

What is Adventure Travel?

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DEFINITIONS

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The Issue

- ◆ Although adventure travel is considered a distinct form of tourism, there remains no generally accepted definition.
- ◆ Instead, definitions vary depending on the source.
- ◆ This study examines this issue through a content analysis of definitions from scholars, professional organizations, and practitioners.



The Method

- ◆ A representative sample of definitions was obtained through an Internet search (using both an open search in Yahoo and a library search using Academic Source Premier).
- ◆ Yahoo search alone yielded approximately 259,000 results.
- ◆ The Academic Source Premier search resulted in over 50 articles.

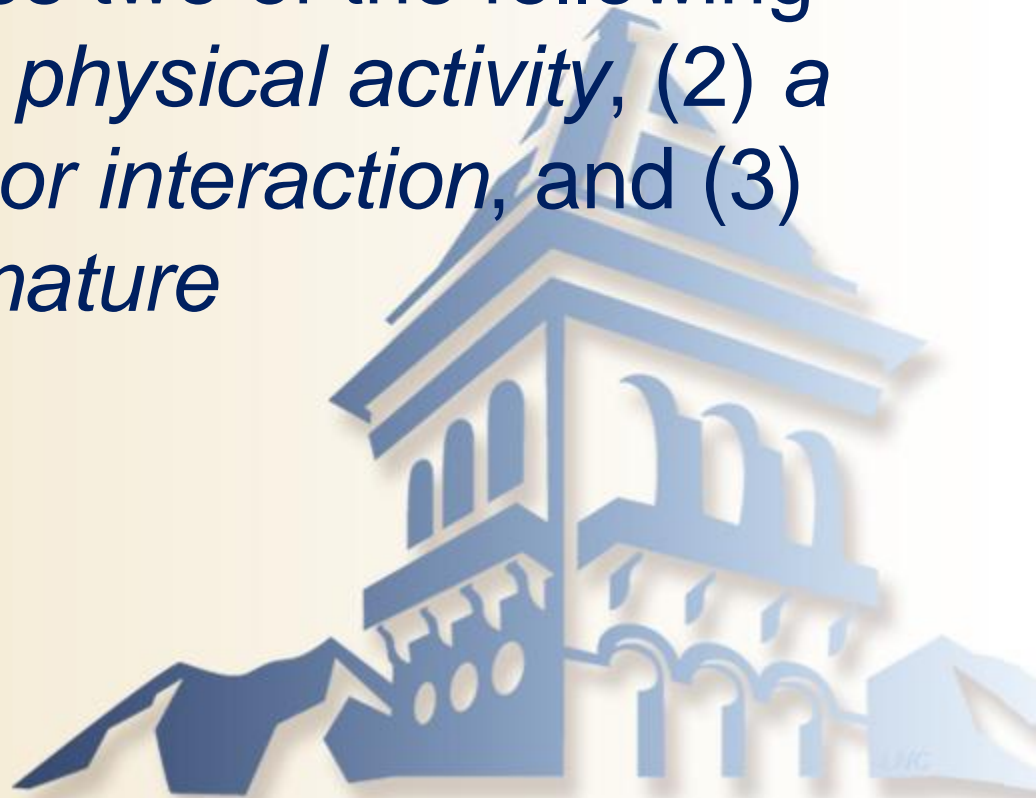


The Results

- ◆ The results indicate that while definitions vary across sources, two primary perspectives emerge:
 1. Professional trade associations and scholars who tend to define adventure travel by a set of characteristics
 2. Practitioners and the popular press who tend to view adventure travel as individual specific

