Psychosocial benefits from participating in an adventure expedition race

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify psychosocial benefits that the race participants gained from participating in an adventure race (AR). The sample studied were participants of the Patagonian Expedition Race (PER), a multi-day AR that takes place in Chilean Patagonia.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected in the 2012 prior to, during, and after the event. Observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven four-member teams. Video material and open-ended questionnaires from 2010 to 2012 editions of the event were analysed for validating the findings from the 2012 race study. Interview and observation data were analysed in four steps, including preparation phase (transcription of interviews), exploration phase (searching for themes), reduction phase, and interpretation. Notes from observations and other sources were added to the data during phase 2.

Findings – Six different types of psychosocial benefits of the PER participants emerged from the data analysis: the "flow" experience including immersion into the nature; the play state and changes between telic and para-telic meta-motivational states; exploration and tourist aspects; the creation of "communitas", friendships, trust, and other social aspects; felt self-change; and the transferability of the benefits acquired to daily life.

Research limitations/implications – The conclusions are limited by the sample size and the case study design. Hence, the study should be repeated in other adventure and expedition race settings and contrasted to studies in shorter ARs as well as in other types of small team sports.

Practical implications – The ARs gives opportunities for unique experiences of coping with nature in extreme conditions, thus developing personal insight and outdoor survival skills. The skills and personal development were applicable to everyday life. Moreover, similar races may be organized in different settings to provide varied options for athletes to participate in such races.

Social implications – The benefits gained by the participants are considered useful for coping with demands in working life. This applied especially to enhanced self-insights, attitudes towards hindrances and obstacles, and teamwork skills. The race might be used as parts of training for leaders in organizations of all kinds.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first research paper applying the concept of psychosocial benefits when exploring the outcomes that athletes gain from their AR participation.

Keywords Skills development, Teamwork, Adventure race, Expedition race, Personal growth, Psychosocial benefits

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Adventure races (ARs) are an endurance hybrid sport – an offspring of triathlons, kayaking, backpacking, "friluftsliv", sailing, and exploration. It consists of various disciplines that the participants have to perform in a natural setting over a limited period, which can range from a few hours (e.g. triathlon) to several days (known as

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expedition races). Participants often push themselves to their physical and mental limits. This sport has shown a rapid growth over the last 40 years (Brymer and Schweitzer, 2013; Celsi, 1992; Celsi *et al.*, 1993; Puchan, 2004; Simpson *et al.*, 2014). The Patagonian Expedition Race (PER) – the case studied here – is an expedition-length race that has been taking place every February in Chilean Patagonia since 2004. Due to the remoteness of the area, the harshness of the territory, and the extreme environmental conditions, it is called "the last wild race" (Patagonian Expedition Race.com, 2012a; Siber, 2012). Importantly, athletes are not paid for their participation, and the winners receive no monetary rewards. Thus, one may question what the athletes gain by participating in such strenuous events when no material rewards are within reach. We expect that the benefits may be mainly of a psychosocial nature. Hence, this study explores the psychosocial benefits gained by the participants of this event.

A benefit may be conceived of as a change that is viewed as an advantageous improvement in a condition or as a gain to an individual, a group, or to society (Driver *et al.*, 1991). The core of the psychosocial benefit concept, as applied in this context, concerns intangibles that the individual "takes home" from an event, including the expectations before, during, and after the event (Meretse *et al.*, 2015). Stebbins (2007) defined benefits as, "an agreeable outcome, anticipated or not, of a person's participation in a leisure activity. That outcome may be anything appealing to the participant, whether physical, social, psychological or something else" (pp. 11-12). The benefit concept may be narrowed down to psychosocial benefits (Meretse *et al.*, 2015; Schanzel and McIntoch, 2000), which are here defined as the ultimate values that people believe they have gained from participating in a certain (leisure) activity. The benefits studied here are supposed to have a transcendent nature, that is, self-realization and the flow experience, communitas, and self-change, in other words, the benefits that "have properties capable of altering one's perceptions in terms of self, context, and others" (Celsi, 1992, para 3).

Few studies have researched psychosocial benefits gained from any kind of event participation while participants' motivation has been examined more frequently (Brymer and Schweitzer, 2013; McMorland and MacTaggart, 2007). Both motivation and benefits relate to needs, but it is argued here that the two are not the same. Motivation acts as a "force" that drives and directs behaviour. Benefits are the outcomes of the behaviour. They function as rewards and are related to individuals' experiences and satisfaction. As an outcome variable, psychosocial benefits will most likely influence future decisions of consumer choices (Frochot and Morrison, 2000). Typically, the benefits gained from an activity constitute the essences of the stories that people present to friends and families after participating in an event; thus, they are a central constituent of the word-of-mouth. The likelihood of an activity being repeated should be expected to be influenced by the benefits gained from similar activities in the past, as benefits are assumed to directly influence visitors' future behavioural intentions (Cole and Illum, 2006).

The research question guiding this study was:

RQ1. What are the psychosocial benefits that the race participants gained from participating in the event?

To increase the understanding of such benefits, and due to the paucity of studies conducted on the adventure-racing phenomenon, this study explored the characteristics of such endurance competitions in the wilderness through the qualitative data based on the interviews with participants and on site observations.

The study contributes to the paucity of studies in this field combined with the actual growth in the numbers of such events along with the increasing participation interest observed.

AR

AR events appear in different forms, and for this reason, they are difficult to define. Wilson (2007) described AR as "a sport in which co-ed teams of two to four athletes cross large amounts of territory while engaging in a variety of physical, non-motorized modes of transportation" (p. 5). The AR race formats vary by duration, disciplines, regulations, and remoteness of the event. Disciplines usually include a combination of paddling, rappelling, orienteering, mountain biking, trekking, rock climbing, swimming, problem-solving tasks, and horse riding (Wilson, 2007). The course is undesignated and scattered with several checkpoints through which the teams have to pass to progress in the race (Schneider *et al.*, 2007). The only instruments that the participants may use for navigation are a map and a compass. At the checkpoints, the teams can change gear and, sometimes, get medical support (Wilson, 2007). In order to participate in an AR, teams pay an entrance fee and provide the organizers with an "athletic curriculum" to prove that each team member possesses the skills required to compete (Wilson, 2007).

