# THE CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE ADVENTURE TOURISM LITERATURE BETWEEN THE 1990s-2010s

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**Introduction**

In my study, I aim to present those different narratives that were depicted in the literature of adventure tourism and interpreted the concept of it. I want to identify how these narratives evolved over a certain period of time (1990s-2010s) and the possible conceptual gaps and/or practical or empirical issues that have been under-researched or neglected within this field. In addition, I intend to investigate the methodologies applied within the literature on adventure tourism. In this discussion, I aim to identify a number of methodical white spots that future research may contribute to through innovative methodical approaches. I think it is necessary, because the research had been conducted in adventure tourism mostly based on quantitative methods, which were descriptive and not predictive and it seems that the methodological scope stagnated over the years, which might have been insufficient to fully discover the dynamics of adventure travel. The researchers did not prove to be innovative regarding the methods and the state of the art techniques still seem to be intact, however the growing complexity of adventure tourism consumption and production should motivate the use of them (Cheng et al., 2016). It is also an interesting question, that in this niche segment, where the tourists' participation so actively forms the outcome of the experience, why the quantitative methods were used in majority and whether these methods gave the proper basis for the epistemology of adventure travel.

I think the revision is important, as the adventure tourism is an exciting research field because of two facts: at the very beginning of its research only a restricted number of people were considered to be "real" adventure travelers which provided the first narratives, and despite its growing significance, there are still some narratives that researchers neglect even nowadays. On the other hand, adventure tourism is an interesting concept in an era, when the everyday routines motivate people to try themselves in unusual situations and get out of their comfort zone (Carnicelli-Filho, 2010). Adventure tourism was born thank to the desire of people, who continuously seek new experiences and place their bets higher, in order to differentiate themselves from the masses (Bott, 2015). This is not only an umbrella term for a bunch of activities which increase the adrenaline level of the participants but a valuable mean for people on the road which leads to finding themselves. To provide the accuracy of this statement, I aim to give a review on those papers and research which have been conducted between the 1990s and today, with defining those narratives that significantly influenced the research on this area and those which are still needed to be covered by the researchers. The reason I am doing my research in this specific era, is that it was the 1990s, when scholars started to investigate

adventure tourism as an independent form within the industry, as it started to attract more and more tourist from this time on (Zurick, 1992).

A parallel can be drawn between the evolution of the concepts of travel and adventure tourism. As Edensor (2001) claims, that "the tourist industry and the dynamic agency of tourists … continually (re)produce diverse forms of tourism and space (Edensor, 2001, p.59) this phenomenon of continous "reproduction" can be observed in the case of adventure travel as well (Bott, 2015). Kane and Tucker (2004) indicates in their work, the historical meaning of the word travel was connected with the exploration of the unknown territories, which involved the uncertainty of the outcome and the challenges of the trip. Whereas adventure tourism is still a niche segment in tourism, the wider commercialization of it brought new perspectives and added different narratives to its interpretation, which shows similar signs to the conceptualization of travel, as the practice of adventure tourism became more common, than it was 20 years ago.

**The narratives in the literature of adventure tourism**

As so many areas in the field of research in the tourism industry are characterized by disagreement in conceptualization, the adventure tourism is no exception from this problem. There is no generally accepted definition of adventure tourism due to its nature and the many different aspects, that should be considered when one is trying to define what adventure tourism exactly is. This form of tourism appeared around the 1980s when a paradigm shift took place in the international tourism and alternative models started to emerge as a response to the negative practices of mass tourism (Zurick, 1992). Adventure tourism was part of this new wave as a form of „green" or „alternative" tourism and at the 1995 PATA Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Conference and Mart it was even stated that the ecotourism and adventure tourism are gradually merging into one type of tourism with more socially and environmentally responsible tourism products, in addition, they should always stay niche segments in order to provide these characteristics (Lew, 1996; Cloke & Perkins, 1998). Other scholars, however, drew a definite border which distinguished adventure tourism from other forms, even if there are overlaps with them. Hunt (1989), lists different factors, such as skills, the effort required, the degree of remoteness or the level of contrivance, to define the characteristics of adventure tourism. Smith and Jenner (Smith & Jenner, 1999 in Swarbrooke et al., 2003) define the quality and length of the trip as distinguishing factors. Swarbrooke explains these perceptions, that the differences exist „... in the minds of the stakeholders and are not necessarily manifested in the

products" (Swarbrooke, 2001, p.26.).