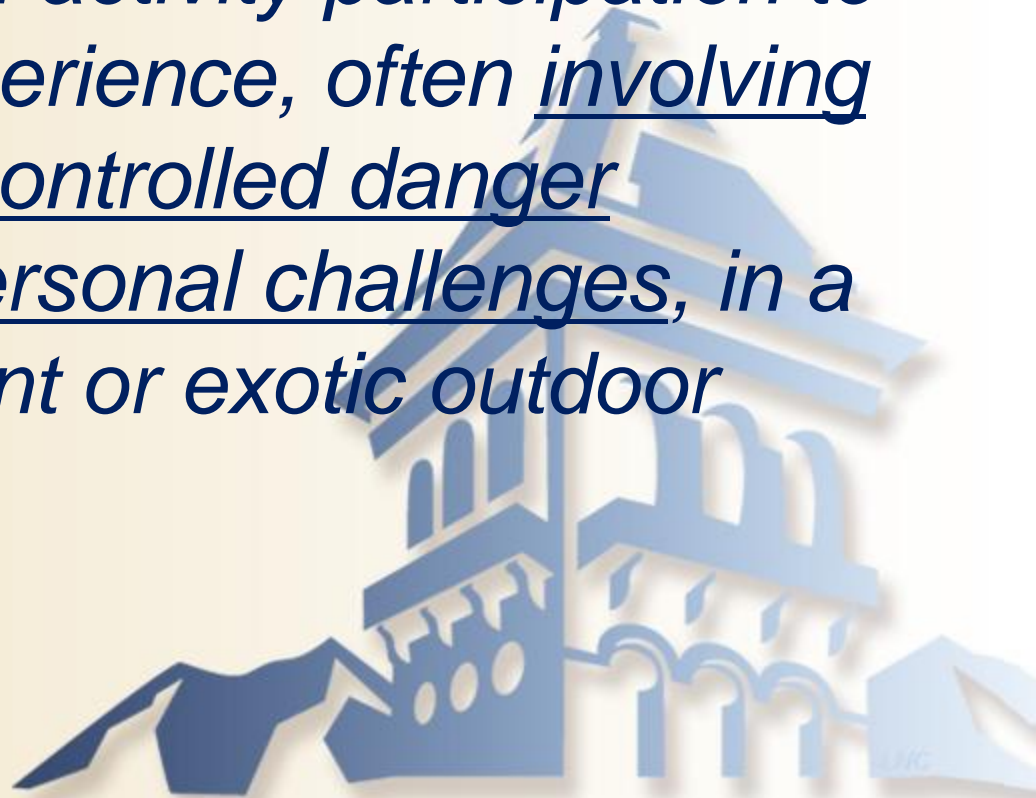


- ◆ *Adventure Travel Trade Association* defines adventure travel as any tourist activity that includes two of the following components: (1) *a physical activity*, (2) *a cultural exchange or interaction*, and (3) *engagement with nature*



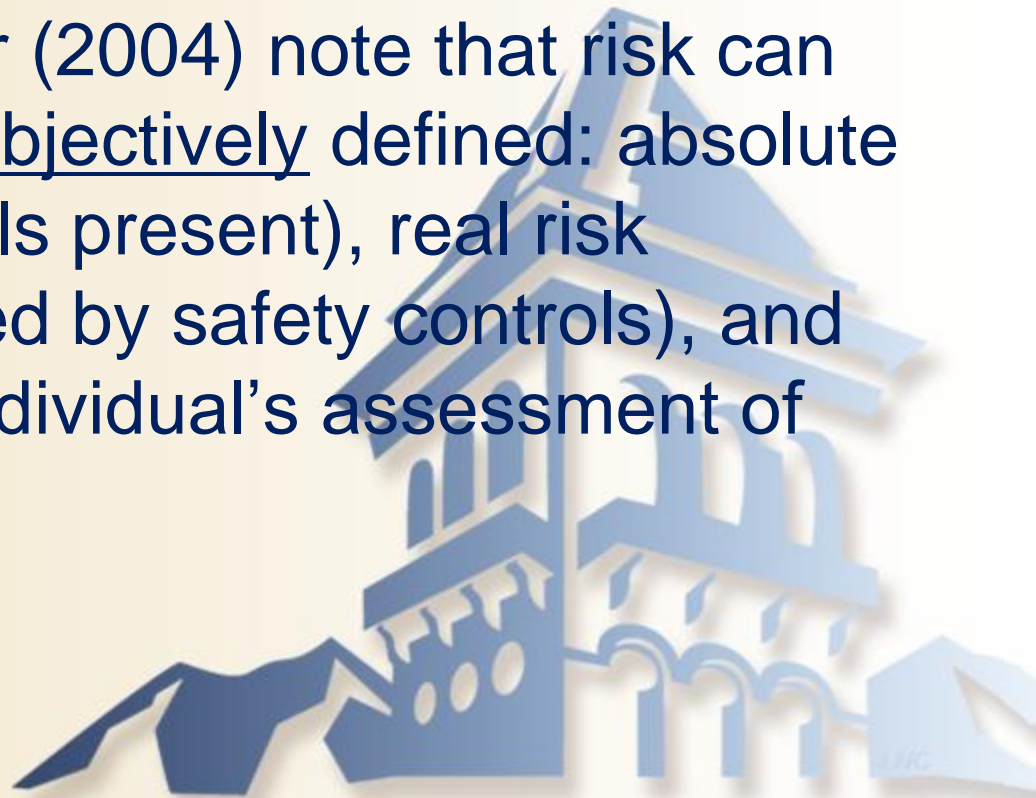
Scholarly Perspective

- ◆ Sung, Morrison, and O’Leary (1997) define adventure travel as *a trip or travel with the specific purpose of activity participation to explore a new experience, often involving perceived risk or controlled danger associated with personal challenges, in a natural environment or exotic outdoor setting*



Scholarly Perspective

- ◆ Luthi (2007) defines adventure travel as an outdoor activity that includes some level of risk that opens the individual more fully to life.
- ◆ Dickson and Dolnicar (2004) note that risk can be objectively and subjectively defined: absolute risk (no safety controls present), real risk (absolute risk adjusted by safety controls), and perceived risk (the individual's assessment of real risk).



