



Adventure Tourism between Reality and Imagination in the Scope of Island Tourism

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Abstract: The specificity that the concept and practice of adventure introduce into tourism, and namely in island tourism, especially in the small ones, is the anthropological and fundamental human but often forgotten reality of the encounter between who arrives with its personal, social and natural identity and who receives also with its personal, social and natural culture. Tourism itself often does not provide the encounter, which implies reciprocity, but only the use of the other as object of contemplation or enjoyment.

Keywords: adventure, island, encounter, experiences, well-being

INTRODUCTION

Among the various issues addressed by philosophical anthropology, the critical questioning of the connections between identity and otherness stands out, which, among other perspectives, may assume phenomenological, existentialist and structuralist approaches, depending on whether lived experiences, freedom of choice or processes of cultural construction are given predominant value. In the first meaning, privilege is given to lived experience—that is, the way people attribute meaning to their own actions—which leads to the appreciation of intersubjective relationships, namely based on Husserl's concept of the *Lebenswelt* and Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body. These concepts have influenced, for example, the position and interventions of anthropologists such as Thomas Csordas with his idea of 'embodiment', whereby the body comes to be conceived as the foundation of culture, a means of perception and a field of symbolic practice.

In principle adventure tourism presupposes the assumption of the possibility of a certain shock in what regards the destination in terms of its natural or urban identity and the culture of the host community, with the implications that this brings in terms of preparation for a foreseeable effort of adaptation, especially to experiences of eventual risk situations (Rantala, O. & Rokenses, A. (2018).

When it comes to promoting an adventure tourism programme, the prospect of these experiences must be commercially consistent in the knowledge that while their innovative nature can be motivating in terms of enticement, they can also arouse fears and inhibitions about the travel project. Especially when health issues arise as "e(E)nsuring travellers' health and well-being is an important issue in tourism management and public health" (Wang J. et al., 2019, p. 1)

It is always important, in order to better understand the complex and demanding correlation between the singularity of the events and the identity of the subjects, to bear in mind the conceptions of some of the great theoreticians of the concept of adventure and their implications in the scope of island tourism.

Adventure tourism combines intense physical activities, direct contact with natural environments and memorable, thrilling experiences. According to Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie and Pomfret (2003) the segment emerged from the convergence between the search for authentic experiences and the exploration of unconventional natural settings.

Buckley (2018) points out that adventure tourism is both leisure and a psychological experience of self-improvement, characterised by a delicate balance between the perception of risk and real protection.

The growing popularity of adventure tourism implies challenges for travel agencies and tour operators, which need to transform perceptions of risk into safe and commercially viable products. This study investigates how tourists perceive adventure and what strategies travel agencies use to meet expectations without compromising safety

Studies indicate that adventure tourists seek:

- Challenge and adrenaline: climbing, rafting, bungee jumping and paragliding;
- Immersion in nature: exploring forests, mountains, rivers and remote regions;
- Cultural authenticity: contact with local communities;
- Psychological safety: experiencing risk whilst being effectively protected (Swarbrooke et al. (2003; Buckely, 2018)

This paradox highlights the tension between the subjective experience of danger and the objective need for safety, requiring specific management strategies on the part of agencies.

Adventure tourism stems from the experience—or pursuit—of enjoying innovative and potentially unexpected experiences in the context of exploring unconventional and less common natural and cultural environments.

This project implies the following assumptions:

