average customer age of 42 (Mintel, 2008). This is because of the ageing population who have the ability to lead tourism demand (Glover and Prideaux, 2008), therefore need to be taken into consideration as they dominate a large proportion of potential consumers. In order to do this, the industry needs to understand the consumers needs, particularly perceptions of risk which are explored within the research of this study.

Motivations within Adventure Tourism

Sung (2004) outlines the 6 key elements which define adventure travel, these are; activity, environment, experience, risk, performance and motivation. Of those it is suggested that risk and motivation require further explanation because they have a greater influence on participation. When associated with adventure tourism, it can be categorised into "risk seeking, self-discovery, self-actualisation, contact with nature and social contact" (Sung, 2004, p.345). Self-actualisation is not only mentioned by Sung (2004) it is relevant in all forms of tourism and can be explored using Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This theory suggests that people move gradually upward in the hierarchy (Rishi, Moghe, and Upadhyay, 2008) because it is not possible to seek higher stages until all basic survival needs are established. However, some are not as important to all people and others may not exist in the hierarchy (Rishi, Moghe, and Upadhyay, 2008). Within adventure tourism, the main motivation as identified is risk and it is seen that adventure tourists want to seek risk in order to meet self-actualisation (peak adventure in the adventure experience paradigm in figure 1). However, some adventurers are willing to skip some of the lower needs such as safety (risk) to fulfil a higher need. This contradicts the hierarchy as Maslow suggests that the lower needs must be met first, but in some situations "only through risk and danger do some individuals meaningfully satisfy their needs" (Walle, 1997, p. 268), this may then be explained as the insight theory. Overall the primary goal for motivation within adventure tourism as identified by Buckley (2006) is for the traveller to experience thrills and fear, but not actual risk; it is therefore complicated to understand motivations for a wide range of consumers and is explored within the research in this study.

Perceived Levels of Risk

There are three areas of risk management discussed within literature; psychological, medical and legal; this study will focus on the participants percpetions of risk which falls into the psychological category (Buckley, 2010). Adventure tourism involves "doing things that are out of the ordinary, in new environments, with some element of risk, either real or perceived" (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003, p. 51). It appears in the modern tourism world the level of risk-taking is increasing, with the number of adventurous types growing within the population and percentages of low risk-takers decreasing (Cater, 2006). The idea of flow, which is "the sense of effortless action felt in moments" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p.46) of enjoyment in activities, helps to understand the balance between risk and skill for an individual. Flow occurs when overcoming a challenge; to either make it harder or if it is already too hard, flow helps develop new skills to make it more enjoyable. It is a motivational theory during an activity that ensures the right level of skill for an individual. Flow aims to source mental energy to focus attention and motivation. It is more likely to be found in leisure and tourism, where activities require personal selection and choices can be made to increase or decrease the level of flow (Cater, 2006).

This concept also has many limitations that need to be considered, for example, it is not easy or consistent to identify a moment of flow as it varies between individual personalities therefore difficult to apply generally (Kiklevich, 2010). Cater (2006) suggests that a more relevant model to use in adventure tourism regarding levels of risk would be the adventure tourism paradigm discussed earlier (figure 1) as it graphically displays clear boundaries, however the two concepts could work together because "when the two are matched there is the condition of peak adventure that corresponds to the balanced nature of flow suggested by Csikszentmihalyi" (Cater, 2006, p. 319).

This is demonstrated by figure 3, it shows the adventure experience paradigm but with the ideal level of flow highlighted where the participant is finding the ideal balance between competence and risk. This adaptation is useful as it combines elements of both models to give further analysis, which enables an individual to more successfully identify which category of the

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adventure experience paradigm they fit into in relation to the ideal moment of flow. It is crucial to establish the right level of risk because clients need to feel safe and comfortable to be able to engage in an activity, but have an element of excitement within the experience for increased customer satisfaction (Buckley, 2010).