Jamison *et al.* (2005) identified three types of ARs based on event duration: "sprint races", which last between three and eight hours; mid-length races that last between 24 and 60 hours; and expedition-length races, often lasting between four and 12 days. The PER belongs to the third category. Expedition races take place in extremely remote areas and in various climates, and they are the toughest among these endurance sport competitions. In the longer races, athletes must master multiple outdoor skills; perform multiple sport disciplines through various landscapes; risk illness and injury; and endure sleep deprivation, lack of food and weight loss, extreme variable weather conditions, and harsh terrain (Kay and Laberge, 2002b). Taking part in an expedition race implies being away from the daily work and family for several days, travelling to foreign places, and buying specific gear for the occasion. It involves considerable amount of time and money. In 2012, altogether 15 expedition races were organized worldwide, and the number varied yearly.

The PER is organized by the Chilean company Nómadas International Group SA. The co-ed teams consist of four members. The racecourse changes every year and is always disclosed the day before the race starts. In the past, the race has ranged from five days to two weeks and from 500 to 1,100 km, whereas the number of participating teams has varied from nine to 20. It includes several sport disciplines, such as trekking, rope work, kayaking, mountain biking, climbing, and backcountry navigation. The racers have to traverse swamplands, glaciers, native forests, lakes, rivers, channels, and mountains and, because of the wideness of the territory, they do not see other human beings besides their teammates. In 2012, in particular, 19 teams took part in the event, representing 17 different nationalities, and ten teams crossed the finishing line. In 2013, only 11 teams participated in a very strenuous competition, covering a total of 701 km and comprising ten disciplines. Only three of the teams completed the race (Patagonian Expedition Race.com, 2012a, b, c).

A framework for AR

As a sport practice, this study considered AR as a fringe sport, although its exact position is a reason for debate among the community of racers and researchers

(Kay and Laberge, 2002a). Regarding skills, AR contains mainly features of extreme sports, defined as outdoor sport activities where a mismanaged mistake or accident would most likely result in death (Mykletun, 2009; Brymer, 2005). It challenges the athletes both physically and mentally (Schneider *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, AR shares values and practices with adventure tourism (Kay and Laberge, 2002a) and frontier tourism (Laing and Crouch, 2005) and it qualifies as nature-based tourism, sports tourism, and serious leisure.

Participation in AR, and in expedition racing in particular, most often requires travelling long distances to races in remote areas, hence AR participation implies to be a sport tourist (Worthington, 2006). Sports tourism is another heterogeneous phenomenon that lacks a universally accepted definition (Hinch and Higham, 2001; Weed, 2006). They draw a distinction between actively participating and passively watching sport events (Gibson, 1998; Hall, 1992; Standeven and De Knop, 1999; Weed and Bull, 1997). AR participation falls within the active part, and it is pursued in genuine natural surroundings; thus, it represents nature-based tourism.

Concerning nature-based tourism (Fredman and Tyrväinen, 2010), one should expect psychosocial benefits of AR to rise from its restorative effects on mental capacities and well-being (Johansson *et al.*, 2011; Kaplan and Kaplan, 2011; Thompson and Aspinall, 2011) and from the joy of novelty and beauty of landscapes (Mykletun and Rumba, 2014). Moreover, nature-based tourism offers unique options to immerse oneself in and learn from a new context; however, these benefits may be contested by frustrations and suffering (Lindberg and Eide, 2016).

Adventure tourism lacks a universal definition due to the difficulties to define the concept of "adventure". Hall (1992) defined adventure tourism as a "broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialized and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participant's home range and containing elements of risk in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and management of the touristic experience" (p. 143). Risk taking is a central prerequisite for adventurous experiences and extreme sports to take place (Beedie, 2003, 2008; Berno *et al.*, 1996; Cloke and Perkins, 1998; Fluker and Turner, 2000; Morgan, 2000). According to Ewert (1989), risk is an antecedent of achieving self-actualization. Consequently, both the thrill of risk experiences and their management might give rise to self-actualization (Maslow, 1968) and constitute a psychosocial benefit of the adventures.

However, Walle (1997) proposed the "insight-seeking theory" to suggest that the ultimate goal of most adventurers is to gain insight from performing the activity. Hence, learning is the psychosocial benefit while risk plays only a marginal role in adventurous activities, and it is a side effect of adventure. Weber (2001) saw both risk and insight as fundamental elements of an adventurous experience to take place; hence, both constitute the psychosocial benefits of the adventure. One of the few studies on AR focussed on the perception of risk among adventure racers (Schneider *et al.*, 2007).

Adventure tourism and extreme sports have been conceived of as adult play (Cater, 2000; Gyimothy and Mykletun, 2004). Studying wintertime arctic tracking in Spitzbergen, Gyimothy and Mykletun (2004) showed the ways in which the participants were absorbed in playful activities, experienced a para-telic meta-motivational mood, attended to the activities for the mere sake of playful eudemonic enjoyment, while also gaining insights and new skills. More than an activity, play is defined as a state of mind that is pleasurable and enjoyable and provides a sense of freedom (Ackerman, 1999; Barnett, 2000; Kerr and Apter, 1991). For the play to be

experienced, individuals have to engage in the activities on their own will. In this state of mind, one creates a small and manageable private world in which one feels secure and unthreatened. Contexts involving challenging activities, exploration of the unknown, and facing danger may trigger playfulness (Kerr and Apter, 1991), as may competitions against oneself or others (Ackerman, 1999). This para-telic motivational state creates a protective frame with an adventurous spirit that makes the individuals trust their abilities. In a play state, individuals are willing to experiment and feel internal control, confidence, and security, as if they were "encapsulated in a psychological bubble" (Kerr and Apter, 1991, p. 15). However, this protective frame has a fleeting nature, and most individuals swing between playful para-telic states and telic states of mind, as proposed by the reversal theory. Such alterations occur under threat, and goal-directed coping with the danger replaces the previous para-telic play mood (Gyimothy and Mykletun, 2004). In AR, the athlete may sway between para-telic states, like winning the competition, enjoying the sublime landscapes, and the team companionship, and harsh telic states when traversing difficult terrain under demanding conditions. The play state provides individuals with psychosocial benefits to be described as the felt self-change (Kerr and Apter, 1991), sense of freedom (Brymer and Schweitzer, 2013), states of being (Cater, 2000), and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

Through experimentation, when in a play state, individuals can experience psychosocial benefits, like acquiring problem solving and creative skills and developing new perspectives on life (Brown, 1991) are applicable to the real life. The shift from the para-telic to the telic state is a necessary requirement for an individual to grow, as the place where individuals engage in playful situations is not only a mere playground in which they feel free to mess around, but it is also a training ground for dealing with everyday life situations (Kerr and Apter, 1991).

