Title: Value in tourist experiences: How nature-based experiential styles influence value in climbing

Abstract

Nature-based adventure experiences constitute a significant segment of the tourism industry and understanding consumers' conceptualisations of value is crucial. The aim of this study is to understand how the perceived value of the climbing experience differs within the climbing community. Interviews with climbers revealed that multiple aspects of the climbing experience are valued, including efficiency, play, excellence, aesthetics, status, emotion, esteem and authenticity. The results highlight that conceptualisations of value vary with experiential style. The study thus adds to the conversation on what creates value in the climbing experience and how this fluctuates throughout the climbing experience. The study contributes to our understanding of nature-based experiences and to the development and marketing of adventure experiences. The results imply that building a strong climbing image at destinations and being involved in the climbing community represent key issues that contribute to co-creating value in the tourist experience.

Key words: *rock climbing, nature-based tourism experiences, value, adventure tourism, experiential style*

Introduction

Tourist experiences have been subject to considerable discussion in tourism research, and the concept of the value of experiences is attracting increased attention (Björk, 2014; Cohen, Prayag and Moital, 2014; Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2008; Galvagno and Dalli, 2014; Prebensen, Chen, and Uysal, 2014). In spite of the growth of the adventure tourism industry (Adventure

Travel Trade Association, 2016), empirical research on nature-based adventure tourism (e.g. Su et al., 2015) does not reflect a similar interest in consumer value. The term 'nature-based tourism' covers all forms of tourism where undisturbed natural surroundings represent the primary attraction or setting; this includes consumptive and adventurous activities as well as non-consumptive contemplative activities (Buckley and Coghlan, 2012). Climbing is a nature-based adventure tourism activity, offering "authenticity and simplicity, an opportunity to connect with nature and ourselves, an outlet to test physical limits" (Adventure Travel Trade Association, 2016: 2).

Although nature-based tourists form a heterogeneous group with diverse origins, motivations and interests (Mehmetoglu, 2007), many seek adventures in nature as a source of excitement and stimulation and as a way of detaching themselves from their ordinary everyday lives (Beedie and Hudson, 2003). Climbing is thus an example of a demanding, nature-based adventure tourism activity (Swarbrooke et al., 2003). The challenge, risk, independence, intense commitment and advanced skills (Heywood, 2006) required when climbing may imply that its experiential value differs from that of ordinary tourist experiences. Thus, value in nature-based adventure experiences may be derived from various aspects of the experience, depending on consumers' outlook.

Zeithaml's (1998: 14) early definition of value as "the overall assessment of the utility of a product, based on the perceptions of what is received and what is given" constitutes the most widely accepted definition both within and beyond the tourism literature (Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2006). Furthermore, researchers seem to agree that value does not exist in the object consumed, but rather may be inherent in the experience itself (Prebensen, Woo and Uysal, 2014). As a complement to Zeithaml's concept of perceived value, it is thus also important to attend to the consumption experience as a means of understanding consumers' perceptions of value (Gummerus, 2013; Holbrook, 2006). In the case of nature-based

experiences, consumers' outlook and relationship to nature and to the activity may influence their perceptions of value. Vespestad and Lindberg (2011) have argued that nature-based experiences can be divided into four perspectives that they term experiential styles, similar to the "appropriation of experience" (Carù and Cova, 2007: 10): the genuine, for entertainment, as a state of being, and/or a form of community affiliation (Vespestad and Lindberg, 2011). Experiential style is a multi-faceted and dynamic construct. In other words, participants may exhibit several styles during the various phases of the nature-based experience. Therefore, understanding tourists' approach to nature-based experiences can be critical for an understanding of their experiences and the value they attribute to them. Given that Vespestad and Lindberg (2011) merely indicate how attributions of value may differ among the four styles, empirical research is required to explore how attributions of value by consumers of the adventure tourism activities differ across the nature-based experiencescape.

The literature on value co-creation draws on several research streams and has been applied to various empirical contexts (Galvagno and Dalli, 2014). In a tourism context, the co-creation of consumer value and its role in pleasurable leisure consumption represents an important theme (e.g. Webster and Rennie, 2011). Contributions draw upon Holbrook's (1994, 1999, 2005) typology of value in the consumption experience (e.g., Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2006, 2008) or on research regarding how tourists act as resource integrators in value co-creation processes (e.g., Prebensen, Vittersø, and Dahl, 2013; Prebensen, Woo, and Uysal, 2014; Su et al., 2015). Research has been inspired by both Service Dominant Logic (SDL) (Vargo and Lusch, 2008, 2016, 2017) and Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) (e.g., Arnould, 2014; Cabiddu et al., 2013; Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014; Schau et al., 2009). Whereas SDL research is primarily concerned with how value is co-created by the provider and the consumer, consumer research focuses more on the ways in which consumers experience value throughout the consumption process. The present study thus takes a somewhat

interdisciplinary approach in that it relies on CCT and contributes to the literature by bringing together tourism and consumer research to shed light on value in the climbing experience. The study concentrates on value creation as perceived by climbers, as climbing in the context selected here does not rely on the presence of a provider. In extraordinary contexts such as climbing, consumer research (e.g., Arnould and Price, 1993; Celsi et al., 1993; Kozinets, 2002) may contribute to an understanding of value creation in adventurous nature-based experiences. Holbrook (1999) treats value as an emergent, multi-faceted phenomenon and thus argues for several types of value. Such different consumption practices might therefore indicate that perceptions of value throughout the consumption of an experience are affected by the consumers' outlook. This study draws on CCT research on experiential consumer value (e.g., Arnould, 2014; Holbrook, 1994, 1999, 2005; Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014; Schau et al., 2009) and nature-based experiential styles (Vespestad and Lindberg, 2011). Through qualitative interviews with climbers, the study aims to investigate perceptions of value. Consequently, this study explores the following research question: How do nature-based experiential styles guide the perceptions of consumer value during the consumption of extraordinary adventure experiences?