- A critical conception of adventure tourism as a dialectical symbiosis between perceptions of risk, intense emotional experiences, and the search for protection and safety.
- Recognition of the potential conflict between the search for authenticity and the overcoming of risks.
- Delineation of adventure tourism in the thresholds between imagination and reality, daring and safety.
- A correlation between the exploitation of the imagery of risk by marketing and the guarantee of safety to be implemented through the management of programmes and corresponding events.
- Outline communication strategies that optimise the balance between safety objectives and tourists' search for unique emotions.
- Identification and characterisation of destinations that serve as benchmarks for island adventure tourism
- Correlations between adventure tourism practices and the well-being of host communities.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Agamben (2016, p. 63), based on the reflections of Diano (1952), after recognising that if “as an *e-ventus*, adventure happens instantaneously and we do not know where it comes from, as *ad-ventus* it always happens to and for some-body in a given place” that is, *hic et nunc*, however, “this does not mean that “the event - the adventure - depends on the subject”. For Simmel (2002, pp. 76-78), in turn, the attraction of adventure lies in the fact that by residing “at the point of intersection of the moment of security and the moment of insecurity”, is constituted in the spaces of luck and chance as a casino game between the highest gain and the most complete destruction, once it is based on the recklessness of assuming an uncertain probability that adventurers, unlike normal people, risk everything. And Simmel concludes:

“The adventure is, therefore, isolated from the whole life, it is withdrawn from it; its beginning and its end have no point of insertion in the continuous stream of existence, looking at this stream as if it could do without it, though it is nevertheless in harmony with the most secret instincts and with an ultimate intention of life, thus distinguished from an episode due purely to chance” (idem, p.81). That's why an event, in order to truly constitute itself as an adventure, implies “the intensity of the tension with which it makes us feel life” (idem, p. 83), subordinating the safeguarding and crystallisation of the contents and materials of life in favour of the prevalence of the restlessness of the vital processes of the present, which are even stronger in youth than in old age.

Buckley (2018) defines adventure tourism as any tourist activity that combines physical or psychological challenge with a distinctive natural or cultural environment. The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA, 2022) emphasises that such activities must involve controlled levels of risk, including planning, safety protocols and expert guidance.

Swarbrooke et al. (2003) emphasise that motivation is not merely about risk, but about emotionally intense and authentic experiences, reinforcing the need to balance boldness and safety.

In a pragmatic view directly applied to the tourist activity, for the Adventure Travel Trade Association (2023, p. 1), “adventure tourism is about connecting with a new culture or a new landscape and being physically active at the same time”. However, immediately afterwards, it is clarified that “(I)it is not being risky or pushing your boundaries. In fact, it is especially important to know and respect your limits while you are in an unfamiliar area. This safeguard will arise from the contradictory conjunction of the identity of tourism as a leisure practice and the inherent importance of its promotion as such and the need to explore renewed interests of traditional tourists and even new audiences somewhat saturated with conventional mass tourism and who therefore seek even, albeit in varying proportions, renewed practices of mountaineering, canoeing, cycling, swimming, jumping, etc. (Sand. M. & Gross S., 2019).

Without prejudice to the assumption of precautionary measures, the experiences of risk, which may be more imaginary than real, end up being strategically presented with the appearance of being supported by forecasts as objective as safe, so as to ensure the production of positive emotions and a heightened sense of excitement in the majority of the addressees.

These objectives imply actions properly designed and targeted to the general public by the respective marketing operations regarding the service or product that is promoted as being "an adventure tourism experience", which must refer in principle to the commonly assumed notion of adventure in which "imagination and emotion are very much part and parcel of the adventure experience" (Swarbrooke et al., 2003, p. 7).

In this critical context, it is important to distinguish between the concepts of 'itinerary' and 'itinerancy'. The former, expressing the privileges of tourist routes marked by strategies based on the prediction and predictability, respectively, of their current and future development, highlights above all the comfort of these routes along with the conventional attractiveness of the proposed destinations; the latter, favouring a radical otherness, is tributary to wandering, aiming for the enigmatic horizon of the 'somewhere' in which the unknown is, in itself, a value. This is often what is sought in tourism addressed to small islands, especially if they are remote.