Ackerman (1999) distinguished "simple play" from "deep play" during which individuals start focussing on their lives and experience moments of ecstasy. Because of deep play, individuals test and redefine their limits, enhance their skills, and become adaptable to unpredictable events. Some activities, such as sports, which take place in environments that are silent and remote, in this case, expedition racing, are more likely to trigger deep play. When in wilderness, senses are more alert, and every sensation matters. This distinction between simple play and deep play to some extent reflects the distinction between casual and serious leisure provided by Stebbins (2007).

Participants of extreme sports may develop an intimate connection with nature (Brymer *et al.*, 2009; Brymer and Gray, 2009), which may be described as a dance involving a harmonious and dynamic interplay between nature and individuals. This often mentioned transformation of one's self through extreme sports has received attention also from Brymer *et al.* (2009), Brymer and Gray (2009, 2010), Brymer and Oades (2009), and Garg *et al.* (2010). Celsi (1992) focussed on the psychosocial benefits that the participants obtained from practicing the sports and from immersion in nature. Brymer and Oades (2009), for instance, found that nature taught lessons of humility and courage to extreme sports participants and triggered a positive transformation in them. To be humble, in particular, individuals have to face realities that are larger and more powerful than they are, and their worldview shifts from anthropocentric to ecocentric (Brymer and Oades, 2009; Gerber, 2002). Environmental challenges induce personal growth by making the individuals focus their attention inwardly (Scherl, 1989). Contact with the environment provides benefits, like confidence, well-being, personal testing, and self-efficacy (Garg *et al.*, 2010). The natural world facilitates the rise of deep consciousness and well-being in the individuals, and its unpredictability

forces them to adapt to it and accordingly, new forms of self-awareness are obtained (Brymer and Gray, 2009). Similarly, Duffy and Overholt (2013) argued that adventure tourists are not seeking the physical danger but the experience of novelty as a unique existential authenticity, where wilderness is a place of escape, renewal, and the search for one's true self.

Frontier tourism and exploration are subsets of adventure tourism that relate to AR and to expedition racing in particular. Unaided by tour operators or leaders, and in isolated areas, they involve high risk and require high levels of commitment and physical and psychological preparation. As the areas where frontier tourism activities occur do not have much infrastructures, travellers have to carry their own food, shelter, and gear, and meticulously pre-plan their trip (Laing and Crouch, 2005, 2009, 2011). Exploration of unknown territories has always been an intrinsic desire of human nature. To some, it is a constructed fantasy, which gives status and purpose, as seeking, searching, discovering, and moving are a primal urge, and transformation is an expected outcome (Laing and Frost, 2014). Thus, frontier tourism may be inspired by and share some characteristics with the explorations of former days, and psychosocial benefits may be the nourishing of identities tied with old myths of the discoverers.

Although by the sixteenth century the majority of geographical discoveries had already been made, explorations continued with a mere curiosity of the unknown and a pure "desire to explore for its own sake" (Duchesne, 2012, p. 87). Nowadays, explorers still go to Antarctica and the Arctic region (Atlis *et al.*, 2004; Leon *et al.*, 2004), which can be seen as a modern version of the journeys that the explorers used to undertake in the old times, especially when retracing ancient expeditions. Such explorations may reflect a search for existential authenticity (Duffy and Overholt, 2013), trigger psychosocial benefits, like the feelings of flow, self-actualization, self-discovery, and personal growth, and result in intense pleasure and enjoyment (Laing and Frost, 2014).

The state of flow may be experienced when an individual becomes immersed in the situation, and the challenges faced are within the range of the capabilities of the person. In flow, individuals act with absolute involvement and do not care about anything but the activity itself. Flow frequently occurs when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile, when concentration is at its highest, and when the immersion in the activity is so deep that the individual perceives the task and the self as merging into the same entity. The unpleasant aspects of life are left behind, goals are clear, feedback is immediate, the individual is not worried about the possibility of losing control, the self is at one with the environment, and the sense of time is altered (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is likely to occur in serious leisure activities (Heo *et al.*, 2010), like rock climbing, extreme sports, and adventure tourism activities in which the participants discover their limits (Celsi, 1992; Celsi *et al.*, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) and constitutes unique psychosocial benefits.

To capture high levels of commitment required by skilled amateurs, Stebbins (1982) proposed the concept of Serious Leisure, which portrays well the adventure racers and the growing popularity of the AR while also suggesting the presence of a community that shares the same interest in an activity. Stebbins (1992) defined serious leisure as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that is highly substantial, interesting, and fulfilling and where, in the typical case, participants find a career in acquiring and expressing a combination of skills, knowledge, and experiences" (p. 3). It possesses six distinguishing qualities, perseverance, career,

personal effort, durable benefits, unique ethos, and identity (Green and Jones, 2005; Stebbins, 2007). Perseverance entails withstanding adversity, such as fear, danger, and embarrassment, with the purpose of gaining reward. Career is a long-term goal and involves a systematic progression in the activity as well as turning points and achievements along the way. Long-term career relates to the personal effort that the individuals put in the activity, which is observable through the willingness to acquire knowledge and skills and the willingness to train. The benefits acquired by performing the activity are of durable nature and deal with the enhancement of personal qualities, like self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, renewal of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhanced self-esteem and self-image, and social interaction. The unique ethos, characterized by Unruh (1980, p. 277) as a "diffuse constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into spheres of interest and involvement for participants", is the subculture that the serious leisure participants share. Finally, identity connects to the social worlds and refers to the social identification with the chosen activity. For the individual involved in the serious leisure activity, identity results in a sense of belongingness to the social world that can be both emotional and physical.

Performing a serious leisure activity has its monetary and opportunity costs and causes disappointments that the activity might cause. An individual involved in a serious leisure activity sees these costs as insignificant, as the rewards associated with the activity pay off any possible drawbacks (Stebbins, 2007). In AR, these would include the cost of buying specific gear, taking days off from work, travelling to the remote wilderness, and "emotional costs", such as being away from home for several days.