Figure 3: The Adventure Experience Paradigm and Flow
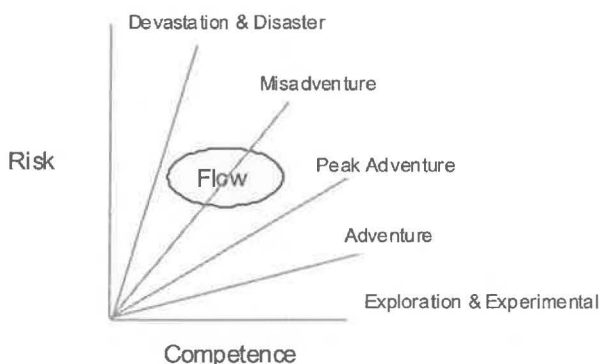
(Adapted from Morgan and Stevens, 2008)

Risk is a power motivator within adventure tourism and stimulates individuals to complete an activity, "any absence of risk from the experience could well result in a decline in satisfaction or even loss of urge to participate" (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003, p. 70). This would be detrimental to the tourism industry and could result in losing part of the market. Overall, adventure tourism involves elements of both positive and negative risk; an individual needs to find a level that is suitable for them using the relevant models that have been explored. The way that risk is viewed depends upon their experience and the type of activity, as well as personality (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003). There are many variables involved within adventure tourism that need to be balanced effectively to be successful.

Problems with Defining Motivations and Risk within Adventure Tourism

Some of the problems in both motivation and risk have already been explored when identifying models and their limitations but generally "risk perceptions are subjective measures and not easy to apply in more formal

objective models" (Bergfjord, 2009, p. 94). To assess risk, decision makers within any industry tend to focus on risk sources that are concrete or easily fit into a model. This may have implications because it is a central element of any business but particularly adventure tourism due to the range of activities and participants; therefore it needs to be identified as a vague concept, which is hard to apply (Bergfjord, 2009). A key issue for adventure based programmes when identifying risk within participants is the level and management of perceived or actual risk; this has been discussed briefly when describing the concept of flow (Morgan and Stevens, 2008). Actual risk can be reviewed and documented within a model, yet perceived risk cannot. This is also identified by Hunter-Jones, Jeffs and Smith (2007, p.245). It is also common that risk perception changes when the activity has been completed more than once, therefore one participant can range through various stages of risk (figure 1).

Motivation for adventure tourism has many elements which have been identified, the main one being risk. The difficulty is identifying a list of motivations for an activity as it depends highly upon personalities of participants thus traditional concepts for motivation do not offer enough scope for adventure tourism. It is therefore necessary to use a number of models which makes it possible to overcome the "narrow and limited paradigms... for outdoor adventure" (Walle, 1997, p. 280) and take into account that people have specific goals and motives together with a personal, and in some cases unique definition of adventure tourism.

Methodology

For this study, the methodological approach is primarily phenomenology because it has been effectively used in past research and is a common stance in the leisure and tourism industry (Brotherton, 2008). There are elements of positivism (from a quantitative stance), however these have an interpretative approach where meanings are grasped through social action in order to capture people's perceptions (Smith, 2010) by using Likert scales and analysing programmes such as SPSS to gather statistics. Qualitative and quantitative methods are adopted (Jennings, 2010) resulting in highlighting different issues important for interpretation of results (Brotherton, 2008),

allowing triangulation. Following reviews of various past studies (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000) related to adventure tourism and risk perception, a questionnaire is used, providing valuable quantitative data including demographics and perceptions. This tool is commonly used within tourism and hospitality (Schott, 2007; Page, Steele, and Connell, 2006; Bergfjord, 2009). A self-complete survey using a Likert scale has been identified as the most suitable measuring tool with regards to consumer's opinions in a number of related studies (Bergfjord, 2009; Qi, Gibson and Zhang, 2009; Mohammad and Som, 2010; Kiklevich, 2010). However a small number used face-to-face research methods, which will also be incorporated (Schott, 2007; Page, Steele, and Connell, 2006).