Literature review

Consumer value

Although consumer value has attracted considerable attention in consumer research and marketing, it remains an elusive and poorly understood concept (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Value is traditionally conceived in economic or functional terms, or related to some sort of exchange value (Bagozzi, 1975; Gallarza and Gil Saura, 2006; Zeithaml, 1988). In marketing the classic perspective is that in a market there is an exchange of value between the

buying and selling parties (Bagozzi, 1975). Zeithaml (1988) adds that value can be viewed as a higher-level abstraction or as an emotional payoff, which can be referred to as semiotic value. Levy's (1959: 118) ground-breaking work that in part argued that "people buy goods not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean" is reflected in consumer research. It is not just the symbolic value of products that is important, but also their social value; that is to say, their relevance to the social group to which the consumer belongs.

SDL research suggests the existence of a balanced consumer-business value co-creation process (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), while the experiential orientation of CCT research recognises that other resources (in addition to the supplier of the product or experience) may influence value creation. CCT believes that when acting as tourists, consumers construct value and that through consumption cultural meanings are mediated by various accomplices (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Moreover, in the case of experiential consumption, consumer value exists in the experiences derived from consumption, rather than existing within the object, the product or the brand itself (Holbrook, 1999). It has been argued that the hedonic aspects of consumer experiences are important (Holbrook, 2005), implying that the fun and enjoyment associated with consumption become central to its value. This notion originates in Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) fantasy-feeling-fun mantra, which emphasises the playful and aesthetic dimensions of experiences (Wheaton and Beal, 2003). Holt (1995) goes further, suggesting that the notion of consumption as play relates to how consumers consume through their interactions and practices. Building on research into consumers' emotional and hedonic states during experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), Holt (1995) argues that value additionally depends on how consumers identify with products, how cultural meaning structures consumers (see McCracken, 1986), as well as the meaning of interpersonal practices. Although Holt has been criticised for limiting his theorising to individual value-creating activities (Schau et al., 2009), his research is useful because it

introduces the idea of consumption practices – rather than subjective experiences – as the experiential focus and describes "linkages between metaphors for" consumption (Holt, 1995: 14). He also considers how interpersonal dimensions and institutional frameworks influence how consumers consume: their consumption style.

Belk et al. (1989) have introduced the sacred and profane as dimensions of the sociocultural impact on experiential consumption. Thus, the concept of experiential value is recognised in both the psychological sphere and the sociocultural sphere. This formed the basis for Arnould et al.'s (2006) argument that consumers may integrate physical resources (e.g., energy, emotion and strength), social resources (e.g., family/friends and tribe belonging) and cultural resources (e.g., specialised knowledge/skills and expectations) during consumption. Consumers play an active role in the consumption of experiences, in turn contributing to their own experiences (Carù and Cova, 2007). Working in this tradition, and inspired by axiology (the theory of value in philosophy), Holbrook (1994, 1999, 2005) defines consumer value as an interactive, relativistic preference experience. According to this definition, consumer value is created during interactions with other people, objects and symbols (Ness, 2011) as part of consumption experiences, and reflects various preferences (such as like or dislike and favourable or unfavourable). Value in outdoor settings is complex because it is contingent on multiple interpretations, which depend upon the situation, subculture knowledge and experience (Senda-Cook, 2012). Indeed, consumer value varies between consumers, situations and contexts.

Holbrook's (1999) value scheme consists of eight value types that may appear simultaneously and to varying degrees in any consumption experience. The typology has been criticised for being a dichotomous and stereotypical typology, lacking a theoretical basis and consisting of randomly chosen dimensions (Smith, 1999). A challenge for typologies is that not all value types are relevant or important in any given experience context (Arnould, 2014).

It is assumed that in extraordinary contexts, the significant dimensions of value are intrinsic (i.e., autotelic/experiences are valuable for their own sake e.g., fun, enjoyable), self-oriented (i.e., primarily valuable to the subject) and active (i.e., physical, mental, emotional engagement).

