

On Reaching the Summit: Profile, Perspectives and Behavior of Filipino Mountaineers

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Abstract – Using a descriptive-quantitative research design, the proponents probed into the profile, motivations, pro-environmental perspectives, and behavior of fifty-one purposely selected Filipino mountaineers. Further, the researchers utilized the appropriate theoretical frameworks of recreational experience preference (REP) and environmentally responsible behavior (ERB) in the given constructs of the investigation. Findings indicate the growing number of women mountaineers though men generate most of the demand. Mountaineering is a highly fulfilling recreational experience, particularly in the domain of nature encounters. The conservation and safety measures in mountain areas need a stricter implementation strategy. Mountaineers are seemingly self-motivated to carry out responsible behavior while inaccurate rules and regulations are not considered severe constraints. The study findings contribute to determining the key influences on their participation or the experience they seek to strengthen some measures to protect the environment when mountaineering. Further, it will help recognize mountaineers' responsible behavior to seek the balance and harmony between mountaineering activities and environmental protection, thus promoting sustainable adventure tourism.

Keywords – Profile, Perspectives, Behavior, Filipino, Mountaineers.

INTRODUCTION

Mountain tourism has been regarded as an effective form of development in economically disadvantaged regions [1], and demand is growing [2]-[3]. Thus, mountains have become a mass tourist destination [3, 4]. Pomfret and Doran [5] confirm the growing demand for outdoor adventure tourism activities and the rapid growth in the associated industry supply, which necessitates an improved understanding of outdoor adventure tourists. Mountaineering is a somewhat typical term referring to the broader field of tourism, sport, and recreation activities in mountainous domains; essentially, it refers to the same activities as climbing, emphasizing the outdoor character of these activities [6]. Outdoor recreation according to Sidi [7] is a recreational pursuit that requires deliberate involvement in leisure time and happens outdoors and includes connection with resources and the natural environment.

It is essential to understand outdoor adventure tourists because estimations suggest strong growth in demand and supply related to outdoor adventure activities and holidays [8]. Therefore, it is imperative for much more research on outdoor adventure tourists' characteristics, including their motivations, which are

crucial for their buying intentions, choices, and behavior. Studies on outdoor adventure tourists can help adventure tourism organizations better understand their clients and prompt their outdoor adventure activities. On the other hand, tourists may not be aware that their behavior would harm ecosystems while traveling [9]. Therefore, it is crucial to cultivate environmentally responsible behavior to minimize negative impacts on ecosystems and avoid environmental degradation in nature-based tourism destinations while providing quality tourist experiences.

However, in contrast to some of these related activities, the more 'serious leisure' or 'hard' adventurous mountaineering tourism has received limited coverage in tourism research so far [10]. While previous research has investigated mountaineering more extensively than other outdoor adventure activity types, limited studies have looked explicitly into mountaineer tourists' characteristics and motivational decisions [11]. Similarly, the proponents have not come across any study that looks into the Philippines' pro-environmental behavior of local mountaineers. In the Philippines, a growing number of nature lovers are searching for other adventures, such as climbing some of the country's mountains. Thus, prompting the

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to implement stricter rules for mountaineers, especially when climbing within Protected Areas (Pas) covered by Republic Act 7586 or the National Integrated Protected Areas (NIPAs) Act [12]. Therefore, the current research desires to fill this gap by investigating factors influencing Filipino mountaineers to participate in mountaineering and behave pro-environmentally.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper provides a case study of selected Filipino mountaineers to extend further our understanding of outdoor adventure in the local setting. Furthermore, this study shall ascertain the triggering psychological dynamics influencing the tourists' intent to act pro-environmentally. Its findings will support the effective execution of environmental protection and conservation structures and programs at mountain destinations. Knowledge of activity preferences can assist destination developers design an effective promotion and create visitor experiences.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Related literature reviews and previous study findings are utilized to formulate the instrument. Similarly, the appropriate theoretical frameworks of recreational experience preference (REP) and environmentally responsible behavior (ERB) served as the basis of each construct's descriptive statements in addition to inputs of selected mountaineers during a pre-survey. Information from experts is taken into consideration to establish the face validity of the instrument. A subset of content validity is face validity, where experts are asked their opinion about whether a tool measures the concept intended [16]. The five parts of the survey questionnaire consisted of disclosing consent, demographic profile, recreational experience motivations, mountaineering conservation and safety measures, and responsible behaviors. A four-point Likert scale was applied to gauge the responses for the motivation and implementation measure variables. In contrast, a three-point Likert scale applies to describe the frequency of performing a responsible behavior. Finally, a Likert scale is used to gauge opinions, attitudes, or behaviors prevalent in survey research because it operationalizes personality traits or perceptions [17].