A pilot test was completed (Brotherton, 2008) with people who had completed some kind of adventure tourism, therefore similarities to the respondents who will be at Cannock Chase. The focus group was also piloted for final planning of the session as it gives "likely themes for discussion and people's responses to them" (Litosseliti, 2003, p.53). It also gave an opportunity for opinions to be gathered with regards to the picture activity, which was the main part of the focus group. A convenience sampling approach was used so it was possible to fairly evaluate all demographics (Glover and Prideaux, 2008) that were at the adventure locations by surveying as many respondents there that were willing to take part.

The sample was taken at two areas within Cannock Chase where different activities take place ensuring that all demographics participating in both hard and soft activities (Swarbrooke et al, 2003) were included. The first was Cannock Chase Visitor Centre and the second Birches Valley Visitor Centre. This approach targeted the right people for the results and "tends to be used in the context of outdoor recreation studies" (Veal, 2006, p244).

The qualitative research tool was a focus group (Brotherton, 2008) and involves different tourist typologies and demographics discussing perception of risks between themselves for a deeper understanding. This method also involves a content analysis on marketing of adventure tourism, providing focus on particular words, themes and images, which stand out to participants (Singh and Formica, 2006), allowing both verbal and visual aspects to

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be deliberated (Page, Steele, and Connell, 2006). Finn, Elliott-White and Walton (2000) identify that within the tourism field, a growing number of content analyses are based around brochures; consequently, a brochure from an operator in the adventure tourism industry was presented to a wide range of consumers to investigate the impact of advertising and sales upon perceptions of risk and future purchasing of a holiday. "A better understanding of the relationship between marketing practices and the client experience of adventure would also assist the adventure tourism industry and build on previous research" (Morgan and Fluker, 2003, p.59).

The focus group was aimed at participants who were not necessarily adventure inclined. An element of purposive sampling also took place where it is the judgment of the researcher to determine whether individuals will be able to provide the most useful information for the study (Kumar, 2005). Initially the group were given a definition of adventure tourism because of limited knowledge of the industry; then several discussion questions, 'what is your perception of a risk?' 'how does the level of risk become influenced by factors such as training and guide supervision?' 'do you think that the level of risk which is perceived to be involved in an activity changes once someone has participated once?' These questions are able to be directly linked to comments from the questionnaire to compare research methods. A further questionnaire was also used at the focus group using elements of the original questionnaire such as the Likert scale and demographic questionnaires; allowing easier comparisons between the tourist typologies.

The content analysis took place where a number of images from an adventure tourism brochure were shown to the group with each member asked about the perceived level of risk. The images were selected by using the scale in the brochure; one image from each of the four categories was used to reduce limitations. Each individual image within the categories was then selected on a purposive sampling basis where it was possible for the researcher to choose the images most appropriate for the respondents' level of adventure tourism, and "the best information to achieve the objectives of the study" (Kumar, 2005, p.179). The images that were first of all shown to the group on their own (without any details of the tour); participants described what level of risk they thought was involved within the activity. Next, the same image was shown together with all of the surrounding information

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given in the brochure and participants were asked if perceptions of risk changes with additional information. This information shows how customers of various ages and other demographics that are not adventure inclined feel about how the tours are being marketed in regards to their perceptions of risk.

The quantitative and qualitative data was analysed separately, SPSS interpreted the quantitative results from the questionnaires. The qualitative data was transcribed by using the recording of the focus group, coding took place by assigning each respondent with a letter, this code was also written on the corresponding questionnaire to the respondent so the demographics can be matched up to the responses made during the focus group.

Findings and Discussion

From the 100 responses collected, Univariate analysis was used to identify key themes for analysis and to flag up any errors within the data before further analysis takes place (Farmington, 2001). This was done through discussing demographics of the respondents who completed the questionnaires.