In the literature of adventure tourism, the most commonly used approach is that the adventure experience is provided by the perception of risk of the different individuals during the activities they take part, which are divided into „soft" and „hard" activities (Williams & Soutar, 2005), and the emotional reward after the fulfillment of them (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). On the other hand, there are definitions which connects adventure tourism to a certain location, which has to be „remote, unusual, exotic" (Millington et al., 2001 in Swarbrooke et al., 2003, p.28), with the involvement of special means of transportation (Canadian Tourism Commission, 1995 in Swarbrooke et al., 2003). These approaches are in a close relation with the original meaning of the word „adventure", which is historically connected to the exploration of distant, unknown locations, and consider only the excitement/risk factor as a measure of the experience (McArthur, 1989). Buckley (2006) identifies these definitions as empirical product-oriented, rather than philosophical and people-oriented. Recently, more complex definitions were provided, which involves culture as an important factor of adventure tourism, for example by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, which lists three elements: physical activity, natural environment, and cultural immersion. Out of these elements, at least two are needed to fulfill, in order to consider an activity to be fallen into adventure tourism category (UNWTO, 2014). The differences among these definitions clearly shows that the narratives which determine the concept of adventure tourism are divided into two groups with two distinct elements in the center: „the perceived risk by adventure and the emotional reward followed by it" and „the cultural implication of adventure and the educational reward followed by it".

**The 1990s optimism: the first attempts for conceptualizing adventure tourism**

The narrative that „the perceived risk is defining the purpose of adventure tourism" was well established in the early stage of its research and heightened in the 1990s with agreement that emotions are in the center of the adventure experience: the perceived risk generates fear, which provides the motive for taking part in adventurous activities and overcoming this perceived fear with the fulfillment of the tasks, the participants experience emotional rewards. Uncertainty is another characteristic of this narrative, the outcome and the risk of adventurous activities are unpredictable (McArthur, 1989 in Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Sung et al., 1996). Linking adventure to emotions and imaginations starts already in childhood: fairy tales and adventure stories that took part in distant, incredible locations, play an important role in this age, later the film industry enhances the picture of adventure in the mindset (Swarbrooke et al., 2003).

Probably this is the reason why the first interpretations of the risk/excitement factor in adventure tourism was connected to remote, underdeveloped locations, mainly in Third World nations (Zurick, 1992; Cloke & Perkins, 1998) and while the concept of tourism itself can be perceived as escapism, it is especially true to adventure tourism, thanks to the childhood memories. The basics of these arguments were rather about the categorization of adventure tourism, as I already mentioned above than the characteristics of it. A general agreement could be seen among those, however, who accepted that the involvement in physically challenging activities differentiates adventure tourism from other alternative forms of tourism. The Risk Theory by Ewert (1985) was considered to be the principle in the literature, which suggests, that the more experienced the travelers become, the more increased levels of risk they need, thus with time, their „adventure hunger" becomes greater and they more likely engage themselves in more difficult activities. This principle was only enhanced by the fact that at the beginning of adventure tourism mainly high income and professional tourists had demand for it (Lew, 1996). These approaches were pragmatic and product driven as the researches mainly focused on the characteristics of the adventure tourism products: what are those elements which make a trip to fall into the adventure tourism category and used the risk factor to measure how „soft" or „hard" can those products be called. A trip can fall into activity tourism category, but it does not mean to be adventurous as well, for example, a guided walking holiday in Wales cannot be compared to a climbing holiday in the Alps (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). These approaches represented uniformity: the motivation for adventure holiday was the risk and the participants accepted the exposure to it.

The researches, conducted in this period mainly evolved around the perceptions of the individuals on the risks and how their experience can be maximalized through this. The methods, used in these studies also showed uniformity as these were mostly quantitative, such as surveys or structured interviews, and intended to prove a pre-defined presumption of the scholars, rather than critically examine a problem, however the correct order should be that the research question comes first, and the selection of the proper method to examine it is only secondary (Munsters & Richards, 2010). Other problem with these methods seems to be, that the researchers tried to translate the motivations, emotions and attitudes of the participants into quantitative data. For example, Gilchrist et al. (1995) aimed to define the validity of the use of Sensation Seeking Scale in adventure tourism research. In this experiment, a sample group of adventure travelers was chosen consisted of 47 British tourists and they needed to complete the Sensation Seeking Scale Form V (SSS), which „concerned with the nature of adventure travel