The proponents utilized a descriptive – survey research design to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation, or phenomenon that

answers the what, where, when, and how questions. Considering the study's interest is in mountaineers, the purposive sampling technique was utilized to collect data amongst this niche segment using a structured survey questionnaire distributed via google forms from February - March 2020. Purposive sampling can be used with several techniques in data gathering [13]. A study may be started with a survey; then, purposive sampling is done based on the study [14]. Out of the sixty-five online survey forms, fifty-one are successfully retrieved, representing a response rate of 78%. The researcher deemed it appropriate to use purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling technique considering that the desired respondents are chosen based on predetermined characteristics. Guest [15] justified using survey questionnaires as having a lower cognitive load on the respondent, leading to the more excellent response and more accurate data.

The descriptive statistics follow for data analysis. Descriptive statistics are utilized to present quantitative descriptions conveniently to simplify large amounts of data in a sensible way [18]. Frequency and percentage were used in dealing with the nominal data of the demographic profile. On the other hand, weighted arithmetic mean was used to determine the average responses of each variable being assessed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 illustrates the key profiles of mountaineer respondents according to gender, age, employment, mountaineering experience, frequency, number of companions, and accident encounters.

The gender profile indicates men mountaineers generating most of the demand, yet the most dramatic increase in participation is currently amongst women [5]. The age profile of the respondents is not purely homogenous. Mountaineers' age ranges from 21 – 54 years old. Although Millennials aged 22 – 38 years old are the most active mountaineering participants. Millennials and younger generations will consist of 75% of all consumers and travellers and confidently take on more daring holidays by 2025 [19]. As to employment, mountaineer respondents are mainly gainfully employed in private sectors, highly educated, and have a disposable income to spend for mountaineering. Lee et al. [20] and Solop et al. [21] emphasized that income, education, and occupation factors positively affect participation in outdoor activities.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Mountaineers

| Demographic Profile | | f | % |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----|------|
| Gender | Male | 31 | 60.8 |
| | Female | 20 | 39.2 |
| Age | 21 – 30 | 12 | 23.5 |
| | 31 – 40 | 20 | 39.2 |
| | 41 – 50 | 15 | 29.4 |
| | 51 – 60 | 4 | 7.8 |
| | | | |
| Employment | Government | 4 | 7.8 |
| | Private | 41 | 80.4 |
| | Self-Employed | 2 | 4 |
| | Student | 2 | 4 |
| | Unemployed | 2 | 4 |
| Mountaineering Experience | Highly Experienced | 11 | 21.6 |
| | Novice | 40 | 78.4 |
| | | | |
| Number of Mountains Climbed | 1 – 5 | 8 | 15.7 |
| | 6 -10 | 17 | 33.3 |
| | 11 -15 | 11 | 21.6 |
| | 16 and above | 17 | 33.3 |
| Frequency of Climbing/Year | 1 -2 times | 19 | 37.3 |
| | 3 -5 times | 27 | 52.9 |
| | More than 6 times | 5 | 9.8 |
| Number of Companions | 1-5 | 12 | 23.5 |
| | 6-10 | 22 | 43.1 |
| | More than 10 | 20 | 39.2 |
| Accident Encounters | YES | 17 | 33.3 |
| | NO | 34 | 66.7 |

