Chapter 14

"Hard" High-Investment Adult-Age Adventure Play in the Off Hours:
Peer-Shared Ideas on the Social Web

ABSTRACT

Globally, adults engage in various forms of high-investment adventure play in their leisure. Sometimes, these are complementary to their careers, their self-identities, and their social circles. This type of adventure play requires investments in learning, KSA (knowledge, skills, and abilities) development, social network development, time, moneys, reputation, and other costs. It may involve some level of risk-taking. This work explores this niche space of "hard" adventure play as expressed on the Social Web as a type of peer-shared teaching and learning, with a focus on "luxury geocaching" as the activity.

INTRODUCTION

Once adults achieve a sufficient level of income and some available leisure time, a subset of this sub-population turns their attention to "serious leisure," a form of play that often requires the development of serious skills, some heavy investment of resources, long-term time inputs, and other expressions of commitment. Serious leisure is "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience" (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3, as cited in Gould, Moore, McGuire, & Stebbins, 2008, p. 48). Serious leisure may be expressed as a hobby or as a vacation or as a continuing side gig. "Adventure recreation" is defined as "*self-initiated, nature-based physical activities that generate heightened bodily sensations and require skill development to manage unique perceived and objective risks*" (Mackenzie & Hodge, 2019, p. 3, italics by the original co-authors).

One part of the tourism industry caters to adventure recreation. In the space, there is a differentiation between so-called "hard" vs. "soft" adventure recreation. Experts have categorized some activities that fit into each activity category: The hard category includes "climbing mountain/rock/ice, cave exploring/spelunking, safaris, trekking" (Schneider & Vogt, 2012, p. 708). A collated list of common "outdoor adventure travel activities" include the following: "arctic trips, backpacking, ballooning, bicycling, bird-watching, bungy jumping, camping, canoeing (river, sea), diving (scuba, sky), dogsledding, fishing, four wheel drive trips, hang-gliding, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, jungle exploring, kayaking (river, sea), motorcycling, mountain biking, mountain climbing (ice, rock), nature trips, orienteering, paragliding, rafting, rappelling, rogaining, safaris, sailing, skiing (alpine, cross-country, downhill, Heil, Nordic, water, wilderness), skydiving, snowmobiling snowshoeing, soaring, spelunking, survival & wilderness training, trekking, walking tours, (and) windsurfing" (Ewert, 1989; McMenamin, 1992; Hall 1989; Special Travel Index, 1992, cited in Sung et al., 1997, as cited in Sung, Morrison, & O'Leary, 2000, p. 8). Others include "surfing, snowboarding, wakeboarding…rock climbing, BASE jumping and *parkour"* (Ormrod & Wheaton, 2009, p. 2).

In terms of "soft" adventure recreation, these include "skiing/snowmobiling, backpacking, hiking, hunting/fishing, mountain biking, observing wildlife/birdwatching, scuba diving/surfing, volunteering on vacation, waterskiing/snorkeling, kayaking/canoeing, bicycle riding, boating, camping" (Schneider & Vogt, 2012, p. 708). Other "soft adventure" (Hill, 1995, as cited in Patterson & Pan, 2007, p. 28) travel includes those that are family friendly ones. Soft adventures involve activities "usually conducted under controlled conditions and…generally led by trained guides that supply the educational component that older people prefer" (Muller & Cleaver, 2000, as cited in Patterson & Pegg, 2009, p. 262).

In a general sense, "hard" adventure is often more freeform and out-of-bounds; "soft" adventure is more defined and structured, within strictures. One is more real, and one is more faux; one more off-trail, the other on-trail; one in wilderness, the other in designed built-spaces (parks with trails). There is the allure of both actual and projected (mass-mediated, social-mediated) vicarious senses of risk and danger.

The respective requirements for skills also differ between the "hard" and "soft" adventure categories. Hard adventures often require "high levels of risk, requiring intense commitment and advanced skills" as compared to soft ones with "activities with a perceived risk but low levels of real risk, requiring minimal commitment and beginning skills" (and with activities led by "experienced guides" for the most part) (Patterson & Pan, 2007, p. 29). Some require expensive equipment and specialized settings that may require cross-border travel.

This work involves the exploration of peer-shared teaching and learning on the Social Web by adults discussing their "hard" high-investment high-risk high-octane adventure play in their leisure. The focus of the work is on the value of the shared information in this elite and sometimes-democratic and inclusive space.

The core research question will be:

- What are the core teachings of adults who engage in "hard" high-investment adventure play in terms of their shared messages on the Social Web?

Social media imagery will be captured. Also, the messaging on a news board, a question site, and the WWW will be used. Computational text analysis will be applied to the text-based messages.

[Note: The research will not be necessarily on the super-elite types of extreme sports like free soloing on rock faces without ropes or flying in a wingsuit and so on, in which the social communications are

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