and the characteristics of adventure travelers" (Gilchrist et al., 1995, p. 513). Their answers were compared to the results of the control group, 46 British people, civil servants and health workers. The main aim of this study was to test the usage of SSS in tourism research with the help of the adventure travelers' perceptions of risk. The use of SSS in the relevance of adventure travel research shows that this study also connects the risk as the main motivational factor for adventure tourism and the SSS not just testify the presence of it, but able to measure the individuals' perception on it. In other words, the existence of the risk is not questioned by this study, rather the extent of it was researched. The researchers also found the connection between the age of the participants and the extent of the perceived risk by them, assuming that older individuals have lower endurance for risk than younger companions. This study also argued that there is a tendency, which shows that certain activities, which were considered to be adventurous or risky in the 1970s, were perceived differently by the subjects of the 1990s and fall into the less adventurous category even for the members of the older age group.

Despite, that in most of the studies risk was in the spotlight and the general opinion about adventure tourism as a whole, was positive, some exceptions can be found. As early as 1992, Zurick's case study on Nepal implied, that the impacts of adventure tourism were mostly ignored by researchers, as it's economic importance was considered to be insignificant compared to the mainstream tourism. In his study he aimed to replace this shortage, with the examination of the impacts of adventure travel on the local people and culture in Nepal. He contacted 100 U.S based adventure travel firms and sent them mail survey, used cased studies from other researcher's and collected data through fieldwork in Nepal, where he visited government and private agencies. Since its opening to international tourism, the country with the highest peak on Earth became inseparable from adventure tourism. Although Nepal is a very specific location, the problems which were defined by the study for example conservation development, the growing number of tourists and resource regulations could be easily set to other places. On the other side, the narrative of the perceived risk is inseparable from the Mount Everest since the born of adventure tourism and it is easily understandable as it involves the various elements of adventure: exotic, distant, climbing it is one of the greatest challenges and require specific skills. These factors contributed to the fact that the trips attracted mainly professionals in the early days of adventure tourism, which itself restricted the number of the possible participants. Their preferences defined the characteristics of the products, as they rather traveled individually instead of organized packaged trips and highly involved the experiencing of the local culture and customs. Throughout the years, the Mount Everest

became the symbol of adventure tourism, because here the risk is very real (the possibility of death is a reality even for the most experienced mountaineers) and does not have to be staged by the tour operators like in so many other cases (Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Kane, 2012).

Another case study from Cloke & Perkins (1998) examined how adventure tourism shaped the image of New Zealand and how was used as a mean in branding the country. This research was rather descriptive with content analysis of newspapers and brochures about New Zealand, and the concept of adventure tourism was used as a framework which was suitable for establish an image of the country. Despite, that this study did not expand the concept of adventure tourism, showed how it can be used as a marketing asset, a strategy in which tourists actively contribute to the success of the trip, as the *tourist performance* defines the experience.

**The 2000s transition: the first critical arguments among the researchers**

Walle (1997) was the first, who questioned the role of risk in the motivation of adventure tourists and started an argument which invigorated the general opinion of researchers about it. In his paper, „Pursuing Risk or Insight", he did not agree that the risk was the ultimate motivation for the travelers and proposed a new approach in the research of adventure tourism, criticising the existing literature, that it did not provide a broad perspective on the term „adventure", thus the full marketing potential of it had not been recovered yet. This study gave a narrative of „the cultural implication of adventure and the educational reward followed by it to the adventure tourism". According to his view, the risk is inevitable in the course of adventure travel, but not the ultimate motivation and fulfillment to experience it, instead, he proposed as an alternative, the Insight model. This model states that, gaining insight is the motivation in the engagement of adventurous activities and whereas the narrative of risk limits the number of activities which fall into the adventure tourism category and inaccurately generalize the travelers, his approach leaves greater space and better understanding of the adventure travel and the final outcome of it.