For the questionnaire, the gender of respondents was 49% males and 51% females. Age is an important factor to consider as established earlier, the frequency percentages are; 38% aged 18-34's, 45% aged 35-54's and 17% aged 55 and older. Another component explored is the number of children under 18 each respondent had, the results showed that, 32% had none, 51% had 1 or 2 children and 17% had 3 or more. After examining this data, it has shown the most common respondents were females aged 35-54, with 1-2 children. This profile does not coincide with the key characteristics of the market identified by Keeling (2003) who states that most commonly participants are under 34 and male, this could be because Cannock is a family orientated adventure location (Visit Cannock Chase, 2012), or that since 2003 the market has widened and is appealing to an increasing number of differing demographics.

Now the profile has been established, bivariate analysis can take place, using advanced methods of analysis such as two-way ANOVA tests. A

chi-square cross tabulation test was used to explore relationships between two variables that have two or more categories (Pallant, 2006). When looking at age and the perceived risk level of respondents for red/black cycle route, the results show that 61.1% of people that perceived it to be of very high risk were aged18-34 and only 16.7% aged 55 and older, indicating that risk is imperative to participants of all ages. This is also the case for horse riding, where of the people who agreed that it involved a high-risk level 40% were aged 18-34 and 20% 55 and older.

The chi-square test for cycling red/black route indicates that there is not a significant difference between age and risk perception for this activity because the 'Asymp Sig' value is more than .05 at .162. This means that the results for the two variables are as expected, and the age groups are the same in some respects. Also the expected count shows that it is above the minimum for the test to be valid, thus violating the results. However, the information is still relevant to this study as it creates a link between age and risk, key variables in the aims and objectives, therefore used within analysis.

Linking this to previous literature, Plog explores tourist types where the older a tourist, the more psychocentric they are (Cooper et al, 2005). The research that has been carried out questions this theory because it shows that the older respondents in some cases thought activities were less risky than the younger respondents. Mintel (2008) also found this, with high percentages of older consumers interested or participating in adventure tourism. The primary and some secondary data suggest that the concept discussed by Cooper et al (2005) is not relevant in all cases.

Plog's typology positions adventurous in the allocentric category of the model, suggesting the participant is outgoing and travels significantly to new destinations (Cooper et al, 2005). It also explains psychocentric travellers as those travelling within familiar surroundings, yet the highest number of respondents at 36% had travelled for only 16-30 minutes, which was a close distance to home. Only 13% had travelled over an hour, which disagrees with Plog's typology, suggesting that more of the adventure respondents remained in familiar surroundings. 'Adventurous' should therefore not just be in the allocentric category of the concept but in all three due to different levels of adventure which suit all types of tourist. The

results show that most respondents took part in adventure tourism within the UK. Consequently it appears that adventure is not always completed in new destinations, which contradict some features of Plog's typology.

For a low risk activity, in this case walking, the highest percentage of people (35.6%) who had taken part had travelled 16-30 minutes; whereas, for a higher risk activity such as the red/black cycling route the highest percentage is split between 31 minutes - 1 hour and over 1 hour with 30.4% for each. These results therefore support Plog's typology because it appears that the further someone had travelled the more likely they had completed a higher risk activity (Cooper *et al*, 2005).

Question two looks at other activities respondents have completed outside the Cannock Chase area, identifying if they had participated, the risk level and location. Of the respondents that had taken part in Rock Climbing the most common risk level (41.7%) is 'moderate risk'. Whereas, for people who had not participated, the most common rating was 'high risk' (48.4%). By comparison, of those respondents who had tried Diving only 16.7% considered it to be 'high risk' whereas 47.6% of those who had not tried it suggested a 'high risk' level. Both of these results indicate that generally people who had not tried an activity thought the risk level was higher than people who had. Using averages, again for diving, results for those who had tried it at least once before a mean score of 3.39 (moderate - high) was recorded, whereas individuals who had not taken part gave a mean of 4.32 (high - very high). When discussing the adventure experience paradigm a limitation to the model is the fact that it does not take into account that individuals may move between categories if they have previously completed the activity. This is because as the skill level increases the risk level decreases; therefore fitting into one category alone may not be an option (Kiklevich, 2010). This demonstrates the changing perception of adventure tourism and signifies an opportunity for the model to be adapted taking these findings into consideration.