Mobility, which is inherent to tourism, "may be understood as this contemporary modulation of this desire for somewhere, which is regularly the appanage of the masses and individuals" (Maffesoli, 1997, p. 26). This desire coexists conflictingly but also persistently with the static identity of times and places, so that, somewhat paradoxically, this staticity ends up arousing more or less intensely, in individuals and communities, the need for wandering and thus, in concrete or imaginary terms, the openness to the possibility of transgressing the limits of everyday existence. In terms of the routines of prevailing norms and the delimitations of the respective territories, while both, due to their stability, provide security, they also somehow oppress and imprison people, inspiring utopian mirages that, usually frustrated, submit to the logic of those routines.

On the other hand, often island's tourism marketing does not highlight the encounter as a value but rather the projects of adventure as a mixture of confrontation and seduction, especially in what concerns the unknown limits of nature on the islands.

In fact, ultimately, as Agamben recognises "only the event that doesn't depend on us becomes an adventure", on the contrary, 'it is we who become its own' (Agamben, 2016, p. 67). The same author warns us: "Adventure presents itself as contradictory: it makes us possess the world in a violent and audacious way and on the other hand we give ourselves to the world with defences and reserves that are smaller than those we use in everyday life." And with identical tone Simmel also emphasises: "The adventurer behaves towards what is irrational in life just as we behave in everyday life with regard to what can be calculated in advance." (Simmel, 2002)

In this context, it is decisive to consider also some concept meanings such as "insularity", "islandness" and "island desire" or "island necessity", which are important for understanding the specificity of island adventure tourism.

If insularity is a geographic concept that defines the island entity as an extension of land surrounded by water, the concept of islandness leads to considerations that, together with the size of the island, consider psychological aspects such as feelings, individual perspectives and representations of its inhabitants. (cf. Brigand, L., 2009); (cf. Péron, F. 1993).

Thus, rather than isolation, the small island favours feelings of disruption that make dream those who search for it as well as the unhappiness of isolation by those who live on

it. Islandness is, therefore, an ideal archetype of a phenomenological aspect integrated in the island's symbolic, fundamental for the tourism marketing, also having to consider that each era takes up this archetype according to the needs configured therein. The desire for an island stems from the fundamental correlation between the ideas of locality, particularity, and humanity found within it, in opposition - sometimes illusory but persistent - to the flaws and routines of civilization. Somehow, the small island, in its fragility, seems to draw the human condition itself as a contradictory synthesis between the desire for openness and for the return to itself, which feeds the imaginary that plunges into it.

METHODOLOGY

In tourism, as in most social and empirical sciences, researchers and the agents of the corresponding practices deal in their reflections and communications with notions and terms that are often common, in their form, with those used by common sense. This sharing provokes, quite often, misunderstandings and inaccuracies of meaning, which arising from a notable lack of rigour prevent the understanding of the complexity and specificity of the phenomena discussed, both in their theoretical construction and in their current interpretation. Furthermore, complexity is also dependent on a heterogeneity that arises from an irreducible and conflicting plurality of perspectives and views making it impossible, given the uncertainty that is thus evident, to provide an illusory objective predictability, such as that promised by traditional epistemologies and by canonical common sense. (Ardoino, 2000, pp. 124-126). As Xin et al. wrote (2013, p. 70), "we position conceptual research as a particular research strategy that sits mainly in the subjectivist/interpretivist paradigms (with possibilities for critical engagement)".

Associated with the ideas and projects of adventure is that of subjective well-being, with which the concepts of 'Extraordinary Experiences, Physical and Mental Balance, Personal Development, Immersion and Transformation, and Community' are associated. These formed the basis of the conceptual framework, which "illustrates how adventure activity participants can gain, maintain, and enhance their subjective well-being". However, "the interchangeability of well-being with other constructs, such as quality of life and happiness, also make delineating it a challenge". Nevertheless, if we examine the dimensions of well-being rather than defining it, "some suggest that well-being involves positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment". (Pomfret et al., 2023, pp. 1, 2)

This is why, in addition to a heuristic deconstruction and phenomenological interconnection of concepts implicit in the metathemes of adventure tourism and insularity, we have selected a set of promotional examples of island tourism which, while not aspiring to support any universality of the theses defended, have only sought to illustrate their foundations and critical applicability.