Value in extraordinary experiences

Theorising about extraordinary experiences, and understanding the micro, meso and macro aspects thereof, can be important to understanding how value is created during dynamic experiences. Based on the hedonic tradition of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), Arnould and Price (1993: 25) have described extraordinary experiences as "intense, positive, intrinsically enjoyable". Based on their analysis of empirical data on river rafting, they describe a connection with others or communitas and self-renewal and unity with nature as resources that are essential to an intensely enjoyable extraordinary experience (Arnould and Price, 1993). Although the tourists in their study emphasised the hedonic value of the river rafting experience, Arnould and Price's study shows that in extraordinary experiences, value is dynamically produced throughout various interactions in meso contexts (e.g., communion with nature) and in micro contexts (e.g., communitas and self-renewal through rafting). Consumers often seek extraordinary experiences out of a desire for adventure and escape (Varley, 2011), and consumers are often highly active throughout such experiences (Tumbat and Belk, 2011). One might therefore assume that the resources that consumers bring to the experience (e.g., roles, skills and preferences) are important to value formation (Lindberg and Østergaard, 2015). Consequently, consumer value is neither objective (as in the exchange paradigm), nor subjective (as psychologists might argue), but rather a contingent product of interaction and actions (Arnould, 2014). In addition to the consumer goal of experiencing an "alien, marginal, and liminoid world" (Varley, 2011: 85), extraordinary experiences might offer absorption and integration into the extraordinary that contribute to the transformation of

consumers (Lindberg and Østergaard, 2015). Within consumer research, it has been argued that consumer immersion in an experience and consumer experience of transcendence are central to experiential consumption (Carù and Cova, 2006; Schouten et al., 2007) and key to the enjoyment of extraordinary experiences (Hansen and Mossberg, 2013).

Celsi et al. (1993) use the example of skydiving to demonstrate that in extraordinary experiences, risks are normalised and value escalates through reciprocal, dynamic processes. Somatic thrill is complemented by pleasure and fun when fear is normalised through skill and mastery of manoeuvre in the air (Celsi et al., 1993). Rather than viewing resources as being static throughout consumption, their research indicates how practice evolves and how new resources (e.g., manoeuvring skill) develop. In a study of adventure tourism, Varley reports that the kayaker's experience follows liminal states (Turner, 1969), moving "from comfort to hardship, from security to uncertainty, passivity to commitment and from action governed via ocular experience to total bodily/sensual immersion" (Varley, 2011: 85). Adventure experiences may offer high exchange values but can be extremely short-lived (Cloke and Perkins, 2002). The richest experiences are lived in the contested margins between structure (ordinary life) and anti-structure (extraordinary), or in the tension between everyday Apollonian value and temporary extraordinary Dionysian value. Apollonian ideals include comfort, predictability and security, and are achieved through planning, training or strategies. Whereas the Dionysian values are created through "experiences of communitas, emotional expression, transcendence, bodily re-invigoration" (Varley, 2011: 96). The relationship between climbing bodies, communities and climbing space has also been explored from a geographical perspective, and space can never be complete when the body is included in its co-production (Rickly, 2017c). Gyimothy and Mykletun (2004) followed winter trekking tourists at Svalbard over three years and demonstrate that the dynamic relationship between risk, insight and play is important to an understanding of the resources underlying the value of

hedonic adult play. Over time, the adventure tourists developed adequate levels of competence and skill and thus became aware of potential risks, a precondition of adult play (Gyimothy and Mykletun, 2004). As adventure tourists gain more experience, they also become more dedicated to the activity (Holm et al., 2017).

In studying the climbing of Everest, Tumbat and Belk (2011) have argued that extraordinary experiences might not be as magical, communitarian and spiritually joyful as the studies reviewed above suggest. They found that consumers formed relationships out of necessity and were "more interested in touting their individual accomplishments" (Tumbat and Belk, 2011: 57) and reaching personal goals than co-creating experiences. Consumers of extraordinary experiences may be willing to forgo pleasure and immediate gratification because they value hardships and tension as part of the adventure. These aspects of extraordinary experiences might lead to "eudaimonia", a higher order of pleasure and happiness that typically requires intense involvement (Webster and Rennie, 2011). Thus, whether instead of or in addition to the positive and communal dimensions of extraordinary experiences that represent social, linking (Cova, 1997) and hedonic values, one might expect such experiences to entail value that encompasses feelings of being alive and challenged and of feeling competent and fulfilled (Waterman, 2005). Thus, identity value may be important if the activity (or particular achievements that constitute part of the activity) represent salient forms of self-expression for the consumer, strengthening their self-identity as well its relationship to their subcultural collective identity (see Wheaton and Beal, 2003).

Experiential styles in relation to nature-based experiences
CCT researchers have focused on the idea that cultural meanings or semiotic values are mediated through consumption and are thus constantly co-created (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014). Therefore, it is reasonable to contend that tourists find their way into nature in search of a variety of cultural meanings. Value-producing practices differ according to the system of

value that predominates during the experience (Arnould, 2014), hence it is important to investigate the possibilities inherent to the value system (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014).

In consumer research, work on experience-based communities has demonstrated that comparable types of value may be common to dedicated groups of consumers. Studies of snowboarders (Cova and Cova, 2002), skydivers (Celsi et al., 1993), Harley Davidson bikers (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and Star Trek fans (Kozinets, 2001) have shown that *experiential style* within special-interest communities can influence value and value creation processes, as members of the community share enthusiasm, social identity, goals and commitments (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006). Thus, experiential styles would likely affect value in nature-based experience communities. Vespestad and Lindberg (2011) have identified four main experiential styles that are important to understanding nature-based experiences; 1) genuine, 2) entertaining, 3) state of being and 4) community belonging (see Table 1). One's view of the tourist experience, experiential presentation, phenomenon and the role of the presenter forms part of the overall perspective taken. The four styles are not mutually exclusive or absolute categories and can differ depending on time, place and activity setting.