Focus Group Results

There was a fairly even split in genders with 60% males and 40% females, this also applied to the age groups with 50% aged 18-34, 30%

aged 35-54 and 20% aged 55 and older; ensuring that opinions were gathered from a variety of people. The final demographic (number of children) had a 50% split of respondents with and without children under 18.

To begin the in-depth analysis; from the questionnaire it was unclear what the respondents' perception of a risk was as it only asked them to rate the activities according to the level of risk they perceived and did not ask for a definition. This element was explored during the focus group to establish a non-academic definition of risk. There were a number of different ideas raised regarding a definition and individual's perceptions including;

"the better you are at an activity the lower the risk" (Participant J)

"skills definitely involved" (Participant J)

"it all depends on the equipment you got as well that would lower your risk levels" (Participant I)

From the amount of varying components raised during the discussion of what a risk is, it demonstrates that the research agreed with the literature reviewed; risk is a vague concept that has different meanings to different people (Bergfjord, 2009). Swarbrooke *et al* (2003) explained that there can be both positive and negative risk, this has also been identified in the research; negative refers to something that cannot be controlled such as being scared of an activity, discussed by participants G and H with a fear of horses and heights. Positive is something that can be controlled and may be viewed as a challenge; this was discussed by participant I and J, who thought that with the right equipment and induction the risk would lower therefore making the adventure more enjoyable. This research also supports the model of flow, when the balance between risk and skill is achieved, and identifies that this moment of enjoyment is personal because perceptions are individual to each participant. Consequently the level of flow cannot be applied to more than one person (Cater, 2006). The focus group identified this with varied opinions of what would affect each participant's level of flow.

This is also the case regarding the importance of materials for finding out about risk; during the Cannock Chase questionnaire overall amongst all age categories signs came top. However, when completing the same means test using the questionnaire filled in by less adventure inclined participants at the focus group, it showed that rangers were the most important material

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with the highest mean of 4.60 (between important and very important). This could be because the participants take part in fewer activities so need more guidance whereas the respondents from the questionnaire have more experience or knowledge in the area.

However, Participant G said that even if a ranger or supervisor was there to watch it would not make any difference because things can still go wrong. An example of the recent bungee jump event was given where the equipment snapped (Burca, 2012).

"The prime example obviously is what happened when that lady was bungee jumping, which was a supervised event" (Participant G).

This is demonstrating the individuality of perception of risk within adventure tourism because of the amount of factors that it depends upon (Swarbrooke *et al*, 2003) particularly when finding the moment of flow as explained above.

Results so far have looked at how risk is mainly affected by demographics, nevertheless, the focus group highlighted that this is not always the case, because personal preference to a particular activity or hobby will also have an impact on an individuals perception of risk. Participants A and B, who both fit into the 18-34 age group are a good example of this, on a number of occasions particularly for the Saharan trip, they referred to their interests affecting risk;

"It is the location in general"

"It sounds dull" (Participant B)

"We are not really hot weather people"   (Participant A)

These examples are another link back to positive and negative risk from Swarbrooke *et al* (2003) as they identify something uncontrollable; if a respondent has a dislike, they will not change their mind and therefore have a negative attitude to the risk whatever the situation, or how it is described to them within the brochure. This is interesting because out of all four trips used this was rated the lowest on the scale used by KE adventure which used descriptions such as 'easy trekking', highlighting that for these

participants risk is not the only factor that affects their choice of activity, it was location and weather.