Previous research on AR

As a new phenomenon, AR has still not captured the attention of many researchers. While the topic has been studied from the physiological and medical perspectives (Kerr and Houge Mackenzie, 2012), a few studies approached AR from sociological, psychological, and organizational behaviour perspectives (Edmonds *et al.*, 2009; Kay and Laberge, 2002a, b; Kenworthy-U'Ren and Erickson, 2009; Schneider *et al.*, 2007; Wilson, 2007). Only one study (Simpson *et al.*, 2014) focussed on participants' psychosocial benefits of adventure racers.

Three studies have explored the 1999 eco-challenge expedition race in Argentina. Kay and Laberge (2002a) pointed out the stakes and struggles of AR and placed particular attention on the authenticity and spectacularization of the sport product. In their second study (Kay and Laberge, 2002b), they identified the emergence of a new social group that is partly common to both AR and the corporate world: the management-level corporate participants who were overrepresented in the eco-challenge competition. These athletes were concerned more with AR as a practice than with their mere AR performance to enhance their overall work performance. In their organizational behaviour class, Kenworthy-U'Ren and Erickson (2009) considered the eco-challenge as an appropriate learning tool, as the dynamics of the teams and the leadership skills showed by the racers were pertinent applications of the topics covered in their course. Studying an AR in Florida, Edmonds *et al.* (2009) found that collective efficacy of the teams, that is, their shared belief in conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action to produce given levels of attainments, predicted team performance. Wilson (2007) studied the micro-learning behaviours of AR teams in action as well as their dynamics. Schneider *et al.* (2007) found that the racers perceived risk to be under control, as they believed that their skills, experiences, and the support

received from their teammates would prevent accidents from occurring. Learning and social bonding constituted main psychosocial benefits in these cases. Finally, Simpson *et al.* (2014) interviewed participants of the Everglades challenges, a 300-mile unsupported, expedition-style AR in Florida. They concluded that at the root of the participant's experience, adventure was the primary context constituted by four subthemes, wilderness and natural beauty, freedom and disconnect from their busy life, novel experiences, and personal discovery. Moreover, unique experiences also included pushing one's limits (mentally and physically); community (camaraderie, competition); physical, logistic, and mental preparation, and rough natural elements (bad weather and animals). The results suggest that AR can be transformational and provides an avenue for exploring personal meaning and promoting psychosocial benefits.

Method

This research was designed as a single case study (Yin, 1994), and it employed both primary and secondary data collected before, during, and after the 2012-edition of the PER at the headquarters of the race in Punta Arenas, Chile, and at four of the checkpoints. Moreover, the owner of the race shared the data from internal evaluations from 2009 to 2011 race editions. These were applied as additional data sources to validate the primary data, which were based on observations and interviews with individual racers and teams at four checkpoints and after the race. The main contribution of these observations was to increase the understanding of the race exposures and efforts required by the participants. Notes and photos were made from the observations and applied to phrase questions for the interviews and support the analyses of the interview data.

The interview guide was framed to gather information regarding the concepts explained in the above theory review while also accepting the outcomes of the observations. The actual interviews followed the principles of responsive interviewing defined as "[…] a specific variety of qualitative interviewing. It emphasizes flexibility of design and expects the interviewer to change questions in response to what he or she is learning" (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p. 7), thus facilitating additional information to surface. Five post-race interviews were conducted with five of the teams during the return to the base at Punta Arenas and additional five post-race group interviews once the teams returned to Punta Arenas. Each interview lasted between 24 minutes and 1 hour and 14 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed and notes were made afterwards.

The secondary data consisted of video material made available by the organizers. The videos had been recorded in different settings containing interviews with individual racers, team interviews, conversations between the racers and the organizers, conversations between racers from the same and the opposing teams, and of conversations between participants during the race.

The data analyses followed the model described by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), which includes data: preparation phase (transcription of interviews); exploration phase (searching for themes); reduction phase; and interpretation. Notes from observations and other sources were added to the data during phase 2. No electronic data reduction programme was used. When in doubt, the authors discussed the analyses until reaching an agreement.

During phase 2, themes reflecting the athletes' psychosocial benefits were identified and coded within the compiled texts, that is, text phrases describing events, occasions, sensations, emotions, reflections, communications, and processes were phrased with

positive values as gains from participating in the race. The texts phrases alluded to the concepts presented in the above theory review, such as personal growth, flow experiences, self-realization, learning and changes, social relations and communitas, appreciation of and connection with the nature and feeling of existential authenticity and search for one's self, and overcoming danger and risks. As this part of the coding was based on the reviewed theories and research, this thematic analysis followed the principles of a deductive "theoretical" approach at a semantic level (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and content analysis (Flick, 2002). Moreover, the coding processes were open to hitherto unpredicted topics, that is, the researchers also applied an inductive approach combined with the qualitative content analysis, coding, and memoing (Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The task of phase 2 was to identify texts that were subsequently coded and sorted into excel sheets. Moreover, special quotes of the racers and teams were written as full texts, and each racer and team was assigned a correspondent fictional name for confidentiality reasons.

The core task of phase 3 was the integration of related texts into larger units based on conceptual similarities and contrasts, following the principles of a deductive and an inductive approach, respectively. In this way, the data reduction prepared for interpretation in phase 4, acknowledging that the interpretation in fact always starts as a part of the interviewing and observations (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). The additional material like videos and pictures were particularly useful to interpret the coded data in lieu of the theories reviewed above. A saturation point was reached after analysing the transcripts and the video material of the 2011 race. Although no new information was acquired after that point, all data available were analysed to avoid the possibility of missing any important aspects that might have come up.

The data were found to be consistent across different data sources used as well as across ages, genders, and nationalities of the race participants, thus indicating that the findings can be considered reliable.

Results

Six different types of psychosocial benefits of the PER participants emerged from the data analysis: the "flow" experience; the play state; exploration and tourist aspects; the creation of "communitas", friendships, trust, and other social aspects; the felt self-change; and the transferability of the benefits acquired to daily life. Whereas the first three benefits are entirely related to the PER, number 4-6 were also partly related to other ARs in which the racers had participated prior to the PER. Thus, the athletes' psychosocial benefits were in part accumulating across events.