Table 1: Experiential styles (based on Vespestad and Lindberg, 2011: 62)

Experiential style	Description
Nature-based experiences as genuine	Real nature, back to nature. The authentic sought from genuineness, attempting to create a coherent life. Participant follows his or her heart in search of the 'sacred' in nature.
Nature-based experiences as entertainment	Nature as a source of entertainment and fun. Fun is the ultimate goal and pursuit of fun is the motivation for being in nature.

Nature-based experiences as state of being	Nature as a source of sensations and means of achieving psychological and physical goals, or a new state of being that is different from ordinary life.
Nature-based experiences as community belonging	Nature represents part of the universe for the tribe. Participation is used to signal tribe membership.

The *genuine experiential style* has its origin in classical tourism literature (e.g., Boorstin, 1964; MacCannell, 1976; Turner, 1973) and assumptions that tourists are on a "sacred quest" to visit places, people and cultures. Tourists may be motivated by the strangeness of the "other" (e.g., natural phenomena) (Cohen, 1972) and be enthusiastic about experiencing the "holy" value of nature. Post-modern urbanisation has engendered a romantic notion of nature and wildlife "and a yearning for new, exciting, adventuresome, life-enhancing, memorable and authentic experiences" (Curtin, 2005: 11). Aesthetics and spirituality may be important considerations for people visiting a place in search of leisure experiences (Webster and Rennie, 2011). A genuine experience is one where a tourist's encounter with nature is submersive or romantic, feels "authentic" and triggers emotions, a sense of communion with nature (Arnould and Price, 1993) and perceptions of Dionysian value (Varley, 2011).

The notion of nature-based experience as *entertainment* captures symbolic and hedonic aspects of experiences. The role of fantasies, feelings and fun in experiential consumption is often connected to contexts that involve self-indulgence and immediate gratification (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). In the tourism literature the "post-tourist" is someone seeking playful experiences (Feifer, 1985) or intense thrill and spectacle (Cloke and Perkins, 2002). If there is a constant search for enjoyment and aesthetic surfaces (Cohen, 1995), the distinction between everyday life and tourist experiences diminishes (Uriely, 2005) For example, the growing tendency to participate in playful activities during tourist trips and

in everyday life indicates a trend towards de-differentiation. Furthermore, research on extraordinary consumption experiences has shown that playful experience is complex in that it depends on developing communitas and being integrated with nature (Arnould and Price, 1993; Tumbat and Belk, 2011; Webster and Rennie, 2011). The tourists' focus would be on having fun and experiencing excitement in nature with acceptable risk in a secure environment (Cloke and Perkins, 2002).

In the *state of being style*, the nature-based experience is expected to help renew the self or result in a novel state of being (Vespestad and Lindberg, 2011). Adventure activities must have the power to allow the tourist to assume a novel role during the experience. In consumer research it is well-documented that self-renewal is an important aspect of extraordinary experiences (Tumbat and Belk, 2011) and that self-renewal involves transformation and immersion (Den Breejen, 2007; Hansen and Mossberg, 2013; Lindberg and Østergaard, 2015). This relates to the existential state of being that can be experienced through touristic activities, undertakings from which existential authenticity can be achieved (Rickly and Vidon, 2017). Moreover, authenticity can be both intrapersonal (bodily feelings and self-making) and interpersonal (family ties and communitas) (Wang, 1999). Pons (2003) has even claimed that tourism creates opportunities to explore what it means to be human. Empirical support for Wang's (1999) two variants of existential authenticity can be found in an empirical study of committed tourists (attendees of the Texas Renaissance Festival), who reported that they attained heightened bodily feelings by constructing a sense of desired self and developing authentic relationships (Kim and Jamal, 2007). Rickly-Boyd (2012, 2013) has also explored the concept of existential authenticity, noting that it "occurs in fleeting moments, informed by social, cultural, and physical encounters" (2013: 684). In the context of lifestyle climbers, she concludes that climbing offers the potential for existential authenticity, which is more often experienced off the rock face through a lifestyle that encourages

independence and self-sufficiency (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Self-discovery can also be an

important motivation for exposing oneself to experiential challenges, such as travelling off the

beaten track, climbing mountains, or dealing with challenges of the ocean and weather

(Steiner and Reisinger, 2006). The "eudaimonia" or happiness one feels when participating in

activities that provide opportunities to achieve excellence demands intense involvement.

Moreover, a further important characteristic of this style comprises "feelings of being alive,

challenged, competent and fulfilled" (Webster and Rennie, 2011: 335).