Mountaineering attracts a significant number of highly interested beginners. Pomfret and Bramwell [22] stressed that mountaineer tourists are driven by a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motives independent of their experience level. As to the number of mountains climbed, data indicates the respondents' extreme passion for recreational mountaineering. It can be construed that they have a profound desire to develop mastery by developing skills and experience in more frequent mountaineering activities. Mountaineering requires highly developed skills that can only be created by repetitive and regular practice over time and after enduring arduous training [23]. Mountaineers are amicable individuals, as reflected in their profile, where they prefer to have more companions. Mountaineering is primarily practiced in groups where teamwork and support are significant parts of the activity [24]. As accidents become inevitable in mountain climbing, a considerable percentage (33.3%) encountered one. Notwithstanding training, equipment, and planning, an integral risk in mountain climbing exists. Soule et al. [25] confirm that the mountain is not a place that can be visited easily without adequate preparation. Monasterio et al. [23] demonstrate that it is also probable that less experienced, more thoughtless, and higher risk-taking climbers were implicated in serious accidents at an earlier part of their climbing careers. For the last 40 years, a notable rise in high mountain climbers has been linked with the climbing activity's characteristics and the climber's profile [33].

Table 2. Motivations of Mountaineers

| Recreation Experience Domains | WM | VI | Rank |
|---|-------------|-----------|------|
| Reinforcing Self-image = 3.78 | | | |
| It gives me a humbling experience. | 3.90 | HF | 1 |
| It is an ideal way of spending time. | 3.65 | HF | 14 |
| Social Recognition = 3.81 | | | |
| I get to see places that very few people see. | 3.83 | HF | 5 |
| It gives me a sense of achievement and challenge. | 3.80 | HF | 8.5 |
| Meeting Similar People = 3.80 | | | |
| I get to meet people of same interest. | 3.82 | HF | 6.5 |
| I get to have more social bonding with my friends. | 3.78 | HF | 10 |
| Skill and Endurance Development = 3.73 | | | |
| I develop more will power and endurance. | 3.86 | HF | 3 |
| I learn to move with calculated risk | 3.59 | HF | 15 |
| Physical Fitness = 3.78 | | | |
| It makes me physically fit. | 3.75 | HF | 11 |
| It is a stress reliever. | 3.80 | HF | 8.5 |
| Excitement = 3.70 | | | |
| I get to overcome my fear. | 3.67 | HF | 13 |
| It gives me a unique adrenalin rush. | 3.73 | HF | 12 |
| Enjoy Nature = 3.84 | | | |
| It gives me a feeling of being with nature. | 3.82 | HF | 6.5 |
| I get to have more appreciation of natural landscape. | 3.88 | HF | 2 |
| I become more environmentally responsible. | 3.84 | HF | 4 |
| Grand Mean | 3.78 | HF | |

Legends: 4 (3.26-4.00) Highly Fulfilled; 3 (2.51 -3.25) Fairly Fulfilled; 2 (1.76 – 2.50) Somewhat not Fulfilled; 1 (1.00-1.75) Not Fulfilled

Table 2 presents the mean assessment of mountaineers' fulfilment in mountaineering activities. The survey presents seven different domains of recreational experience preference in mountaineering. These are reinforcement of self-image, social recognition, meeting similar people, skill and endurance development, physical fitness, excitement, and enjoying nature. Activity preferences are activities chosen by sport tourism participants and can be used as a basis for conducting market segmentation [26]. The experience supports why people engage in recreation, provides direction in understanding what people desire from the hobby, and suggests how it might do them good.

Findings denote that respondents positively fulfil all seven domains of mountaineering recreation and that mountaineering is an enriching outdoor adventure activity. Their mean ratings range from 3.59 – 3.90. The top three affirmations indicated in the statements, "It gives me a humbling experience" (Self-image Domain), "I get to have more appreciation of natural landscape" (Nature Domain), and "I develop more will power, and endurance" (Skill and Endurance Domain) with mean ratings of 3.90, 3.88 and 3.86 respectively, reflect the intense passion of the respondents towards mountaineering. Pomfret [11] affirms that mountaineering may be the prototypical exemplar of adventure tourism, and mountaineering is closely related to intense emotional experiences.