The heated argument of Walle raised new questions and the lack of critical debate in other aspects of the adventure tourism which characterized the 90s was recognized and addressed in the new decade. Weber's 2001 paper which reviewed the research approaches in adventure tourism proved my conclusions and insights of the previous decade: the researches rather based on the „preconceived notions of scholars and practitioners" (Weber, 2001, p. 360) than the individuals' subjective experience. Such as Walle's work, Weber's paper also could be considered as a milestone: she argues that „the contribution of the tourism aspect is generally

ignored" (Weber, 2001, p.361). She emphasized the fact that the existing literature considers adventure tourism only as an extension of outdoor recreation. She proposed the consideration of the travelers' needs: a differentiation of the tourism market was needed, as both insight seeking and risk taking could be motivations for the people. She raised attention about the problem, that the discussion on defining what adventure tourism is based on what scholars accepted and not on what individuals experienced or consider as adventurous. Despite that these arguments did not bring consensus on the definition of adventure tourism rather divided the scholars, they stimulated the research on the topic. Sung's (2004) paper on the classification of adventure travelers complemented some deficits that hindered the utilization of the full potential of this niche market. She proposed that the measurement of the exact size of the adventure tourism market is hindered by the lack of a standard definition for adventure travel. She aimed to classify the travelers into subgroups which could be used as a guide for improving product/service development in this segment. She investigated the US market participants, both those who already participated in an adventure trip and those who had not yet, with a survey mailed to them, regarding their preferences, motives and needs. With the identification of 6 subgroups, this study contributed to the better understanding of the consumers and was progressive with not putting the risk theory in the center, as previous researches did, but tried to define other motives and perceptions of the travelers, suggesting that ultimately their behavioral characteristics which decide on what activity falls into the adventure tourism category. This enabled marketers to more effectively tailor and expand their programs/services.

The unstoppable growth of this sector became obvious by this time (Sung, 2004) and this increasing interest had challenged the tourism operators. The positive judgment on adventure tourism had slightly changed and its negative impacts came into the surface as well. Williams & Soutar (2005) listed quite a few critical operational issues that tourism operators should be aware of. The problems they identified were: poor safety standards, unstandardized operating procedures, minimal risk management strategies and ineffective consumer protection, not to mention the growing number of unlicensed operators who intended to benefit from this form of tourism. This study raised awareness on the negative effects of the commercialisation of the adventure tourism and that the industry experts and government could not react quickly to the problems, involved in it. They introduced the „close to the edge" narrative, which referred to the fact that if the operators did not change their practices, the adventure tourism would not be the sustainable alternative, once it was. This narrative highlighted the importance of planning and controlling with quitting from the circle of the other narratives of risk and insight seeking,

and tried to answer to the how rather than the what and why questions. This study questioned how to develop and sustain the adventure tourism system for a long-term, in order to be benefitial for the tourists, tour operators and last but not least for the locals and the nature. Operating on "close to the edge" was a consequence of the fragile balance where the tour operators had to find the appropriate level between the manageable, but thrilling risk for the customers and safety issues. Thus the risk, which was in many interpretations the main motivation for the adventure, became one of the most challenging and critical issues for the tourism businesses.

For example, Bentley et al. (2001) highlighted the importance of intervention measures in order to increase the safety level in adventure tourism and minimize the number of serious injuries even during „hard" activities. According to their study, the tourism industry did not have intentions to accept or conduct wider research on the dangers of adventure tourism, moreover, tried to minimize the importance of it. They chose New Zealand for their research location, which is another important adventure tourism scene, and collected primary data through surveys sent to tourism operators and secondary data from public hospital morbidity files.

Apart from Sung's (2004) study on classification, in which the travelers were involved, the above-mentioned papers focused on the supplier side and the most commonly used methods were interviews or surveys, which often did not even involve personal contact with the interviewees. It can be seen that the research practices from the 90s, were continued and implemented in the new decade as well. It is important to mention, however, that in the early/mid 2000s the technology was not so advanced as nowadays, and the surveys were sent by regular mail, which proved to be very time-consuming. The lack of consensus in this field probably derived from the fact that the researchers studied this topic from the „distance" and regardless of the few exceptions (Zurick, 1992), did not take part as either active or passive observants. Kane & Zink's (2004) and Buckley's (2007) papers proved to be refreshing exceptions, as these were based either participant observation or direct observation. Both of them chose the package adventure tours to be the object of their research. Kane & Zink (2004) rather focused on the understanding of the adventure tourism experiences with an observation of a kayaking package tour in New Zealand. They tried to find the answers how the participants experience the controversies of a packaged adventure tour: adventure is connected to uncertainty and risk, whereas packages are characterized as controlled and structured. The methods used here beside the observation of participation were interviews and conversations with the kayakers, who were aware of the fact that they were being researched. The