The concept of *community belonging style* is based on an appreciation of marketplace

cultures and cultural structuring as being important for an understanding of experiences

(Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). Tourists' perceptions of value

are filtered through the norms of the sociocultural communities to which they belong

(Vespestad and Lindberg, 2011). Østergaard and Jantzen (2000) have criticised accounts of

value that treat the consumer as an independent person who is collecting emotional

experiences or seeking self-renewal. They argue that the consumer can be thought of

metaphorically, as a member of a tribe where experiences and symbolism create a universe for

the tribe (Cailly, 2006). Tourists search for the "right" symbols so that the other members of

the tribe will recognise them. The assumption underlying this notion is that all tourists are

embedded in a particular cultural context that shapes their decisions, activities and

experiences (Vespestad and Lindberg, 2011). Nature-based consumption experiences are

valued according to collective sociocultural criteria such as normative discourses, modes of

practice, identity and shared meanings (see Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Kates, 2002), and

emerge through the medium of common "symbolic codes of stylised behaviour, taste and

habitus" (Katz-Gerro, 2004: 20). Such community belonging has been identified in empirical

research into adventure activities such as surfing (Preston-Whyte, 2002), white-water rafting

(Arnould and Price, 1993), skydiving (Celsi et al., 1993), wilderness canoeing (Sharpe, 2005)

and climbing (Cailly, 2006; Rickly, 2016, 2017a). The meaning of nature, the significance of the activity and the importance of the community culture itself are all interrelated, and so may become significant to the perception of value in the community. Identifying these values in relation to experiential styles thus becomes essential.

Method

Data were collected in the Lofoten Islands in northern Norway over a two-week summer period. The informants comprised 20 climbers (eight Norwegian nationals and twelve people of other nationalities) who were on vacation in the islands. This was a convenience sample. The age of the climbers ranged from 18 to 36 years, and included 19 males and only one female. The climbers were climbing alpine (non-bolted) routes with climbing partners. They were contacted at various campsites, where they were both interviewed in depth (Thompson et al., 1989) and observed. In the interviews, informants were asked to recount their climbing career and their most recent climb, covering every element of the experience from preparation to return. They were later asked to discuss other activities, such as regarding being at the campsite, their motivations and goals, the milieu, lifestyle issues and the value of the experience. All three researchers visited the campsite, the climbing pub and suppliers in order to understand the milieu and the logistics of climbing in the Lofoten Islands. This enabled us to comprehend the climbing culture and (along with triangulation) also helped increase the credibility of the study.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the text was then content-analysed (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004; Krippendorff, 2004). The analysis was designed to elicit how the climbers themselves valued the climbing experience. Given that any text may have multiple readings, there is no such thing as "the content" (Vespestad, 2010), hence emphasis was placed on the words the climbers used to express the value that climbing had

for them. The analysis went through different levels of abstraction (Mehmetoglu, 2004; Strauss and Corbin, 1996). In the initial open coding phase, the interviews were broken down into indicators, followed by concepts and finally categories. Holbrook's (1999) framework served as the inspiration for the coding of the value categories. The categorisation process was data-driven, hence the categories that were not appropriate to the empirical context were modified accordingly (Richins, 1999). Consequently, two of the initial categories (ethics and spiritual) were replaced with emotional and authentic value. The sources of value that emerged from the interviews facilitated a more profound and thorough elicitation (Richins, 1999). It was thus important to maintain the descriptions given by the informants to ensure credibility.

Findings and discussion

The findings and discussion follow the four experiential styles and the value emphasised by the climbers within each style. *Genuine* nature and the aesthetics of nature could be deemed salient in the first meeting with the climbing destination or when taking in the view at the top of a mountain. The climbers expressed this as: "Just experiencing nature and being in beautiful places is inspiring" (inf. 6). Moreover, they placed considerable value on the aesthetics of nature; indeed, the spectacular natural surroundings were one of the reasons they chose to climb in the Lofoten Islands. They stated that they loved being outdoors and enjoyed the landscape and views. Although most of the climbers valued nature, few asserted that love of nature was the main reason they chose to climb.

The climbers stressed that nature was important to them because it enabled them to climb, but the physical and mental challenges of climbing constituted more important aspects of the experience, somehow reducing nature to a performance arena. The *beauty* of nature was not vital; rather, nature was important because it provided the setting and was thus a

prerequisite for climbing. In line with previous research (Rickly and Vidon, 2017; Trauer, 2006), nature was the setting for climbing, rather than representing value in itself. The aesthetics of the setting thus contribute to the value of climbing (referring to aesthetics of the mountain/climbing route). Furthermore, variations in nature, the character of the mountain and the weather all determine whether one can climb or not, just as they influence a climber's performance.

The aesthetic value of climbing is also a property of the aesthetics of the climbers' own bodies and their movements when they are climbing. In climbing, the focus is clearly on the movements required and the bodily sensation (or value) of testing one's body's physical abilities. Climbers seem to be particularly fascinated by the movement skills involved and the aesthetics of the body. One climber even compared the movements in climbing to a choreographed dance:

> The whole movement of the climb is enjoyable; you have to think about it and analyse it to understand how to move. It is almost like a choreographed dance; it is very creative. You move through different positions (inf. 16).

This attitude is congruent with the literature on adventure activities (e.g. Ness, 2011) where (for example) surfing has been compared to a dance (Ford and Brown, 2006). Moreover, the flowing choreography of female climbers' bodies have been underlined by Chisholm (2008) and it reflect the aesthetic value of the activity. Another climber expressed the aesthetic value of climbing by claiming "I'm searching for something beautiful" (inf. 18). The search for the aesthetically pleasing supports earlier studies on aesthetics and spirituality (Webster and Rennie, 2011) as it reflects the importance attributed to the moves and the connection between the climber's movements and the nature of the route.