The experience and state of "flow"

Several racers reported a total immersion in the activity during the competition during which distorted perception of time is a central element:

> Looking back at it, it is hard to remember that we actually spent so much time on the race. We spent so much time in the moment that our minds were just focused on the race; it feels like it has been a parallel life or universe that we spent some time in. I do not have any sense of time when it comes to being in the race (BG Source 2).

The alteration of sense of time and the fuzziness of the race was evident, as was deep involvement and absorption related to the aesthetics of the landscape:

> I was really […] I had my mind just like absorbing everything around me. It was just so beautiful. I don't know where my mind was to be honest; I was just traveling (BC Source 2).

The feelings described by these racers were somewhat contrasting. The latter seemed conscious of herself and absorbed everything around her, but her mind seemed to be detached from the outside world. During such total immersion in the activity, the racers also forgot about their daily life, which they claimed to be far away.

The perceptions of the landscape were filled with contradictions between appreciations of the beauty and striving to progress towards the next checkpoint. The area traversed by the racers was described as a land of extremes, wild, breath taking, fantasy-like, with overwhelming sceneries, but also harsh because of the nature of the terrain and unpredictable weather conditions. The PER participants, especially during the longest treks, happened to see no humans for days and had the feeling to be, as one racer observed, "as far from civilization as it is humanly possible to get" (Source 6). The race environment was described as proper wilderness, with no trails, no footprints, and no signs of civilization.

However, nature was not conceived of as something to race against, but rather to accomplish things with. Being "out there" and striving to reach the goal was beyond dispute, and to be in harmony with nature was an unalienable aspect of AR. The nature was even conceived of as a "pain killer" because it gave the racers relief from their pain and suffering. The nature generated feelings of freedom, peace, and enjoyment, and triggered positive emotional reactions. Racers were more alert while immersed in nature, and they paid more attention to the colours and textures around them. In the following account by a participant, which he claimed to be his favourite throughout the entire race, the harmony with the environment is evident:

> Coming down from (checkpoint) five, rushing down towards six, we ended up getting tangled up in the bushes. It was in the middle of the night and we couldn't move any further so we said, "Ok, we need to find some high ground", and we found basically this spot on top of this little mount that had four perfect little cocoon-shaped things, and we all picked our own one and laid down. The clouds parted for 10 minutes, we just had this perfect, in the middle of nowhere, moment of peace and quiet, and it was spectacular. There were more stars than I had seen anywhere else (GM Source 6).

A true intimacy with nature is signalled through the conceptions of the "cocoon-shaped things" that seemed to be there waiting for the team to rest. The parted clouds, the remoteness and the stars gave the racer moments of peace and tranquillity.

At times, the participants who could not finish the course looked back at their experience with melancholy for having left the wilderness. When during one of the interviews a team was asked how their relationship with nature could be described, the racers all looked at each other and laughed: "It depends on who you ask" (DB Source 2). One of them clarified:

> For me, I mainly enjoyed the nature when I was in the mountain pass. I just like the mountains, but as soon as we would get to swamps with all the beavers, I nearly got crazy. […] Sometimes I just stopped and yelled (BG Source 2).

Feelings of harmony with nature followed moments of frustration due to the challenges that nature presented. Overall, nature was seen more as a companion rather than a rival, and the stories that the participants told about the race were far more imbued with a sense of intimacy and harmony with nature than with feelings of frustration towards it.

The athletes generally considered the PER as a survival experience and as a chance to go back to the roots. When out in the wilderness, the racers lived in a simple way, as they divested themselves of the excesses of daily life and dealt with the elements of nature.

Some participants experienced a sense of belongingness to nature and of profound authenticity, they felt very alive when passing through it and literally felt as if they should really go back to the wilderness:

> Out in the wilderness you feel very alive. You are back to the basic instinct in your existence. It is pure survival […] Where's the next water, where's the next food, so it is just […] Yeah, you feel like back to your instincts and basically hunting (EJ Source 2).

> What is special about this race is that you abandon the technology of daily life and you go out with friends, food, just being yourself and the natural elements. For me, the race means going back to the roots, to the earth (MJ Source 6).

The primal lifestyle experienced by the racers was accompanied by a deep sense of humility, appreciation, and respect of nature. By living on the premises of nature, the racers recognized the power of it and became aware of their weaknesses and the smallness of human kind in comparison with it.

The state of play

Racers laughed, joked, and played games along the course and generally described the race as a fun experience. During these moments of para-telic light-heartedness, which involved the entire team, the PER athletes left the worries of daily life behind. Some "just went slowly and enjoyed" (OR Source 2). At times, the course was even described as a playground where the racers could play around freely:

> I feel like a kid just playing. Just being out of nowhere, you know, no grocery shopping, no getting gas in the car, just playing in the woods for days. That's it! We just have to move, play […] Love it. No worries (BC Source 2).

> My love for the sport and nature is so immense that I find it difficult to think that the race was hard, painful, challenging, body and mind punishing or anything like that. For me, it is just a blast. It is like being a child again. I get to run around, get dirty and play with my friends (MG Source 6).

Here, the bodily and mental suffering was irrelevant when compared with the positive energies acquired from being out in the wilderness. Nature made them go back to a childhood-like state of mind.

Moments of fun and play hardly lasted throughout the race. During the down moments occurred, as in risky or challenging situations when strengths were low, the racers would think of their homes and families and have second thoughts regarding their participation in the race:

> In risky situations, my heart beats fast. I don't know, I think about home. It's like somebody bursts the bubble a little bit. When I'm out there I don't really think of all those things but then every once in a while, after something that I'm uncomfortable with happens, I think about home, kids and responsibility (BC Source 2).

This racer, the same one who expressed her joyful feelings when out in the wilderness, saw risky situations as a threat to the childhood-like state she experienced during the race, and during the race she moves from a para-telic to a telic meta-motivational state. The racers appeared to be highly aware of the potential risks involved in the race and claimed that dangerous situations were kept down:

> We were pretty conservative when it came to river crossings; we spent a lot of time every time trying to find the best place where to cross. We were so concerned about the cold, it's just so exhausting being cold. We tried to be as safe as possible (SV Source 6).

