



## Research Paper

# Can't we all just get along? Emotions and the team guiding experience in adventure tourism

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the volume of research identifying the importance of experiences and emotions in consumption and the impact of tour guide behavior on client experiences, investigations of guide experiences in adventure tourism destinations are limited. In particular, the impact of guide-to-guide interactions, rather than guide-to-client interactions, on experiences is needed. This study investigated interpersonal interactions and emotional experiences that occurred while working in a river guiding team in an adventure tourism destination. Critical incident data was collected by an adventure tourism guide over 112 days and used to inductively analyse emotional experiences and patterns in guide-to-guide relations. Findings highlighted potential factors associated with the experience of both positive and, more frequently, negative basic emotions in the adventure team guiding interactions in this study. This investigation appears to be the first analysis of the emotional experience of team guiding in adventure settings. The importance of studying guide interactions, implications of the findings for tourism destination management and operators, and future research directions are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Despite the increasing prominence of emotions and experiential perspectives in tourism research and management (e.g., Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011), emotive aspects of adventure tourism guiding require further investigation. Emotions are essential drivers of adventure tourism experiences, however, only a limited number of empirical studies have focused on adventure tourists' and guides' experiences (e.g. Arnould, Price, & Tierney, 1998; Carnicelli-Filho, Schwartz, & Tahara, 2010; Gyimothy & Mykletun, 2004; Holyfield, 1999; Holyfield & Jonas, 2003; Houge Mackenzie, Hodge, & Boyes, 2011, 2013; Houge Mackenzie & Kerr, 2013). A seminal study in this vein was Arnould and Price's (1993) investigation of 'extraordinary' white-water rafting experiences that examined emotive and symbolic elements of adventure tourism consumption. More recently, Faullant, Matzler, and Mooradian (2011) demonstrated the importance of emotions such as joy and fear in mountaineering adventure tourists' experiences. As adventure guides play a key role in tourists' destination experiences (e.g. Holyfield, 1999), it is important to also understand guides' emotional experiences. Research has largely

overlooked a fundamental aspect of adventure guiding: the emotional experience of guiding in teams.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews literature related to adventure guiding experiences and emotions. This review integrates adventure-specific studies with a summary of adventure team guiding issues and general research documenting co-worker conflicts. A brief overview of guiding quality standards is also provided to contextualise the study. Research on emotions is then reviewed and we conclude with the research objectives. Section 3 describes the novel use of autoethnography in this study, data collection, and analysis. Results are presented in Section 4, followed by limitations in Section 5. Discussion and management implications are proposed in Section 6.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Adventure guiding studies

Tourism guiding has begun to receive increasing research attention, primarily in terms of how tourists experience guides' performances (e.g. Geva & Goldman, 1991; Haig & McIntyre, 2002; Ham & Weiler, 2002). Many of these investigations have employed ethnographic methods to conduct sociological analyses of tourism work. Adventure guiding in particular has been linked to identification, liminoid experiences, symbolic interactions, and intense

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emotional experiences (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993; Arnould, Price, & Otnes, 1999; Holyfield, 1999; Varley, 2011). Beedie (2003) highlighted performative aspects of mountaineering guide experiences and Sharpe (2005) found emotional labour to be a significant demand in guide–client interactions. Cater (2006) elaborated that guide–client interactions can be strained by differences in language, cultural norms, attitudes, and risk perceptions. Expectations of appropriate (e.g. enthusiasm) versus inappropriate (e.g. boredom, anger, or fear) emotional expression towards clients has also been described in the literature (Buckley, 2010; Jonas, 1999). This literature identified that in adventure tourism: (a) positive emotional experiences are often carefully crafted by guides; (b) guide-to-client interactions can be emotionally intense and create emotional labour; and (c) guiding requires emotion management in response to these conditions. What has not received scholarly attention thus far are adventure tourism guides' emotional experiences of team guiding (i.e. guide-to-guide) interactions.

## 2.2. The nature and importance of team guiding in adventure tourism

Despite the volume of literature demonstrating the influence of tourist–guide interactions on commercial success (e.g. Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010; Law, Pearce, & Woods, 1995; Pearce, 1984), there is a paucity of research examining guide-to-guide interactions and their impacts on guides' experiences. Popular accounts of mountaineering and whitewater rafting trips, for example, detail team member tensions and intense emotional interactions (e.g. Bangs & Kallen, 1989; Krakauer, 1997). However, few scholarly works have focused on these experiences. As adventure tourism guiding inherently entails more risk and uncertainty than many other work environments, emotional responses may be distinct from other work settings. Guides often communicate quickly with two or more co-guides to manage risk. These time-sensitive interactions may exacerbate emotional responses. Guides may also work with a range of different co-guides depending on the season, activity, and destination. Mountaineering guides, for instance, often travel seasonally to work in many destinations with different co-guides on each trip. Valkonen (2009) concluded that guides operating in outdoor settings manage far more tasks, and emotions, than guides in other tourism segments. Thus, understanding the quality of emotional experience in adventure team guiding is necessary to expand tourism literature and inform management approaches.

