Climber’s Perceptions on Mount Everest: Measuring Crowding Issues, Challenges, Success, and Environmental Issues

Background
- Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation (THED) scenario.
- Mount Everest ‘Summit Fever’ on Mt. Everest: an indirect ripple effect on the THED and Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park.
- Highest peak phenomenon = increasing issues (2003).

Research Objectives
- Develop a new framework to analyze the environmental perceptions and experiences of Everest climbers associated with a timeline scenario of the highest mountain on Earth.
- Utilize a surveying technique to analyze the overall impression of climbers than a typical expedition.
- Enhance understanding on how the visitor experience to Mount Everest is perceived and how it can be improved.
- To examine the visitor experience in association with overcrowding and subsequent climber’s perception of risk and challenges on Mount Everest.

Research Questions
1. What factors have a significant effect on the mountain climber’s perception, including hours and challenges encountered on Mount Everest during all phases of an expedition?
2. What is the relationship of success versus overall climbing experience on Mount Everest? In addition, what actually constitutes true ‘success’ on Everest?
3. Are the levels of crowding and environmental degradation within acceptable limits for the Everest climbers?
4. What are major similarities and differences within the Everest climber demographics regarding questions 1, 2, & 3?

Gaps in Literature
- Assessment of ‘Summit Fever’ on Everest climbing community on specific issues.
- Climbers have a sense of moral responsibility.
- Climbers have been to the summit.
- Climbing on ‘high’ vs. ‘low’ perception.
- Environmental perception.
- Critical Concepts.
- Current state of environmental ethics.

Methodology
- 40-item questionnaire administered on site for all three phases of the expedition:
  - “Before”, “during”, “after”
- Survey organization by the following categories:
  - Climber demographics
  - Prior experiences and expectations
  - Perceptions of fears/challenges encountered
  - Over-crowding and environmental concerns

Conclusions
- Focused innovations of the project include:
  1. Demonstration and geographic assessment of climber demographics: who the climbers are, where they are from, and what brings them to climb Everest.
  2. Evaluation of the mountaineering experience: exposure, and skill of climbers on Mount Everest to determine how qualified the climbers actually are (prior to the climb), and then how effective they are in protecting the environment.
  3. The conclusion is that climbers think they should be in order to climb the peak.
- A probabilistic view of factors affecting climber’s perceptions of overcrowding is a high peak within the context of the crowding expedition (‘Before’, ‘during’, and ‘after’).

Acknowledgements
- Jon Kedrowski
- Research Proposal
- University of California Press, 361 p.
- Journal of Applied Sport Psychology
- Himalayan Research Bulletin XVII
- Mountain Research and Development

References
- North Col Side
- South Col Side
- Conceptual Framework of Survey
- Study Area Locations
- Jon Kedrowski
- Research Proposal
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Conclusions (Cont.)
- Project innovations (cont.):
  4. A site-specific and detailed location determination of the mountaineering and environmental problems on the highest mountain in the world.
  5. Popular critical concepts addressed in regards to associated challenges on the mountain that may be applied to other mountains as well.
  6. Valuable insight for the Nepalese and Tibetan governments to help manage the permit systems and mitigate escalating problems on Mount Everest.