When risky situations did occur, on the other hand, the athletes appeared to be confident in their skills and claimed to have overcome the challenges with teamwork. The rare times when risky situations were sought on purpose, such as when a team decided to swim down a fjord and leave the recommended route marked on the map, the confidence that the teammates' abilities would help the team escape unharmed was considered higher than the likelihood for accidents to occur. During changes between para-telic and telic motivational states, the racers experienced rollercoasters of emotions:

> This is day two and a half and day two and a half is kind of like "Why do I do this?" and then by tonight, I'll hope it never stops but, I'm struggling just to keep up (CS Source 6).

This participant seemed to be aware of the fleeting nature of his feelings and considered the moment of struggle as a temporary phase. A little later the same day, one of his teammates expressed her sensations in an opposite way:

> I feel awesome! Actually yesterday was a bad day for me. I did not have fun AT ALL! (Emphasis put) Today […] today is day three. Day 3 is always magical. Magical day […] I love the rain. I love the clouds […] (Laughs). Good feeling (WH Source 6).

Exploration aspects of AR participation

The PER participants travelled over long distances to participate in expedition races, and especially those with jobs and families claimed to be very selective when deciding to participate in the expedition races. In the decision process, location was considered as a factor playing an important role and contributing to the uniqueness of a race. Expedition races, moreover, were seen as a great way to see a country. In the specific case of the PER, the racers considered the remoteness of the Chilean Patagonia areas, where the race takes place, the wildness of the territory and the improbability to run into other people along the course among the most appealing factors of the competition:

> The PER takes place in a completely isolated area, out of this modern world and participating in it will be in some ways like landing on the Moon: no civilization, no "hello pizza" signs, no mail or mobile phone to waste time with. It will be like going back to the roots of adventure or like joining the Mother of all Adventures (TT Source 5).

Many participants claimed that while advancing through the racecourse, they had the feeling that nobody had ever passed through those areas. The racers often described their experience as an epic journey, and racing in an untouched environment generated in them the feelings of discovery and exploration:

> You really couldn't tell that anybody was in front of you, you couldn't tell if you were following somebody's footsteps, there weren't people who had been there camping before you so you felt like you were the first one who was there. That was the supercool part about this race, it was just new (BS Source 2).

The participants also generated the "exploration spirit" on purpose, such as when a team abandoned the recommended route marked on the map to see where that might lead them. The possibility to pass through areas far away from civilization had novel-like features, and it was associated with the journeys that explorers undertook in the old times:

> One of the things that strikes me is that we were racing in the Magellan Strait, the Darwin Range, the Beagle Channel and these are places that you've read about in books of explorers and things but […] It's quite a cool thing to come and do a race here, at the end of the world. It's been really neat (RS Source 2).

A few racers even mentioned that once in the wilderness, they could access places that are "as far from civilization as it is humanly possible to get" at almost no costs. Besides the location of the PER, the design of the course was also mentioned as an aspect that shaped the experiences of the racers, and having a wide variety of terrains in the course of the competition was perceived as an asset. The participants also claimed that the race provided them with the unique opportunity to see places that are hardly reachable by "normal" people. Racers considered visiting areas that only a few people get to go to as an exciting aspect of the sports event:

> If we had visited Patagonia as tourists we would have seen some interesting glaciers, some mountains, but not more. We would not have felt it on our skins, which is a very important thing. Adventure racing gives this opportunity to everyone, but you need to be quite strong to make it through (PC Source 2).

The creation of "communitas" and other social aspects

The participants in the course of the race experienced elements of fun and play as enhancement of trust, reciprocal understanding, support, shared suffering, and social bonding. Trust in the teammates, confidence in one another's capabilities, respect, compassion, empathy, and emotional understanding formed the basis of a solid teammate relationship. Support and team synergy were just as important. Both emotional competence and physical competence were reported as important:

> Everything to keep the mind off from what's currently hurting is the best. Just staying with that person emotionally. Because, you know, sometimes when you hurt and you're going slow you're the last person on the trail you don't feel like you're the last person on the trail, you know, you want to comfort that person and let know that we're still moving as a team versus the three of us and that person, so […] I think this is kind of where we worked really well (BS Source 2).

Physical support included teammates carrying weight for each other or providing first aid when small injuries occurred:

> When we finally saw the glacier and the lake we had to climb up that slope, it was unbelievable. We went free climbing on a rock face exposed and I was carrying two packs because one of my teammates' feet were absolutely trashed. To help facilitate his pace I was carrying the pack, two packs, climbing up that slope (LR Source 3).

Support was most of the times described as being mutual. Team synergy, which was manifested through working as a unit to achieve common goals, overcome obstacles, face unpredicted events, and take wise decisions along the way, was achieved through the combination of different factors. Strong social bonds within the teams were reported in the majority of cases. The strength of these bonds varied depending on whether the teammates already knew each other prior to the race and further strengthened their bonds in the course of it or whether they teamed up for the occasion without previously knowing each other. In either case, bonds were tight and the events that occurred at an individual level, whether they were positive or negative, were generally described as affecting the entire team with a sort of domino effect.

When out in the wilderness, some participants were in a state of mind that was similar to the one they experienced when the immersion in the activity was high. When recalling his team reaching the top of a mountain, a racer expressed his feelings as follows:

> There was no race anymore; the race seemed so far away. There was nobody to help us, you know, just the four of us and the beauty. It was pretty impeccable, those moments […] In a lot

> of other races we do for four or five days we're always concerned with racing. In this Patagonia race, we always start racing but there comes a point every time in where it stops being about racing and it's about survival, teamwork, and just figuring out how to make it (LR Source 3).

Teams were described as being separate worlds that move in parallel with the race, as "bubbles" that traversed the wilderness:

> You forget everything about your day job and you're just there with these four people you become very tight and close with and you're very focused on things (BA Source 6).

Encounters of different teams in ARs, such as the PER, represent also an opportunity to meet potential teammates for future races. A great deal of participants, in fact, got to know each other as competitors in different ARs and ended up racing on the same team:

> I met my teammates at adventure races and learned by competing against them that I wanted to race with them (DR Source 5).

Another common means through which racers teamed up was by word-of-mouth. When a team was lacking a member, for instance, friends involved in AR would be likely to be contacted and asked about any recommendation for a possible teammate. The world of expedition racing consists of a small community:

> We're a small community that does the very big races. So in most of the cases, if somebody's not available, you can call other people to see if you are available cause you really want people who you know can finish the race (BS Source 2).