One of the examples given in the content analysis during the focus group was a trip to Uganda; this had the highest skill and risk level according to the brochure. The participants agreed with this level of risk in both parts of the activity (with and without description), "I think that the Uganda trip would be the high risk" (Participant C). However, even though all participants agreed that there was a high level of risk involved, it was also the trip out of the four that the majority would like to try,

"Risk I'd probably say the Uganda trip but if I had to choose one of these trips to go on I would probably say I'd go on that one" (Participant C)

"Yeah it is the more interesting one" (Participant B)

This research links back to earlier discussion where limitations to Maslow's hierarchy of needs were explored, the model suggests progression through each stage thus the lower steps need to be achieved to move higher up the model (Rishi, Moghe and Upadhyay, 2008). As research earlier has shown this is not always the case; the results from the focus group also show similar limitations. For the Uganda snow trip, individuals were willing to skip lower stages such as safety needs and risk because they felt they would enjoy participating in an activity with an element of danger in order to reach higher needs such as self-actualisation (Walle, 1997), because they "would get more satisfaction" (Participant C). This applied to most of the members of the focus group therefore across a number of demographics.

It was indicated through discussion at the focus group that participants felt that a red cycle route was high risk and experience was needed "you'd have to be experienced wouldn't you to go on red routes you couldn't do that without experience" (Participant D). However when looking back at the Cannock questionnaire results it shows using a cross-tabulation that of the 29 respondents that had completed the red cycle route 11 of them had never taken part in a green route. This might be because the participants at the focus group were not regular adventure tourists so did not have the required skills and confidence to complete the riskier routes. Whereas, the respondents at Cannock Chase were more frequent adventure tourists possessing skills

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in other adventure activities so felt more comfortable starting at a higher route. These results are emphasising the importance of skill or competence when taking part in adventure tourism, which is an important component on the adventure experience paradigm in figure 1 (Morgan and Stevens, 2008).

A number of issues were raised at various stages of the focus group regarding personal barriers or issues that applied to individual participants linking directly to the elements of perceived risk (experience, personality, skill and socialisation) discussed by Morgan and Stevens (2008) in the actual and perceived risk concept. One issue was in regards to previous childhood experiences; participants from a range of age demographics felt that if you were encouraged not to do something as a child or did not get the opportunity, it would affect your participation when you were older, "if you are told not to do something you won't do it" (Participant A). Experience is identified as one of the 6 key elements that define adventure tourism by Sung (2004), therefore agreeing with the comments made during the focus group that it has an impact upon adventure tourism involvement. The questionnaire completed at Cannock Chase shows that 68% of respondents had a child under the age of 18, demonstrating that a number of children are being given the opportunity to experience some sort of adventure tourism thus completing one of the 6 key elements (Sung, 2004).

Conclusion

When investigating demographics within adventure tourism, it was confirmed that tourist typologies are not necessarily as easy to define as some of the concepts suggested (Cooper *et al*, 2005; Keeling, 2003). The literature states that adventure tourists are young, allocentric (according to Plog's tourist typology) and likely to be male (Keeling, 2003). The questionnaire research that has been carried out disagreed with these statements with a higher percentage of females and a relatively even spread of ages, suggesting that adventure tourists are not always allocentric, therefore can fit into other areas of the tourist typology model.

Literature indicated that risk perception is a vague concept with varying definitions. Focus group results verified this, suggesting participants had diverse ideas of what a risk was, providing examples of positive and nega-

tive perceptions as discussed by Swarbrooke *et al* (2003). Personal preference/barriers were a repeated comment by all participants of different demographics within the focus group; it also had an immediate impact upon the perceived risk, even though in most cases there was limited actual risk involved (Morgan and Steven, 2008).