STUDY EXAMPLES

These adverts published on the web by the organisations responsible for the marketing campaigns of the respective island entities have as a common reference point the prominence given to the adventure activities offered in their territories.

It is clear that the descriptions of these activities, usually of a soft nature, are invariably accompanied by the more or less obvious, but always underlying, enhancement of guarantees of enjoyable experiences in which sensations of pleasure are combined with contexts of safety, while promising extraordinary experiences due to their exceptionality. By doing so, the aim is to correspond and answer, by anticipation, to the ideals and daydreams that characterise Western tradition and contemporaneity shared by the majority of potential tourists.

It is also curious to note that the event of the 'encounter' with the other is omitted in favour of appealing contacts with the proclaimed diversity of a singular nature in which the tourist will mainly encounter subalternised dimensions of himself in the routines of his daily social and personal life:

- "For your next Caribbean getaway, enjoy a mix of adrenaline-pumping adventures and leisurely relaxation along white-sand beaches.

Most people think of a Caribbean vacation as a time to relax, let their hair down and let their worries melt away while swinging in a hammock. Sun seekers bring along bathing suits, their favorite books and sip fruity drinks while listening to the calm, lapping surf. But adventurous travellers see the Caribbean in a different light. Sure, the Caribbean has some of the world's most beautiful beaches, but its diverse destinations also offer some of the best opportunities for outdoor recreation. Whether you want to hike, mountain bike, fish, dive or partake in other active Caribbean adventures, there are plenty of places where you can test your limits and get your adrenaline fix." (The World's Greatest Vacations)

- "Puerto Rico offers some of the most diverse outdoor recreation options for seasoned travellers. Here, you can partake in an array of water sports from fishing to diving to hiking and exploring the El Yunque National Rainforest to riding the world's tallest and longest zip lines at Toro Verde adventure park to kayaking through one of the Caribbean's bioluminescent bays." (The World's Greatest Vacations)

- "Known as 'nature island', Dominica is revered for its natural allures. The isle is home to 365 rivers, volcanoes, mountains, waterfalls and hot springs, along with the second-largest boiling lake in the world and lush rainforests. Travelers can enjoy any combination of outdoor experiences, from hiking to forest bathing to snorkeling through the caves to horseback riding to kayaking to diving. And hikers will especially be thrilled to explore the Waitukubli National Trail, which covers 115 miles." (The World's Greatest Vacations)

- "Calypso Island, a small off-shore paradise, is also available for visitors interested in fine dining, water sports and amazing sunsets. You can book sailing and snorkeling tours or charter a private catamaran for your own water-based adventure." (Yahoo News)

- Curacau. "There are also plentiful, beautiful and popular hiking trails to explore across the island that are well-suited for adventurous travellers with unique tropical plants and secluded regions of the island." (The World's Greatest Vacations)

- Tristão da Cunha. "Reaching the remote archipelago is an adventure in itself. The island can be accessed by a small number of adventurous travellers who embark on an arduous journey, as the island can only be accessed via sea voyage, usually between Cape Town and Tristan, as there is no airship on the island. However, those who make the effort are rewarded with an unparalleled experience like no other." (This City Knows)

- “Corvo Island, or Ilha do Corvo, is a captivating destination for those seeking an off-the-beaten-path adventure. As the smallest and northernmost island of the Azores archipelago, Corvo is home to just 386 residents, making it the smallest single municipality in all of Portugal. Known as the Island of the Crow, Corvo offers a unique blend of untouched nature, tranquil isolation, and breathtaking landscapes. Whether you are drawn by the allure of its rugged coastline, the lush green valleys, or the stunning Caldeirão volcano, Corvo promises an unforgettable experience.” (Azores Getaways)

- Fernando de Noronha. “Nature and unparalleled beaches make Fernando de Noronha a truly unique destination. Whether you're looking to relax or enjoy the adventures the islands have to offer, get ready for unforgettable experiences.” (Visit Brasil - We are Brasil, spelled with the letter S)