An athlete who made his first appearance at the 2012 PER made a similar observation:

> I noticed that all of the people here have seen each other in different races (OR Source 2).

The PER participants had acquaintances, friends, and life partners involved in AR:

> Basically, most of my friends are adventure racers […] everyone knows each other in adventure racing (TC Source 2).

Felt self-change

The AR participants reported a felt self-change. The PER and the sport of AR itself changed the participants:

> To become an adventure racer is a life changing choice you make. It takes all the sweat and dedication you have. It does not spare you of nothing. On the other hand, it gives you all back (MG Source 5).

The personal development came with experience:

> What AR has taught me I could have never learnt anywhere else. It forced me to become more patient, less selfish, to value the moment and to be in the moment. AR has taught me about all of my weaknesses and forces me to be better […] with every race I gain a better understanding of all the things that I need to improve (WH Source 5).

Whereas the more experienced racers mentioned deep feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness, the athletes on their first expedition race claimed to have gained new ambitions and to have learnt things about themselves that they did not know before. AR was said to generate introspection and contribute to personal growth in various ways. Participants claimed that during the race, "everything came up", and that the

true colours of a person were much more likely to be identified during AR than in everyday life:

> You have the tendency to expose a lot more of your inner self and you're definitely more vulnerable to somebody who really sees how you express yourself in a race such as this. It strips you down pretty quickly (BS Source 2).

The racers claimed to have learned how to work as a team under difficult conditions and how to immediately recognize when a teammate is in need of assistance. They noticed that their innermost strengths came out and that they developed a sense of appreciation for simple things:

> This race is purifying me. You start to be happy about small things; you start to appreciate a warm bed, a nice meal, a dry pair of shoes […] (BW Source 6).

Learning to think outside the race context was also mentioned as another outcome of racing. The self-changes triggered by AR were mostly said to have come after a race is over. The race was a unique opportunity for self-introspection:

> Through this race I think I've learnt […] I think I'm learning a lot. Like now that I've done the race I think there's a lot of things that I'm going to realize about myself. However, that's something that you can never get to experience in anything else. I think that's why adventure racing is so attractive to me; it's a chance for me to grow (CL Source 2).

The changes that occurred through AR were expected to have long-lasting effects. The racers claimed to have acquired a new view of the world as well as a new approach to problems and new coping skills:

> I have a different approach to problems, with whatever it's in my work or it's my private life. I got all experience from racing competitions like this […]. It has changed my life (EJ Source 2).

A few participants literally said that AR made almost everything possible in daily life, made lives easier, and made them tougher as persons:

> After racing, a lot of problems in daily life seem like nothing and actually life gets simpler. After I learnt about adventure racing, and after I've done it a few times, I think that my life is much simpler (CL Source 2).

A sense of fulfilment and accomplishment was noticed upon reaching the goals, along with the awareness of one's limits and possibilities, and a feeling of being in tune with the world. The benefits of self-change applied to both their private and work life. The most experienced participants considered their lives to have become easier after they started racing and that AR brought moral values, fun, excitement, and passion to their everyday life. The racers claimed that AR provided them with a "toolbox" for daily life:

> You learn how to tackle problems, you get a huge toolbox for dealing with issues, whatever it's in your work or it's in your private life. You can use these tools everywhere in your life and I share these tools with people and […] It works really well, absolutely (EJ Source 2).

In their work life, the teamwork skills and the different approach to problems acquired through AR were probably considered the biggest assets. A few racers even found similarities between their occupation and AR. Learning applied in the opposite direction as well in that racer developed some skills necessary to succeed in AR through the performance of their job.

The benefits that the PER participants acquired through racing were also communicated verbally to people who did not necessarily belong to the AR world.

A few athletes claimed that their experiences as adventure racers have been recognized by the company for which they work as well as by different companies as having value from a corporate perspective and, for this reason, presentations and workshops in the organizational context were encouraged. During this type of presentations, some racers spoke about motivation and high performance teams:

> In my company I have, from time to time, been asked to present to my co-workers my experiences as an adventure racer. Through these opportunities, I have developed workshops and speeches where I talk about teamwork, team building, planning and strategizing techniques as well as how to achieve success in life, all from my experiences gathered from previous races (MG Source 5).

Experience sharing was a topic explored during the interviews. Most participants claimed that they share their AR experiences with family, friends, and other racers at home or in other AR events, as well as with people who were unaware of the AR sport. The racers shared their AR experiences through informal conversations, parties, and presentations, which in one case were said to be attended by as many as 100 and 200 people. Furthermore, they shared their experiences through social media, websites, team race reports, and, in one case, even television programmes. A couple of racers, on the other hand, said that they do not use any of the previously mentioned means of communication to share their experience. As they believed that "common" people would not have understood what they had gone through in the wilderness, they preferred to keep the AR experience to themselves.

Conclusions and discussion

This study explored psychosocial benefits that athletes gained from participating in a unique AR, the PER, which is an expedition-length race that has taken place every February in Chilean Patagonia since 2004. Due to the harsh and spectacular landscapes, the event is known as "The Last Wild Race". The athletes gained no monetary or material rewards for participating; hence, they enjoyed different types of benefits. Based on a definition by Driver *et al.* (1991), this study conceived of a benefit as a "change that is viewed to be an advantageous improvement in a condition or a gain to an individual, a group, or to society" (p. 4). Furthermore, the study assumed that such benefits might be of a psychosocial kind, specifically, intangible benefits that the individual "takes home" from an event, including the expectations before, during, and after the event (Meretse *et al.*, 2015). Thus, psychosocial benefits are the ultimate values that people believe they have gained from participating in a certain (leisure) activity.

The study identified six main types of psychosocial benefits gained in this context: the "flow" experience; the play state; exploration and tourist aspects; the creation of "communitas", friendships, trust, and other social aspects; the felt self-change; and the transferability to daily life of the benefits acquired.

The "flow" experience and the state of play became evident through the reports about absolute involvement and immersion in the activity, the alteration of time perceptions, and a feeling of being one with the surrounding environment. Likewise, a sensation of an emotional distance from daily life and the playful state in which the participants felt at certain points of the race suggest that states of flow and play were present. The participants were amazed by the aesthetics of the nature, and at times immersed in it. The nature provided learning points and became a playground that may be raced with as a companion or "racing mate" once the appropriate skills and competences are developed. Although not stressed by the athletes, the balance between

competence and resources on the one hand, and the demand from the racecourse on the other hand was clearly a prerequisite for the flow feeling. A few of the teams gave in and quit the race due to imbalance between demands and resources.