In terms of *entertainment style*, climbers sense the fun and enjoyment of climbing: "I love climbing, it is fun and I love it" (inf. 12). Climbing is fun because it is exciting and challenging; it requires the climber to use his or her skills to manage fear (informant 6). This finding is in line with Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) argument that consumer value is related to fantasies, feelings and fun. However, climbers are more than just hedonistic fun-seekers; they are not searching for pleasure through mere fun (Jantzen et al., 2012). Rather, they believe that pleasure is related to physical activity and happiness:

> The physical activity, it physically makes me happier, I go through periods of depression when I am away from climbing (inf. 13).

This climber thus refers to the happiness he experiences when climbing and the emotional discomfort of not being able to climb, indicating a temporal aspect pertaining to the time spent away from climbing. In accordance with earlier research that suggests that temporality is important to defining happiness (Bhattacharjee and Mogilner, 2014; Mogilner et al., 2012), the physical happiness the climber derives from climbing is defined by contrasting the time spent climbing with ordinary everyday life. The entertainment value appears to be more important in the camp, climbing pub or village than when actually climbing. Thus, the entertainment element forms an aspect of the experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, 2011), but it does not exist at its core and it is not found in the most physically active parts of the experience.

The *state of being style* encourages a focus on efficiency, excellence and emotional value. This experiential style signifies a striving for excellence, evident in that all the interviewees preferred being the lead climber. This role involves taking the most responsibility and of being in control of the decision-making. Indeed, the lead climber is normally the most skilled climber:

(…) but of course it becomes boring if one is the second climber over a long period of time, and not being able to unfold and be "the spear point". It is a bit to do with that. ….. One gets to decide the route (inf. 14).

This evidence corroborates earlier research on the value inherent in control (Kiewa, 2001) and efficiency (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Webster and Rennie, 2011), because the leader takes the most risk and must trust in his or her decisions. Consistent with earlier research (e.g. Cater, 2006; Kiewa, 2001), the climbers in our study did not seek risk or climb because they valued risk itself; rather, they sought somewhat risky situations because they enjoyed mastering the risk by exercising their skills and solving problems. The difference between actual and perceived risk (Bentley and Page, 2008) seems to be important in this context, as the risk in climbing is not limited to physical risk, but may also include social and psychological risks (Weber, 2001). Most climbers perceive the risk of climbing to be relatively low on the grounds that they know which factors of the situation they can control. This is contrary to the general perception of rock-climbing as being risky (Holm et al., 2017).

Extraordinary experiences may be valued for the struggle they entail, feelings of achievement, mastery or endurance, or because they allow one to attain a personal goal. The climbers valued excellence in the physical aspect of climbing and continually strived to achieve it. The informants focused on different aspects of physical value, but they all emphasised that climbing kept them fit and that they enjoyed its physical challenges. As one climber stated: "… it is like doing a puzzle on the wall, with your own body" (inf. 17).

The body's performance proved fascinating to the climbers: "the experience is your own accomplishment: your body, your muscles; it is your personal performance that gets you up there" (inf. 3). One's level of climbing performance is thus closely related to one's skills and learning, as Fennel (2012) argues that it is a primarily activity-based performance. The

climbers' sense of achievement and feeling of well-being when they meet their own expectations of bodily and mental performance as they are climbing is thus related to valuing excellence (Holbrook, 1998) and striving for merit.

All of the climbers valued the emotional aspect of the activity, as true of other experiential activities (Sørensen and Friis Jensen, 2015). Their reflections can perhaps reveal a certain touristic gaze (Urry, 1990; Urry and Larsen, 2011), looking for "the perfect climb", equivalent to the surfer's search for the perfect wave (Preston-Whyte, 2002). However, their contemplation is closely connected to being an active participant and does not represent a passive spectator gaze (Cloke and Perkins, 1998). The emotions connected to the climbing experience vary. During climbing, some of the climbers experienced an emotional state akin to meditation, which they viewed as liberating:

> (…) a meditative feeling when I am leading and am very focused in the moment, focusing just on the climb, all worries disappear (inf. 10).

> That's what's so in a way liberating, your head empties and the only thing that you focus on is the next few metres (inf. 1).

The feeling of being so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter is known as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). It is a moment of complete focus, in which the performer's level of skill matches the challenge. One can achieve "flow" when participating in adventure activities (Celsi et al., 1993; Ford and Brown, 2006) such as climbing. The climbers were totally involved in and committed to climbing, and attained a strong sense of happiness from it, in line with studies of happiness and eudaimonia (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Webster and Rennie, 2011). The focus and commitment of the climbers was expressed by one informant as "when climbing, yeah, there is nothing else, you have to concentrate on what you are doing" (inf. 8). In the state of being style, the climbers express a view of the authentic value as being

the purity and honesty of climbing. The following statements can be related to the search for or experience of some sort of authentic self (Wang, 1999), where climbing helps one find one's true self:

> (…) maybe I am somebody different at work and when I'm climbing. I think so (inf.18).

> Through climbing I learned how to be a better person in my life outside of climbing, because it builds confidence, skills around managing risk, and it has had an impact on my priorities in life (inf. 6).