The domain of enjoying nature surfaces with the highest average mean rating of 3.84. Another way to appreciate nature is through mountains and forests as natural attractions. As a category of adventure tourists, mountaineer tourists enjoy visiting places that offer scenic beauty, unique natural formations, and opportunities to experience activities in remote wilderness environments [27]. Visitors consider the scenic values a primary value to mountain destinations [28].

However, the excitement domain attains the lowest mean score of 3.70, although still interpreted as highly fulfilled. Overcoming own internal challenges, whether that means confronting fears, pushing to limits, or attempting to stage the best effort in terms of physical and mental accomplishment, is an intrinsic motivation for most climbers. Interestingly, risk-taking and sensation-seeking had low importance for all experience levels [29]. Therefore, risk-taking may not be the goal of mountaineers at any experience level but rather a means to fulfil other purposes like the need for stimulation and self-expression [29]. However, further research has asserted that risk and thrill are only secondary motivations for engaging in adventure [30].

mountain destinations. Mountaineers need to observe the implementation of conservation and safety measures. However, results suggest that conservation measures (3.28) have stricter implementation than safety procedures (3.16). Overall performance is not that strong, as indicated by a mean value of 3.23, interpreted as fairly implemented. Likely, all conservation measures are vulnerable to projected changes, but also they should involve sources of adaptive capacity and resilience that can support dynamic stewardship of nature reserves [38].

Further, given the twelve indicators presented as conservation measures, six are highly implemented, while the other six are fairly executed, reflecting a need for more incredible performance. Respondent mountaineers affirm that the procedures about prohibitions for taking plants and animals, marking protected areas as off-limits, charging entrance fees, surface prohibition of a bonfire, differentiated routes for trekking and riding, and keeping roads and trails to a minimum are exceedingly operationalized. The surge of recreational mountaineers brought about by mass tourism affects the mountain areas' conservation measures. During the last decades, high mountains are experiencing a massive cultural and socio-economical shift in many world regions [31]. Ethical principles, including the principles of conservation, were a significant part of the ethos of climbing. Unfortunately, real climbers are often replaced by tourists with big ambition, aptly described by Apollo [32]. Climbers and other people visiting mountains wipe out plants by trampling. Apollo [33] describes that outside the camps area occurs a ring of abundant vegetation, which is probably related to tourists, specifically with the products of their urination. Transport facilities have increased visitors, and tourism has become a significant economic element in the high mountain and nature reserves [34]. Although plenty of natural resources, mountains have generally been less amenable to large human populations [35]. The marking of mountains as protected areas prevents further damage to the existing flora and fauna. In the Philippines, 13 out 240 protected areas are supported by laws and the rest is covered by presidential proclamations or executive orders, which served as initial components and may be re-evaluated by the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) upon the recommendation of the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), the highest policy-making body of a protected area [36].

Table 3. Implementation of Conservation and Safety Measures

| Indicators | WM | VI | Rank |
|--|-------------|-----------|------|
| Conservation Measures (3.28 – Highly Implemented) | | | |
| Charging of entrance fees and environmental charges | 3.39 | HI | 5 |
| Violators are fined. | 3.08 | FI | 17.5 |
| Roads and trails are kept to a minimum | 3.29 | HI | 9 |
| Any form of vandalism and littering is strictly observed. | 3.22 | FI | 11 |
| There are protected areas as off-limits. | 3.45 | HI | 4 |
| There is limit on mountaineers per day. | 3.08 | FI | 17.5 |
| Use of vehicle is restricted. | 3.20 | FI | 12 |
| Bonfire is not allowed | 3.33 | HI | 7 |
| Taking of plants and animals are strictly prohibited. | 3.55 | HI | 1.5 |
| Routes are differentiated for trekking and riding. | 3.35 | HI | 6 |
| Camping is regulated if not prohibited. | 3.25 | FI | 10 |
| A regulatory staff stays at the camp. | 3.18 | FI | 13 |
| Safety Measures (3.16 – Fairly Implemented) | | | |
| There are trained personnel to attend during an emergency. | 3.14 | FI | 15 |
| Safety signs are made visible. | 3.10 | FI | 16 |
| Pre-climb orientation is required. | 3.47 | HI | 3 |
| Climbers should hire the service of registered mountain guides. | 3.55 | HI | 1.5 |
| A climbing permit is required. | 3.31 | HI | 8 |
| Restrictions regarding age limit and physical requirements for mountaineers exist. | 2.98 | FI | 19 |
| Climbers need to present a proof of being physically fit to climb. | 2.86 | FI | 21 |
| Smoking is not allowed. | 2.88 | FI | 20 |
| Protective clothing and safety gears are required. | 3.16 | FI | 14 |
| Grand Mean | 3.23 | FI | |