conversations between the researcher and the subjects were very important because in this way knowledge construction in collaboration could happen. In this research, the narratives of the kayakers formed the results: in the adventure tourism context (even if it is guided), they are all adventurers who want to share adventure stories with each other, anything else beside this (their job, social status etc.) only secondary. Collecting new stories and sharing previous ones was the ultimate goal of their trip and in return, they did not mind sacrificing a part of their freedom for the sake of the guided tour. Fletcher (2010) also made an attempt to explain the paradox of adventure package tourism: the uncertain and risky nature of the activities within the framework of the planned and controlled packages. He applied the narrative of the „public secrecy", the term originally invented by anthropologist Michael Taussig, „that which is generally known but cannot generally be articulated" (Taussig, 1998 in Fletcher, 2010 p. 11) in order to prove whether does this phenomenon exist in packaged adventure tourism, or these trips really offer „authentic" adventure. In this study, Fletcher did ethnographic field research as a professional raft guide, where he conducted informal conversation with the clients and formal interviews with other guides, in addition he used the technique of textual analysis. Due to this fact, he gained deeper knowledge in the providers' insights, whereas the clients' point of view remained superficial. His findings concluded, that whereas adventure is indeed simulated during such trips, the participants do not try to hide the „true nature" of them.

Buckley (2007) criticized the literature because of the ignorance from researchers over the structure of commercial tour products. He decided to take part in 75 tours by different operators, in order to analyse „the price, duration, prior skill requirements, remoteness, group size and client-to-guide ratios", in search for identifiable product signatures in the sector (Buckley, 2007 p. 1428). Interestingly, Buckley did not reveal himself in the role of the researcher for the participants and he made passive observations. His research meant an improvement in the literature as an exploratory approach, but was not suitable for detailed analysis due to the relatively small size of the sample. His findings identified that the adventure tourism market was full of with low-difficulty products for unskilled clients, whereas on the other side of the scale there could be found the few number of high-cost products, which require skills and experience, and operate in remote areas, with high level of risk involvement. Although the huge gap, existed between the low-difficulty versus high-difficulty activities, he found identifiable patterns for „price and duration, group size and cliento-guide ratio" (Buckley, 2006, p. 1432).

As Buckley's (2007) research revealed, the wide range of package adventure holidays offers the

possibility for everyone to take part in adventure travel, because the experience had become „instant", which means that they do not require any specific skills, but rather money from the participants. Despite that at the 1995 PATA Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Conference and Mart it was stated that adventure tourism should always be preserved as a niche segment in tourism, many countries gained popularity thanks to their natural resources which perfectly suitable for adventurous activities, and exploited by the marketers. Carnicelli-Filho et al. (2010) suggested in their research that many of the tour operators in Brazil depict pictures about these activities which reinforce the presence of risk and „aimed to consolidate fear as a fundamental emotion" (Carnicelli-Filho, 2010, p. 953). They interpret this with the lifestyle of the modern people: the repeating everyday routines stimulate the needs for new emotions and sensations. In their study they selected three different adventure activities and designed a three-item questionnaire towards the participants in it. With their findings, they intended to prompt further research „not just to examine the influence of emotions ont he commercial aspects of tourism, but also ont he technical and social aspects of adventure activities" (Carnicelli-Filho, 2010, p. 956).

In the 2000s, the above mentioned studies highlighted the negative aspects of adventure tourism and have been more critical on both the tourism industry and the established literature which interpreted the phenomenon. However, the methods applied in the researches still based on the traditional quantitative approaches, mainly conducted throughout interviews and surveys. A moderate development could be observed as some scholars engaged themselves in ethnographic research, which debunked the walls between them and the observed subjects. In this decade the critical agruments were stimulated by new narratives on the characteristics' of the products and travelers, but did not really expand beyond these fields. These arguments remained within „the safe zone", the well-established frames of tourism experience, product and destination development.

**The 2010s new perspectives: the tourists place their bets higher**

The very recent years brought many changes in the people's lifestyle and perceptions on their environments. The technological development, the presence of social media did not only make easier to connect with different people but further stimulated the desire for adventure. Suddenly many places became easily accessible, not just virtually, but physically as well, „instant" adventure experiences occured. For example, there is a measurable correlation between the growth of the mountaineering tourism on the Mt Everest and the spread of Internet use.

