

Idealizing the adventure tourism experience: expectations and tourists' profile

Working Paper

Abstract

Adventure tourism is often motivated by a romanticized “adventure mythology”. Travelers idealize their adventure experiences and develop individual expectations, through these glamorized conceptions. However, research has focused primarily on motivations (why), on feelings participants undergo during this kind of experience (what), and on their satisfaction and future behavior. Studies on how tourists expect their adventure activities to unfold have not had the same attention, although the Experience Economy emphasizes the importance of minimizing customer sacrifice. In an emergent island adventure destination, the Azores, 393 questionnaires were gathered, in which 26 items regarding adventure tourism experience expectations were analyzed. CATPCA shows that tourists idealize their experiences based on six main components: physical engagement, interaction with nature, immersive fantasy, self-reliance, unpredictability, and preparation. Statistically significant differences were detected among sociodemographic variables, revealing two opposing self-assessment adventure profiles: “reluctant adventurers” and “eager adventurers”. A spectrum of adventure tourism experiences expectations is, then, proposed.

Keywords

Adventure; tourism; experience economy; expectations; extraordinary experience

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