Legends: 4 (3.26-4.00) Highly Implemented; 3 (2.51 -3.25) Fairly Implemented; 2 (1.76 – 2.50) Somewhat not Implemented; 1 (1.00-1.75) Not Implemented

Table 3 illustrates the mean assessment on the implementation of conservation and safety measures in

Although statistically, the average evaluation falls into highly implemented, the vigour of implementation is not that solid as supported by almost 50% of conservation measures being fairly implemented. It is unmistakable that some other conservation strategies require the more effective discharge of actions regarding the limit on carrying capacity, imposition of fines for violations, regulatory personnel's regular presence, vandalism, prohibition of camping, and vehicle restriction. Ideally, execution should be exceptionally prescribed to guarantee the consistency and sustainability of beneficial outcomes in the mountain ecosystem. Conservation measures are crucial in the protection of the natural mountain environment. Many mountain climbers affect the mountain environment, affecting both people (local communities) and nature [33]. Wilkinson [39] discloses that in 2019, Nepal issued a record number of 381 climbing permits and a roughly similar number of licenses to guides and Sherpas, contributing to crowding in Mt. Everest. Currently, that delicate ecosystem is being visited by increasing level of tourism activity, which have been growing since the 1960s around the globe [40]. The threat from mass tourism is due to the frequency of visits to relatively small areas, which are usually of great ecological importance [41]. As today's travel to high mountains is no longer restricted to experienced mountaineers [42] the introduction of entrance fees and fines to natural attractions may help counteract the threat of inadequate funds for site maintenance and management [43].

As to safety measures, respondents verify that they are pretty implemented as held by a mean mark of 3.16, which is reflective of a flimsier discharge of rules to ensure the safety of mountaineers. Three out of nine are highly implemented, which suggests somewhat insubstantial putting into practice the other indicators. The pre-climb orientation, acquisition of climbing permits, and mandatory service of mountain guides are highly functional. However, prohibition of smoking, presentation of a fit to climb certificate, visibility of safety signs, presence of trained personnel to handle an emergency, and wearing protective clothing and safety gears are not that compelling, as supported by their mean ratings of fair execution. There are chances that not all mountaineers adhere to these safety procedures, which can be attributed to the lacking of strength in their implementation. As nature can only do so much to protect itself from irresponsible mountaineers, it can be construed that mountain authorities prioritize the protection of the mountain environment over its

climbers. In contrast, mountaineers' safety relies significantly on their knowledge, skills, and compliance with environmental rules.

Respondents verify that they are compelled to present a climbing permit and attend a pre-climb orientation as a chance for all the participants to convene before the climb itself. Not following the pre-climb is considered unethical. One of the purposes of a pre-climb is to set the participants' expectations, which will help the organizers make the necessary arrangements. Mountain guides are certified by local authorities or mountain guide associations as specially trained and experienced professional mountaineers. Nowadays, 90 percent of successful Mt. Everest climbers come from group tours led by a mountaineering leader, but many clients don't have the necessary mountaineering skills [44]. Salim et al. [45] emphasize mountain guides being among the most reliable professionals in the field. The aspect of a stricter measure to present a medical clearance has to be considered. It can be an alarming practice of local mountain authorities not to oblige the presentation of medical support to prove that mountaineers are physically fit to climb. The requirement has generated mixed reactions from mountaineers, with some contesting the additional "hassle." With or without a medical certificate, hikers need to consult with their medical doctors about hiking activities if they have risk factors (i.e., old age, pre-existing medical conditions). Others have contested that given the fact that the desired mountain is attracting not just ordinary mountaineers but casual hikers, a medical certificate would be beneficial in avoiding future deaths [46].