Community belonging is significant in climbing. Nearly all of the climbers said that they value the social aspect of the climbing community, which manifested itself as a strong sense of belonging, camaraderie and support. However, as one climber noted:

> The social contact by itself is not like the major motivator for me …but I have noticed that we tend to meet more, like, similar people (inf. 10).

This finding is in line with research on participants in adventure and lifestyle sports (Preston-Whyte, 2002), as well as previous studies into climbing that emphasise a shared vision within the climbing milieu (Cailly, 2006) and distinct practices and patterns within the community (Rickly, 2016). However, the hostility between climbers identified by Rickly (2017a) was not seen in this study. One informant went so far as to say that climbers are *better* people, whereas others discussed the feeling of community amongst climbers:

> The climbing community are the best friends I have ever had (inf. 8).

> The climbing community is in a way a bit special compared to other communities, it has a camaraderie and support that is really….what should I say, nice and fun (inf. 1).

The climbers also explained that one achieves status in the community through skill, through being the first to climb a route and owing to one's experience of climbing:

> There is actually a very strict code, it is not said out loud, but it is definitely there, on how you are supposed to behave and how you are supposed to look and…, a bit like you don't care, and you just casually do something very dangerous or very demanding, and you act like it is not a big deal. Then your friends go and tell everybody that he did this and he did that. But you still get the respect, the word still goes around, but you don't, like, go and brag about it yourself (inf. 10).

The climbers believed status was crucial "to some climbers". Given that climbing requires dedication and skill, the pursuit of "climber-status" would not be enough to keep somebody within the sport. Nevertheless, one informant said that his decision to start climbing was partly influenced by a search for status and image:

> When I was younger and I started climbing, I trained a lot and it was very important for me to always get better and better, and to be more hardcore. I think it was more important for my self-image and I thought … it kind of made me special, or I was hardcore because I was a climber. Then at some point, I kind of realised that it doesn't make me any more special and that it was stupid to climb if I was climbing because I wanted acceptance or approval from others. Then I also realised … that the thing I enjoy the most, is not really showing off to other people, but really climbing these bigger things, where there are fewer people around and it is just you and the rock (inf. 10).

Another indication of status in the climbing community was the way in which the climbers classified each other by the routes they have climbed and how they performed. Just as consumers' needs for self-expression and self-affirmation can be related to the construction

of a personal and social identity (Dimanche and Samdahl, 1994; Wheaton and Beal, 2003), performance is key for climbers; they want to perform well in their own view, but also in comparison with others in the community:

I compete with my mates… there is lots of competition… (inf. 3)

One's performance is reflected in one's status within the group, and status is derived from being able to climb the more difficult routes or finding solutions to particularly challenging parts of a route (e.g. informants 7 and 14). According to one climber, it is common to talk about what you have climbed, but you should not brag about your accomplishments: "you are supposed to act, like, very humble and very, like, cool and chilled, and you are supposed to act like it doesn't matter to you…" (inf. 14). Another climber (inf. 7) said that they brag amongst friends "like boys do", although they do not talk about competition aloud.

Here, authenticity is connected to the search for an authentic lifestyle. Most climbers claimed that climbing is a lifestyle and that it is not about escape from everyday life; rather "it is part of life and not separate from it" (inf. 8). Another said:

For me and almost everyone I talk to, [climbing] is the normal life. It is living in the bush and climbing all the time… I don't like the term "lifestyle" because, I don't know... I feel like lifestyle is usually something that you can choose, and, I mean, I guess I choose to climb, but because of how much time I spend climbing I feel like it is, it is almost no longer an option. Just a staple in my life. It is always there (inf. 13).

In keeping with Björk's (2014) holistic life approach, which posits that tourist experiences influence happiness, quality of life and well-being, the climbers here saw climbing as an aspect of their lifestyle and as something that creates life satisfaction. Some even claimed that they would become restless and out of sorts when they are unable to climb for a while

("would get very upset", inf. 13). Climbing is their passion, and the informants had a close relationship to it as an authentic activity, and emphasised the meaning it added to their lives.

Consistent with CCT (Karababa and Kjeldgaard, 2014), the climbers mediate and experience a cultural meaning in what they do based on their community culture. The climbers emphasised that the community feeling they derived from the climbing community was something special when set against other areas of their lives. The sense of belonging to a community (Rickly, 2017b) is seemingly a common understanding amongst climbers; climbers share not only the joy of climbing, but also a certain identity that is bound up in practices, rituals and meanings (Cailly, 2006; Cova, 1997). Moreover, they share the freedom to withdraw from mundane life into an anti-structure communitas (Arnould and Price, 1993), as well as sharing goals and the experience of flow (Celsi et al., 1993). Climbers join a climbing culture that allows them to leave mundane life behind and master or be "at one" with the mountain. They assume a novel cultural role that is different from the role they play in everyday life, but that at the same time is embedded in everyday life. Collective engagement in nature with a social group renders it possible to become immersed in climbing. The members of the community attain status in the eyes of relevant others. Climbing also creates meaning to the climbers through common community codes. Table 2 describes the experiential styles and their most prominent values.