Table 1: Dominant slogans in tourism advertising for the selected small islands - Synthesis Table

Island	Slogan
Caribbean	Relax, calm, adventure, recreations limits
Puerto Rico	Recreation, shorts, adventures
Dominica	Allures, nature experience, travels, lush rainforests
Calypso	Paradise, shorts, tours, adventures
Curacau	Beautiful, travels, adventures, tropicality, isolation
Tristão da Cunha	Remotely, adventure travellers, unparalleled experience
Corvo	Off-the-beaten-path, adventure, small island, untouched nature, tranquillity, landscape, experience
Fernando de Noronha	Relax, adventures, experiences, nature

The descriptions presented here by the entities responsible for promoting tourism on these islands were selected for expressing the predominant axiological valences found on the websites of the small insular spaces. These values, within their remote and unique identities, the harmonious connection established between challenges posed to visitors' boldness and an intrinsic provision of well-being and pleasure. These proposals thus safeguard the extension of their offerings to a broad range of visitors, who, usually coming from urban environments, seek alternatives that by transgressing - particularly through the exploration of wild nature - the routines of their daily lives do not compromise the physical and psychological safety to which they are accustomed.

FINDINGS

In the scope of adventure tourism, we can see that many of its proposals apparently try to reconcile, in a discreet and attractive contradiction, the tranquil security of itineraries with the throbbing seduction of itinerancies, although in their delineation savings are made on the untimeliness implicit in the latter. This way, especially in so-called “soft adventure tourism”, the anthropological assumptions of the ideology of modernity end up prevailing through the discreet recognition of the common-sense representations dominant in the societies from which the tourists come namely with those from continental geographical spaces facing small island communities, especially when these ones are distant.

In this context, there are activities on offer, from walking in particularly attractive natural areas to horse riding and kayaking, which, while bearing a certain resemblance to hard tourism, are easier and far less dangerous, as well as facilitating comfortable and relaxing breaks. Often labelled 'Adventure for Everyone', soft adventure tourism offers an attractive but cautious approach to the physical and psychological limits of its practitioners. Here is a good example: "You could go on a day long catamaran trip in the Bahamas and not even get out and snorkel and still call it soft adventure". (Wandering Carol's Luxury Travel Blog)

An ideology which overvalues precisely the supposed universality of these western representations in the categorisation of the natural and social world, cancelling out the importance of the diversity of subjects as well as of the disruptive emergences which go against a supposed logic of continuity. As Gilbert Larochelle (1995, p. 67) points out, ideology is an interrupted questioning, so ideological discourse produces meaning by destroying otherness.

In fact, if a journey always implies a relationship with somewhere, configured between imagination and reality, imagination can open itself to a greater or lesser contrast with reality or, purely and simply, wrap reality with a system of assumptions that cancel the interaction with it. Nowadays, as there are more tourists interested in real experiences and strong emotions, the tourism industry often implements what appears as the "hard adventure tourism" with the proposal of activities, such as paragliding, mountain biking, caving or climbing, which are more high-risk. This is a widespread travel trade based on the valorisation of expeditions in which increasingly prevail the remote and unique destinations, continuing, however, to be important to examine to what extent this trend incorporates the sense of adventure as a dimension of achievement of human integrity and wholeness. This raises questions about sustainability, such as the protection of natural habitats, biodiversity and the involvement of local communities in defining and assessing tourism activities. These questions are decisive because 'the core of the problem of a distorted encounter lies in the impossibility of opening up to the other and listening to each other', which does not permit an authentic encounter (Michel, 2002, p. 77).