Conquering the highest peak on Earth means an incredibly high amount of money, but the websites and blogs multiplied the sponsorship potential of the applicants (Kane, 2012). In his study, Kane (2012) analyzed blogs and websites in order to define the authenticity and identity of them, putting in the context of Bourdieu's (1979/1984) conceptual framework of social interaction. Accordingly, the tourist's practical skills were less important, than the story which described their experiences. The story behind these narratives originates from George Mallory, who reasoned his motivation for climbing the Everest with the famous „Because it's there" phrase (Mallory in Kane, 2012, p. 271). Those blogs, that Kane analyzed, provided an authentic story and brought closer the outsiders to adventure experiences with enhancing the feeling that the adventurer was one of them. This study mentions the role of the female tourists in the mountaineering experience, supposing that they are distinguished and gain more spotlight just because of their gender. They need to prove in a traditionally male-dominated environment, which make their stories more motivational and valued.

Schneider & Vogt (2012) used the 3M Model of Motivation and Personality in order to explain the psychological background of the behavior of adventure tourists. According to them the previous researches conducted in this topic are scarce and lack psychological foundings, prefering risk as the main motivation force of the participants. The method used in their study was quantitative, regular mail surveys sent to the subscribers of National Geographic Adventure magazine, and the results provided statistical data. The research proposed that the further exploration of cultural experience as the main motivation for adventure should be emphasized in the academic literature. Interestingly, only 25% of the respondants were women, which might indicate, that adventure tourism is a male-dominated segment and would require further research as well.

The most recent review of adventure tourism literature by Cheng et al. (2016) aimed to discover the theoretical foundations of it and define the still existing shortages in this field. In this study, they used empirical methods, combining network-based direction-citation and co-citation analysis, content analysis and a quantitative systematic review of the publications. With these methods, they identified those areas which are overrepresented in the literature: adventure tourism experience, destination planning and development and adventure tourism operators; in addition made reccomendation for future research in the following areas: tourist market segments, new theoretical lens and cross-disciplinary approaches and adventure tourism and the external environment. This research is especially valuable, because despite the fact, that from time to time there were reviews on the adventure tourism literature (Weber, 2001;

Swarbrooke el al., 2003), these focused on a narrow segment of the phenomenon, making it difficult to understand the adventure tourism as a system. In addition, with the systematic method it used an integrated review became possible. As Cheng et al. argued (2016), meaningful conversations only happened in specific areas of adventure tourism, but other parts were more or less ignored by the scholars. Their greatest critique against the adventure tourism research was that the demand side was only examined by the point of view of the Western tourists, their demands and possibilities were depicted in most of the studies. Non-Western locations were depicted as host contries for adventure tourism and neglected as outbound markets. In addition, the external environmanet was generally ignored as well, in the articles, for example the role of technology and the use of social media aside from a few exemptions (Kane, 2012) do not appear in the researches, neither in the methodology, nor as the object of the research. The lack of posttrip research is also very conspicuous, whereas in many papers adventure tourism was depicted as a mean for self-expression (Carnicelli-Filho et al. 2010), there is a lack of empirical prove for its lifestyle changing impacts.

Regarding the studies (or rather the lack of them) on non-Western adventure tourist, I found a very recent one from Gardiner and Kwek (2017), studying the Chinese adventure tourists' perceptions on adventure tourism experiences and their motivation for participating. This study is outstanding in the sense, that although it also exmined tourists' motivations and perceptions, non-Western tourists were the subjects of it. As Cheng et al. (2016) noted, the insights mostly came from Western tourists, in the adventure tourism literature, which resulted in the generalization of the cultural implication of adventure tourism. Walle (1997) paralelled culture and insight seeking with adventure, but how this approach would change regarding the different cultural backgrounds of the participants. The emerging Asian markets signs the transformation of this field, noting that in the past adventure tourism was dominated by Western tourists, but the trends shows that it is shifting towards the Eastern tourists (Cheng et al., 2016). The methodology chosen for this study focused on exploratory interpretive approach, with interviews conducted on Chinese international students. Each student were showed pictures with different activities, which helped to overcome the possible communication problems, in addition this method helped to induce emotions and reactions regarding them. The importance of this study based on the fact, that the interpretation of adventure and the freedom provided by it differs significantly among Western and Chinese tourists as the latter ones are bounded by social rules, usually controlled by the older generation, for example the parents, whereas these kind of social boundaries less and less characterize the life of the Western people (Cheng et al.,

2016).