It was discussed that the adventure experience paradigm and Mortlock's four stages of adventure are similar models with limitations highlighted regarding the concept not giving an opportunity to identify experience that an individual has in the particular activity. There is also an issue with inaccurately selecting the level of risk and competence (Kiklevich, 2010). The model was adapted to include the risk theory Flow (Cater, 2006); this then allowed an individual to identify where they are positioned more easily and an opportunity for greater depth in understanding their motivation. However, the results from the questionnaire demonstrated that once experience is gained the perception of risk is lower than if the activity has never been completed, this is because previous experience is an aspect that affects perceptions (Novelli, 2005). This was also reiterated during the focus group with participants indicating that they would feel more comfortable if they were familiar with the situation. Thrill seekers were the exception to this statement though. Therefore, the adventure experience paradigm can be adapted further to include the experience element which offers the participant greater depth in order to more accurately identify where they fit within the concept.

The adapted concept (figure 4) uses the original labels 'perception of risk' and 'competence', as identified on the adventure experience diagram. It encompasses an extra dimension through considering the level of experience, which was recognised as a significant factor when thinking or carrying out an adventure activity. A dual axis graph is the most suitable way to show this concept because it allows more than two variables to be analysed on the same chart (Griffith, 2010). There is also scope to have varying scales on each axis to simplify the comparison of the results from each of the variables, a key component for this model. The diagonal line through the centre of the graph represents the level of flow (Cater, 2006) for the participant where they feel most comfortable with all three variables balanced for them to enjoy and complete the activity. An example of

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the concept is that if a participant is not competent and has no previous experience in an activity, the perception of risk involved would be high whereas if a participant has previous experience and a sufficient level of competence, the perception of risk would be lower. There is however some exceptions to this concept where the individual enjoys high levels of risk, as identified in primary research, but for the majority of participants this would apply. Overall this model allows an individual to more successfully predict the suitable perception of risk and level of flow involved in an activity, which in turn solves one of the limitations to the original model recognised by Kiklevich (2010).

Figure 4: Perception of Risk, Competence and Level of Experience in Relation to an Adventure Tourism Activity
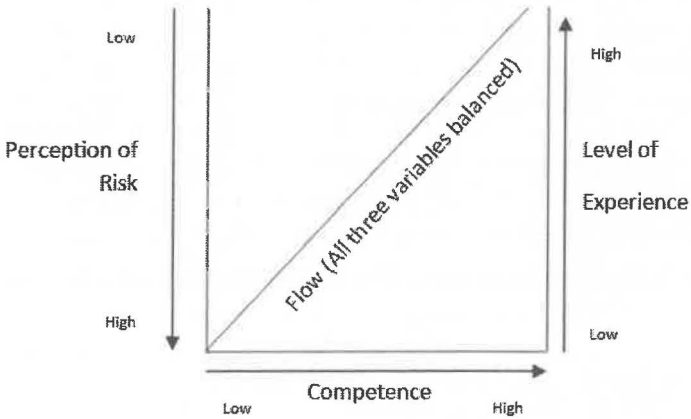
I ... how the findings support and in some cases contradict the literature, it is possible to say that to a degree, demographics of participants within adventure tourism in the UK has an effect on the perception of risk. However, in relation to the growing number and range of participants taking part in adventure tourism, demographics are having a reduced effect on perception of risk; although the majority of respondents within both research methods in this study indicated that there is a reluctance concerning risk and demographics.

Recommendations and Future Research

- Explore in greater depth the effects of childhood experiences on future participation. It was identified within the primary research that activities participants were subjected to as a child influenced how and what they completed later in life.

- Results were collated during a school holiday consequently this influenced results with a large number respondents having at least one child with them. It would be interesting and useful to look at these figures at different times of year to gain a fuller perspective. Nevertheless, these findings indicate that parents feel adventure tourism activities are suitable for family participation (Keeling, 2003).

- During the focus group, results indicated that the perceptions of a risk were varied for the less inclined adventure tourists. This information provided an understanding into customer risk perception but further exploration for regular participants would provide the researcher and industry with an insight regarding risk for both contrasting markets.

- This study is based within the UK because of a research gap explored. A wider range of participant opinions and adventure tourism activities could be gathered through repeating this study at other locations to expand the depth of knowledge already gained. This would in turn create a broader perspective of risk perception amongst adventure tourism.

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