## 2.3. Co-worker conflict

In addition to adventure-specific elements that may affect guide experiences, conflicts amongst co-workers generated by individual differences in emotions, values, culture, language, and gender have been well documented (e.g. Buckley, 2010; Icten, 2010; King, Hebl, & Beal, 2009; Mannix & Neale, 2005; West, 2007). Research shows that diversity can negatively affect social integration, communication, and group interactions (e.g. Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999) and result in poorer performance and lowered satisfaction for group members (e.g. Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Riordan & Shore, 1997). Studies have also demonstrated that: individuals favour others with similar characteristics (Dovidio, Maruyama, & Alexander, 1998); culturally homogenous groups display more positive team processes than culturally diverse groups (e.g. Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993); and dissimilarity amongst teammates may decrease cooperation (e.g. Webber & Donahue, 2001). Affective differences amongst team members may also be associated with decreased cooperation and increased emotional and task conflict (Barsade, Ward, Turner, &

Sonnenfeld, 2000). Based on this body of literature and the nature of adventure tourism guiding detailed above, we expected that adventure team guiding interactions could instigate intense emotional experiences and conflicts.

## 2.4. Guiding quality standards in tourism destinations

The literature provides precedents for 'good' or acceptable tour guiding and describes professionalism issues in specific destinations (e.g. Ap & Wong, 2001; Black & Ham, 2005). As these factors may influence team guiding experiences, they are worth examining here briefly. Characteristics of, for example, a well-guided river trip include effective communication and teamwork, preparedness, efficiency, time and group management, engagement with clients, and provision of adequate information and guidance regarding safety and lines of travel. Many of these attributes are reflected in published guidelines detailing qualities of 'good' tour guides. These qualities include: using non-verbal communication (e.g., smiling); acting professionally (e.g., punctuality, greeting clients, being courteous and attentive); advance preparation; providing necessary information; learning about clients; structuring the tour; using demonstrations; and managing the group (e.g. ensuring effective communication and instruction, providing safety, handling unexpected situations) (RARE, 2001). These criteria provide minimum standards by which to judge the quality of adventure tourism guiding.

## 2.5. Theories of emotion in psychology and tourism

Emotions are complex affective states that influence thoughts and behaviors through somatic and psychological changes. Emotions have been linked to personality and motivation, and are more immediate and intense than moods. Psychological theories of emotions have generally focused on physiological, neurological, and cognitive approaches. Physiological theorists contend that emotions occur as a result of physiological reactions to events (e.g. arousal); whereas neurological theorists propose that brain activity leads to emotional responses (Myers, 2004). Cognitive theorists argue that thoughts play an essential role in emotional experiences (e.g. Lazarus, 1991; Schachter & Singer, 1962). Various catalogues of basic emotions have been proposed that include emotions such as: anger, awe, contempt, disgust, embarrassment, enjoyment, excitement, fear, gratitude, guilt, interest, resentment, sadness, shame, surprise, and virtue (e.g. see Ortony & Turner, 1990 for review).

Despite the volume of research on emotions, there is a lack of consensus regarding fundamental human emotions and their causes (e.g. Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Izard, 1991; Johnson & Stewart, 2005; Oliver, 1993). While some theorists advocate focusing on two superordinate emotional dimensions of positive and negative affect (e.g., Mooradian & Olver, 1997; Wirtz, Mattila, & Tan, 2000), others contend that specific basic emotions provide a more meaningful level of analysis (e.g. Apter, 2001; Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). Richins (1997), for example, distinguished amongst 16 consumption-related emotions, whereas Laros and Steenkamp (2005) proposed a hierarchy of consumer emotions consisting of: a superordinate level of positive and negative affect, an intermediate level of four positive and four negative basic emotions, and a large number of subordinate emotions. Although many tourism scholars agree that two dimensions of affect are insufficient to account for the diversity and complexity of emotions in tourism contexts because (a) important distinctions may be lost and (b) different emotions result in different behaviors (e.g. Lerner & Keltner, 2000), they have yet to agree on the basic emotions. Due to these inconsistencies, the distinct study context (i.e. tourism work rather than consumptive tourism), and the

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