Another interesting study in this area came from Bott (2015), who attempted to quest the authentic narrative of adventure tourism with the help of ethnographic research and interviewing conducted in a remote bay of Thailand where tourists could practice rock climbing. It is indeed a special segment, which counts to be hard activity, not to mention the fact that the location itself is special, preserved from mass tourism. The research argues, that the underdevelopment of tourism infrastructure provides the authenticity of this place. Local narratives are featured as well, because despite the language difficulties, 10 interviews were conducted with Thai residents. The appearance of authentic in adventure tourism research though, raises interesting questions. If there is no agreement regarding the conceptualization of adventure tourism itself, which factors decide whether the experience is authentic or not. Mahadin & Burns (2007), explain that „true adventure" has to take place in undeveloped regions (Mahadin & Burns, 2007 in Bott 2015), but the problem with this interpretation is that it again considers only the Western tourists and how would it categorize a hiking tour in Norway or Iceland among non-Western tourists then? Another interesting statement raised by Bott (2015) is that the lack of tourism infrastructure provides the „unspoilt" and „authentic" nature of adventure tourism locations, which means that many attractions are already „ruined" by the industry, producing false or imitated experiences. Just think about the example of the Mount Everest again: in which category would it be fallen then, authentic or reproduced experience? There is an indisputable intervention from the tourism industry in this case, for example the sherpas, camps, not to mention the organized guided tours by agencies. Hiking the Everest became a commodity and according to Bott's interpretation, lost the „original adventure". In this narrative of „impossible to cross the same river twice" suggests that every adventurous experience alternates: the magic of adventure can only happen once, after that it loses its uniqueness.

All in all, the very recent years did not bring breakthrough in adventure tourism research, regarding the methodology, but at least recognised some important shortages, which could be central topics of further examination in the following years. The critiques aroused recently shows the „one-sided" nature of adventure tourism, which means that the literature suggests that it is the privilege of Western tourists and only they have the force to influence the market (Cheng et al., 2016). However, emerging literature on non-Western tourists shows that the once overlooked segment is now increasing and developing, so they cannot be ignored any longer (Gardiner and Kwek 2017). In addition, the narrative of adventure as a lifestyle was proposed

by some researchers, but the after-adventure experiences were not fully investigated (Carnicelli-Filho et al. 2010; Kane, 2012).

**Reccommendations for further research**

Regarding the theoretical shortages, my opinion is that researchers should put more focus on these areas:

1) Post-adventure narratives

The research on pre-adventure experiences, expectations and motivations is very advanced, however, there is little to know about the outcomes after a trip. Sharing stories play an important role during the trip (Kane, 2012), but there is little research on how they also influence the individuals' relationship to the everyday life after such an experience. What are those benefits, which they had gained and could implement in everyday life situations, whether their perceptions on adventure changed because of the trip and if there are any personality changes, that could be noticed. Regardless of the motivations of adventure tourism (Ewert, 1985; Walle, 1997; Weber, 2001), the long-term effects of it on one's personality again seem to be assumptions which lack any empirical proof, or critical arguments on the question.

2) Local narratives

In the adventure tourism research, both the supply and demand side are represented, however the narrative of the locals are still missing. As tourists are pushing their limits in adventure further and further (Gilchrist et al. 1995), the eagerness in participating hard adventure activities, or visit even more remote and special locations, increases. As it is already mentioned above, most of the literature in adventure tourism was written from the point of view of western tourists and in many cases the host contries are underdeveloped nations. There is little research on how the locals benefit from adventure tourism and how did it impact their life overall (Zurick, 1992). This is also valid though, when a western country becomes the host country. For example I found a very interesting piece of blog entry on the Norwegian fjord tourism (https://www.heartmybackpack.com/norway/off-the-beaten-path/), describing that in fact the country is overwhelmed with tourists during the course of summer and the locals are rather frustrated than happy with them. However, there is no academic reference, which would prove the validity of this phenomenon.

3) Narratives of Non-Western adventure tourists

The research on Western tourists is very advanced within this area, however there is little to know about the customs, preferences and perceptions of Non-Western tourists (Cheng et al., 2016). Focusing on these tourists would be very important, because there is a grown-up generation now, between 20-40, who are looking for special travel experiences and will be a determinate segment in the tourism industry (Gardiner and Kwek, 2017). Understanding their needs and preferences is essential for the travel businesses, in order to gain them as customers and provide suitable offers for them.