Table 2: Value in the climbing experience according to experiential style

Experiential style	Description	Most important value sources
The genuine style	Search for meaning of nature. Aesthetics of nature, related to the place, view and the climbing body. Nature is valued as a setting in which climbing is possible. Authenticity of the climbing place is central.	Aesthetics (emotional and bodily awareness, physical movement, being outdoors). Authenticity (of nature and place).
The entertainment style	Entertainment is important through the fun and enjoyment of the activity. It is about more than hedonic fun-seeking; it also demands focus. Fun is	Play (fun, excitement, focus)

	imperative before or after the climb, rather than during the climb itself.	
The state of being style	Climbers strive for excellence through control of risk, decision-making and performance. Physical and mental development creates value in climbing. Skills matching the challenge and experiencing 'flow' is key. Significance of 'the perfect climb' through commitment and involvement. Existential authenticity is valued; the purity and honesty of climbing itself.	Efficiency (accomplishment, confidence in yourself, discipline, risk, skill). Excellence (personal learning, useful/ applicable knowledge, skill toolbox). Emotional (openness, meditative). Authentic (physical/mental challenge)
The community belonging style	Strong sense of community and common codes of behaviour. Status in the community is important but not discussed. Competition and performance evident in the community. Authentic lifestyle and climbing as part of life. Cultural meaning created in the community.	Status (symbol/status in community). Excellence Esteem (social community) Authentic (lifestyle)

Conclusions and implications

The purpose of this study was to understand tourists' value in adventure experiences.

Interviews with climbers revealed that value differs among participants. The study has

identified the main sources of value in the climbing experience as being efficiency, play,

excellence, aesthetic, status, emotion, esteem and authenticity. Consequently, the paper adds

to the conversation on value in tourist experiences in the context of adventure tourism, an

uncharted area. The experiential style that a climber adopts influences the values that assume

the greatest prominence in every aspect or stage of the climbing experience. For instance, a

climber who adopts an entertainment style will focus on the play value of climbing, on having

fun and on enjoyment, as well as experiencing nature as a setting for the activity (allowing fun

to happen); indeed, the activity is at the fore. The experiential style is more often adopted in

the camp before or after the climb than during the climb itself.

The experiential style of the climbers is not necessarily consistent throughout the climbing experience, hence value varies throughout the consumption experience. The current study thereby illustrates the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of value. The dynamic nature of the proposed experiential styles are emphasised, as the climbers could move from one style to the next, or in-between styles depending on time, space, activity and throughout a vacation. The subtleties of the value of the experience are thus evident as (for instance) authentic value is apparent in the genuine style, the state of being style and the community style alike, yet the meaning of authenticity changes from the authentic value of nature and place to the authenticity of the activity and the authentic self or an authentic lifestyle.

This study contributes to the literature on nature-based experiences, as it offers new insights into the value of extraordinary adventure experiences. First, the study considers the value that climbing has for climbers and relates this to the notion of experiential style. Second, the study captures the dynamics of value by tracing shifts in value within the climbing community. For example, the main source of value may shift from the authentic value of being in nature to the value related to excelling in performance of climbing moves. Climbers can focus on being in nature during the phases of the climbing experience that are not technically demanding (e.g. before or after the climb), but whilst they are actually climbing all their attention is paid to the physical challenge of the climb. Third, we propose that the experiential styles framework illustrates the dynamics of value, as different values are appreciated depending on the style one adopts during the various phases of the experience. The current study thus contributes to a relatively unexplored area of adventure tourism research (Pomfret and Bramwell, 2016) by shedding light on value creation and the dynamic nature of adventure tourists' experiential styles. This discussion of value within the frames of experiential styles is a contribution that can contribute to advancing the field.

This study has some limitations. First, the data are derived from a limited number of climbing tourists in one climbing destination, and so the results cannot be generalised. Second, the value categories highlighted here might not cover the full spectrum of sources of value in nature-based adventure experiences, as they emerged from research on climbers. Extending the research to other empirical contexts would generate a more comprehensive picture of value in adventure experiences. Further research could also explore climbers' online discussion forums or magazines in order to extend understanding of the post-consumption phase and memories of climbing experiences.

This article identifies value in climbing in relation to nature-based experiential styles. It would be interesting to conduct further research in other adventure tourism contexts in order to broaden the understanding of value in adventure tourism. This might uncover patterns of similarities and differences in the value matrices of the various special interest communities. Independence thinking is high amongst climbers, as none of the informants were part of an organised tour or had made use of guides or pre-arranged packages. For tourism businesses, the implication of this is that climbing destinations could benefit from focusing on maintaining a strong climbing image to contribute to value co-creation. If a destination becomes known as a climbing destination in the wider climbing community, climbers will be attracted to the area, creating opportunities for businesses to specialise in providing supportive experiences, such as climber "hang-outs", basic equipment, climbers' guidebooks, maps, services, alternative experiences when it rains, and so on, in order to facilitate value for the climbing community. Given that value creation in climbing often occurs beyond the business sphere, the quality of support services or experiences offered at the destination could affect the overall value of a climbing vacation. Paying attention to the co-creation of value during different parts of the climbing experience where the entertainment style is adopted might allow businesses to make an impact. The study indicates that climbing

is part of the lifestyle of many climbers, implying that there could be business opportunities in

reaching out to climbers in their everyday lives through marketing efforts directed at the

climbing community, such as forums and interest magazines.

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