Since the racers felt immune to danger, they were acting within the protective frame that individuals experience when in a state of play (Gyimothy and Mykletun, 2004; Kerr and Apter, 1991). The fact that these PER participants faced risk with an "adventurous spirit" is also consistent with the theory of flow, which argues that individuals in such a state of mind are not concerned with the possibility of losing control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990).

Exploration and tourist aspects were central parts of the benefits. The fact that the participants considered expedition racing as a way to visit a new and remote country suggests that the race was seen as a "sample" of Chile and that the course design plays a key role in shaping the participants' perception of a country. Moreover, at times, they felt as if they were exploring the land where no humans had been before or traversing places described as passages in the history of the early explorers. These experiences boosted the feeling of being explorers themselves (Laing and Frost, 2014).

Like the explorers of the past, the athletes were exposed to risk (Ewert, 1989; Schneider *et al.*, 2007) to the extent that some teams gave in, although risk was not a central topic in their own conceptualization of the why of the participation or in their reports of their experiences. They trusted their own and their team's skills and coped with the constantly shifting challenges and circumstances, which is much in line with the conclusions drawn by Brymer and Gray (2009, 2010) and Brymer and Oades. Adding to this, the AR participation allowed for a wide range of learning options, such as introspection, social learning, and group development skills, about nature and culture. Consequently, this AR matches better with the insight theories of adventure (Walle, 1997) than with the risk theories, although both theories apply (Weber, 2001). As for the down moments experienced after the race, the feelings of disappointment and "post-race depression" that were identified in a few PER participants suggest the possibility that, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), enjoyable activities become addictive for those who experience them.

The development of "communitas" and friendships took place, and trust was a base on which achievements were built. Camaraderie, equality of status, and freedom from everyday social norms, which are the main elements of communitas according to Turner (1969), were identified in the teams. However, the type of social bonds that characterized the racers, such as trust, mutual understanding, solidarity, and family-like relationships, is more closely related to the more comprehensive concept of communitas that Celsi (1992) found to be applicable to the high-risk sports participants of his study.

The participants' understanding of teams, social interactions, and team effectiveness improved during the race, and they developed insights into their own personality and social functioning. Participation in AR was found to have transformational effects on the individual and the team and seemingly also on the "members of the AR-society". It became evident that a unique society of AR-athletes may be identified, congregating at various events across the world and creating an AR-subculture shared by the serious leisure participants (Stebbins, 1992). It is a "diffuse constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices, which have coalesced into spheres of interest and involvement for participants", as characterized by Unruh (1980, p. 277).

The felt self-change or personal development resulted from learning processes. It consisted of increased levels of self-awareness and self-confidence, changes in the

worldview, sense of fulfillment, and improvement of knowledge and skills. These findings paralleled the results by Celsi (1992) and Kay and Laberge (2002b) in high-risk sports participants and adventure racers, respectively, and the results by Allison and Wald (2010) supporting the emergence of intra-team relationships and improved understanding of oneself among the members of the expedition object of their research. Moreover, the racers claimed to have become more humble by being immersed in nature, as reported by the extreme sports participants studied by Brymer and Oades (2009). These experienced self-changes allude to the concept of existential authenticity (Duffy and Overholt, 2013).

Although the racers benefited from self-change through personal development, it is difficult to determine which factors triggered them. They might be attributed to being in touch with the nature (Brymer and Gray, 2009; Scherl, 1989) as well as play during which individuals learn through experimentation (Kerr and Apter, 1991). Likewise, they may be attributed to flow, with accumulation of episodes resulting in a transformation of the self, according to Celsi (1992). Furthermore, they could be attributed to existential authenticity (Duffy and Overholt, 2013) or to additional factors that did not emerged from this study. The participants expressly attributed their adaptability to unpredictable situations, humility, and the increased awareness of their weaknesses to their contact with nature.

The self-changes were to some extent transferable to daily life. The participants argued that they gained an expanded worldview where problems become challenges that could be mastered and small and simple pleasures of daily life become highly valued. Their understanding of teams, social interactions, and team effectiveness improved radically, and insight into their own personality and social functioning developed. Interestingly, applications of the benefits gained from the AR participation may be applied in private and working life, and most participants were actively communicating with others about their benefits and AR as a sport option.

The findings of this research suggest that the PER athletes considered their ordinary work and the participation in AR as two mutually beneficial activities, where the skills and knowledge acquired in one of them could be applied to the other one to achieve a successful performance in both fields. The applicability of benefits, such as the personal development acquired through the PER and previous ARs, has implications that the corporate world might also consider, and companies might want to recognize the mutual reinforcement of work and AR. Certain skills developed by the racers throughout the PER and other ARs, such as the adaptability to unpredictable environments, teamwork skills, coping skills, open communication, and approaching problems in a different way, might be of particular importance for corporations.

The findings revealed that the athletes obtained various benefits by participating in the PER, some of which were transformational in character. The PER may be regarded as an active sport tourism (Hinch and Higham, 2001; Weed, 2006), as in addition to being active, it requires long travels to reach the events. Likewise, the study showed that the AR fits well into the definitions of adventure tourism (Hall, 1992) in which frontier tourism (Laing and Crouch, 2005, 2009, 2011) and exploration (Laing and Frost, 2014) are appropriate connotations.

In the specific case of the PER active sports tourism assumes a double dimension, as it involves both travelling to the destination of the AR and traversing the environment where the race was set. Moreover, due to the high level of commitment involved in taking part in the PER, the race participants can be said to belong to the category of "serious sport tourists", as proposed by Getz and McConnell (2011). AR fulfils most of

the criteria for a serious leisure activity, as proposed by Stebbins (1982, 1992, 2007), including the efforts of the racers to train for and to complete the race, the perseverance to reach the set goals, and the progression in the athletic career that took the racers from small AR events to international expedition races. The durable benefits acquired through the PER and previous ARs, the existence of a community of adventure racers, and their identification with the sport were all aspects that were present in the findings and that coincide with the qualities of serious leisure identified by Stebbins (1982).

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