4) Narratives of women

It might seem to be an unneccessary segmentation of the market, however there was little research conducted on the roles of females in adventure tourism. In their research Schneider & Vogt (2012) found out that only 25% was female among their subjects, however this result cannot be regarded as representative, due to the limited number of participants. Although, it might worth to explore the perceptions, needs and preferences of women as well, because many hard activities considered to be male dominant (climbing, caving, kayaking etc.). The better understanding of women might help the better customization of products which could improve the overall performance of the tourism businesses.

Regarding the methodology of adventure tourism research, there are quite a few methods, that could be effectively implemented in this area, however still can be regarded as „white spots":

1) Ethnography

This method was increasingly used by the researchers in the recent years (Kane & Zink 2004; Bott 2015; Buckley 2007), yet more focus should be put on it as the exploration of the whole extent of adventure cannot happen without empirical research. In the future researchers should more often embark on adventurous trips in order to get personal data and experiences, which might help better to realize the problems and suggest solution for them.

2) Netnography

With the use of netnography, which was developed from ethnography, researchers could gain valuable data about the tourists' post-adventure experiences and interactions with eachother. This would be very useful in the prediction of the future of adventure tourism. At the moment, there is a limited research ont he future of adventure tourism, but with netnography, this shortage could be addressed. Not to mention the fact, that the quality of the data gained by this

method is not influenced by the researcher, whatsmore, the subjects reveal a more sincere opinion as they do not know that they are observed (Bartl et al., 2016).

3) Content analysis

The increasing popularity of social media, Youtube and blogs exposed a huge amount of data which can be accessible by everyone. Although content analysis is not entirely unknown in this area (Kane, 2012; Cheng et al., 2016), this method should be extended to examine all those material which is available on the Internet. The data collected through this could help to determine the trends and help marketers to make predictions about the future. Of course, there are several other utilization form of this data, for example getting an objective view on the different aspects of adventure tourism and it would help to understand the several different interrelations of it.

4) Correlational analysis

More exploratory analysis should be conducted on the relationship of different variables in adventure tourism. Such as the study of Bentley et al. (2001) explored the relationship between accidents and adventure tourism activities, research on for example the connection of pollution and adventure tourism or the effects on the local population could be useful.

**Conclusion**

During my review on adventure tourism literature, I noticed that the situation of the concept can be described by the old story of the blind men and the elephant. These men had no idea about the look of the elephant and as they were asked to touch different part of it, they started to conceptualize its look on these partial informations, which led to totally different ideas on the animal. Research in adventure tourism had quite the same results: some parts of it were researched and discussed very well, whereas others were scarcely explored and this is the reason for the disagreement in the conceptualization of it. The narratives over the years have slightly changed, never overwriting the others, but adding new dimensions to the literature and always examine the concept of adventure from a different perspective. From the risk theory (Ewert, 1985) and the optimist voices that at the beginning characterized the literature, over the decades more pessimistic perceptions were developed and very recently narratives, that questions the „authenticity" or „genuine" nature of adventure also appeared (Bott, 2015). The full extent of adventure tourism is still needed to be explored and more psychological research should be

established (Schneider & Vogt 2012) in order to better understand not just the Western, but the non-western tourists' behaviour as well. Now, the general statements were drawn based ont he Western tourists, but further research is needed to determine the validity of them in the case of non-Western tourists. My suggestion is that the researches should move from the current Western and male dominant approaches, as some studies already proposed as well (Gardiner and Kwek, 2017). Regarding the methodology of the studies, not too much progress happened during the course of the decades. Regardless of a few exceptions (Kane, 2012; Cheng et al., 2016) new, innovative methods were not involved in the research, which further limited the results of the studies. From this point of view, the quantitative methods dominate, but more qualitative research could help to give a more complex picture on this field.

 Development in this field can only be reached if the future researches focus on the neglected parts and involve them under their radar, which would be very profitable regarding that this type of tourism is still very promising but comes with many issues and problems as well. In my oppinion, more studies are needed to frequently check the status and effects of adventure tourism, which could continuously give feedbacks on it and this could stimulate further dialouges among the scholars and the members of the tourism industry. Without the better understanding of it and the consensus in the conceptualization, the problems (i.e. environmental pollution, effects on local community, exploitation of nature) cannot be addressed effectively, which can easily turn adventure tourism to be another deterrent example of mass tourism.

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