It is important to ask whether adventure tourism, by trivializing the very concept of adventure, does not lose sight of the fact that the search for otherness, being massified, does not ultimately result, in the case of human communities, in their progressive destruction by the touristification of the destinations chosen and therefore the blurring of their authenticity. It also happens that, when it comes to natural destinations considered exotic, there is a risk that, on the one hand, the communities living there will be ignored and, on the other, the natural resources themselves will be mistreated by excessive incursions. The massification of ecotourism, to the extent that its practice tends to be motivated by the fashion for a certain type of naturalism, seconding or even ignoring the principle of responsibility, is therefore a good example of this. (Fenneli, 1999) or as Michel (op. cit., p. 57) tells us, quoting Todorov, "the tourist is a hurried visitor who prefers monuments to human beings since the absence of encounters with different people is much more restful because it never puts our identity into question". Meanwhile, with the predominance of air travel where contact with the environment fades, the temporality and surprises inherent to travel are to some extent annulled, even trying to erase or at least lessen the inconvenience of their duration, although this often becomes longer.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The analysis indicates that:

- Marketing exploits the perception of risk, creating memorable emotional experiences, whilst operational management ensures safety (BUCLEY, 2018).
- Tourist satisfaction depends on a perception of authenticity and challenge, without exposure to real dangers (Swarbrooke et al., 2003).
- Safety failures compromise the destination's reputation, trust and sustainability (Lohmann, Panosso Netto, 2017).

Furthermore, digitalisation and experiential marketing are expanding the construction of adventure narratives, making clear communication between the agency and the tourist essential when it comes to safety and expectations.

It becomes unavoidable to understand and adopt a new universalism that respects differences, which Paul Ricoeur (1990, pp. 43-45) in particular identifies and proposes with the concept of "solicitude". In fact, with solicitude and, through it, with a hermeneutics of conflicts, humanity, in its authentic universality, exists only through the plurality of cultures, that is, with the promotion of the multiple forms of humanity in which each subject is open to intersubjectivity and, in this way, to the possibilities of meaning of the future and of the event in its multiple psychological and corporal expressions. "The respect for other is thus equivalent to the respect for oneself as an other. The other must be thought of in and from oneself, I who am for every other an other beyond oneself", hence, since the other "cannot be reduced to a copy of myself, but is conceived as my equal", the respect that I have for him "refers back to a common and intersubjective element" (Sevenant (2001, p. 98). In this way, self-esteem and solicitude necessarily refer back to each other.

For Rosi Braidotti (1994, p. 23), "nomadic consciousness" is identified as a form of resistance to an "exclusive hegemonic subjectivity". Resistance which implies "not making our way of thinking the criterion of the encounter with the other", rather looking at the encounter with the other as an interpellation operated by the originality of the latter, which "gives meaning to the alternative discourse and thus confronts us with the limits of our own point of view" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2011, p. 48).

This valorisation of the authentic encounter with the other as being conducive to an anthropological openness and cultural growth of the visitor himself, even grants us a new concept of exoticism that is not restricted to the visitor's vision on the visited. In fact, if there truly is an encounter, the visitor will no longer be just the same as before because "the other can become a part of oneself, which leads to an "inverted exoticism" in which each one becomes a stranger to oneself", as Fernandez (2002, p.21) states, adding that since our cultural self is permeable to encounter "the exotic is the self according to the gaze of the other".

However, somehow, only those who have left can return and "when someone no longer leaves, they no longer change, they dry up and atrophy" (Jean-Luc Nancy, 2011, p. 23).

With this anthropological and hermeneutic approach, we realize that an authentic intercultural practice presupposes the realization of effective "encounters" between heritages led by different people and benchmarks. In the field of travels, this means that,

in order for the phenomena of an authentic interculturality to be consummated, it will be necessary to accept the departure for those travels as the opening door to a displacement susceptible of provoking or confirming a rupture between identity codes and values that may be extremes between each other, purely and simply ignored or reciprocally encountered. Adventure tourism, while inspired by adventure as a concept and practice, should approach the search for this reciprocal encounter.

Future studies may explore:

- The impact of immersive technology (VR/AR) on risk perception;
- Communication strategies that enhance safety without diminishing the emotion;
- The relationship between adventure tourism and the sustainable development of local communities.

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