Scholarly Perspective

- ◆ Gyimóthy and Mykletun (2009) discuss the objective-subjective nature of adventure travel itself: *food tourism resembles that of adventure tourism in general, including novelty-seeking, fear and thrill.*
- ◆ Beedie (2005) suggests that “urban” tourism is a form of adventure travel because *city centres might be understood as a modern wilderness.*

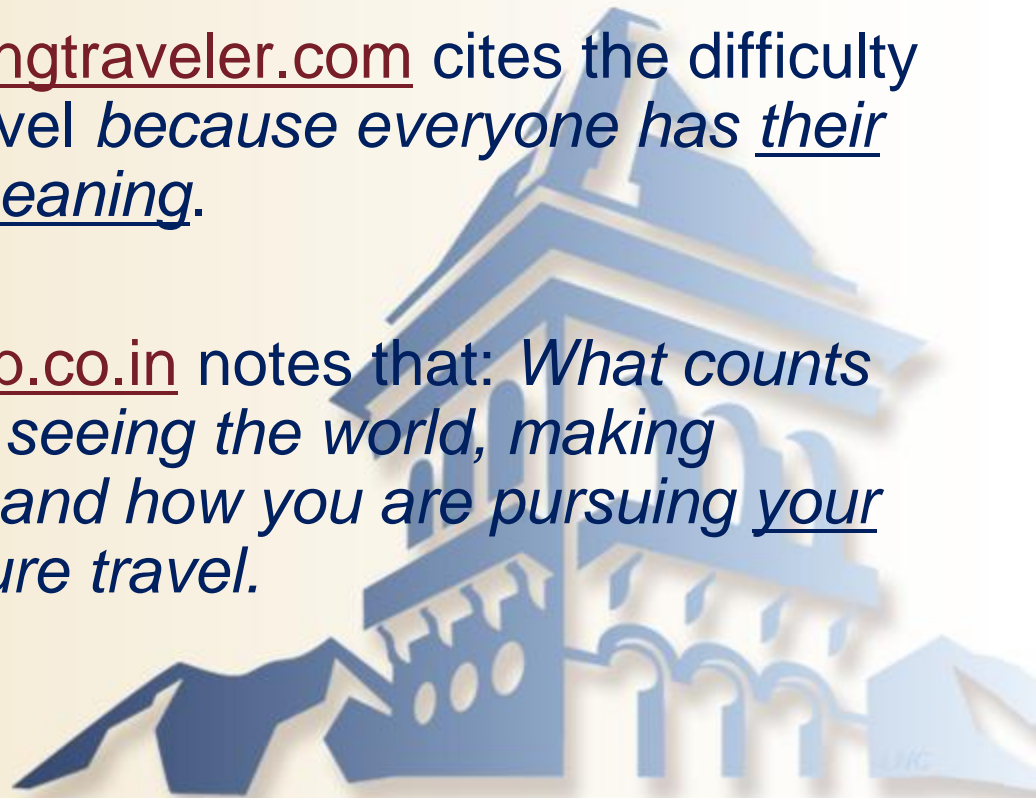


Practitioner and the Popular Press Perspective

- ◆ Chessman (streetdirectory.com), notes: *Due to the fact that every individual defines the meaning of the word ‘adventure’ differently, the realm of adventure travel can be pretty broad!*
- ◆ The blog www.examiner.com notes that providing a proper definition of the term “adventure travel” is not easy because it means different things to different people

Practitioner and the Popular Press Perspective

- ◆ www.travel.lovetoknow.com notes that *adventure travel is a very broad term and means something slightly different to each traveler.*
- ◆ The blog www.theramblingtraveler.com cites the difficulty of defining adventure travel *because everyone has their own idea of the term's meaning.*
- ◆ The blog www.book-shop.co.in notes that: *What counts is the new ways you are seeing the world, making friends in foreign places and how you are pursuing your own definition of adventure travel.*



A Proposed Definition

- ◆ The following definition is proposed for consideration:

“Adventure travel includes participation in any travel-related activity that involves a level of challenge and risk that is both objectively and subjectively assessed.”



Clarifications on the Definition

- ◆ Challenge refers to the activity's difficulty; the higher the level of challenge, the greater the adventure.
- ◆ Risk refers to the amount danger inherent in participating in the activity; the greater the level of risk, the greater the adventure.
- ◆ Both challenge and risk may be delineated in terms of their physical, social, and/or psychological components.
- ◆ Travel refers to the distance traveled and can be characterized by a variety of components including physical distance, psychological distance, and/or cultural/social distance.



Conclusion

- ◆ The field of adventure travel might be best served with a definition that is broadly defined and allows for some individual interpretation.
- ◆ In doing so, there is flexibility.



Why is this important?

At least one practicing professional argued that:

- ◆ “The last thing we need...is to suck the life out of 'adventure travel' by defining it”
(Michale Kaye, www.planeta.com)