Further, it is prominent that five other measures appear to be not that convincing in the application. It can be taken that local mountain authorities are somewhat lenient with their guidelines, as the findings illustrate. Policies regarding the prohibition of smoking, restrictions on age limit and physical requirements, visibility of safety signs, presence of trained personnel, and wearing protective clothing and safety gear among mountaineers are not strictly enforced. The initial global assessment of the environmental rule of law discovers insubstantial execution as a worldwide trend that aggravates environmental threats, despite prolific growth in environmental regulations and agencies worldwide over the last four decades [47]. The presence of cigarette butts found along camping and trail areas indicate the smoking practice of mountaineers during the climb, which can potentially initiate forest fire, in

addition to the health hazards faced by passive smokers. As to visibility of safety signs, recreational visitors in mountain areas are distributed in different stages, necessitating visible safety signs serving as educational signages or warning signs. Pothercary [48] suggests considering more along the lines of education as the best way to influence people's behavior. Apollo [49] confirms that mountaineering varies at various stages and that the most critical ones are in the second and third stages—those at the last village on the regular road. The limited presence of trained personnel led to insufficient staff to oversee mountaineers' activities, [50-55] that many nature destinations do not have sufficient staff for its day-to-day operation and enforcement. Surprisingly, to a great level, the recent deaths on Mt. Everest have something to do with low-cost mountaineering management and inexperienced tour operators [44].

It can be discerned that most of the management type is based on regulating visitors' behavior and activities mainly because intentionally or unknowingly, visitors' actions can cause adverse effects to the mountain ecosystems. It can be assumed that when mountaineering, humans cause more harm to the environment than nature does. Considering that it is a high-risk nature encounter, accidents are inevitable. Inexperienced climbers, either through ignorance or arrogance, do not meet basic safety standards. Monasterio et al. [23] confirm that it is also likely that less experienced, more impulsive, and higher risk-taking climbers were part of severe accidents at earlier stages of their climbing careers. Catalan et al. [35] emphasize all conservation measures are being susceptible to probable transformations. Still, they should also comprise adaptive capability and flexibility bases to endure active stewardship of nature reserves.

Responsible Behavior of Mountaineers

Table 4 describes the mean assessment of the occurrence of responsible behavior among mountaineers. Fifteen statements representing responsible behaviours are found to be frequently practiced by the respondents. In addition, they affirm to demonstrate a consistently desirable behavior when mountaineering, as evidenced by an average mean rating of 2.74. The statements "I respect all forms of plants and animals that I encounter in the mountain," "I keep my litter until the entire duration of the climb," and "I wear protective gears and carry safety devices when climbing" attain the highest mean evaluation of 2.96, 2.94 and 2.92 respectively.

Table 4. Responsible Behavior of Mountaineers

| Responsible Behavior Criteria | WM | VI | Rank |
|---|-------------|----------|------|
| I am interested to pay more as the amount or quality of the environmental good to be provided increases. | 2.35 | A | 15 |
| I comply with conservation measures when they are strictly enforced. | 2.69 | A | 12 |
| I correct the attitude of other climbers who violate environmental conservation. | 2.61 | A | 13 |
| I sacrifice my personal enjoyment to observe compliance with conservation measures. | 2.75 | A | 7.5 |
| I comply with conservation measures even if they are not reasonable to my understanding. | 2.82 | A | 5 |
| I comply with conservation measures even if there are no educational signages or warning signs in the area. | 2.75 | A | 7.5 |
| I walk in designated trails only. | 2.78 | A | 6 |
| I am willing to pay reasonable fine for any violation with conservation measures. | 2.71 | A | 10.5 |
| I wear protective gears and carry safety devices when climbing. | 2.92 | A | 3 |
| I seriously attend a pre-climb orientation. | 2.74 | A | 9 |
| I keep my own litter until the entire duration of the climb. | 2.94 | A | 2 |
| I comply with non-smoking rules during the entire duration of the climb. | 2.71 | A | 10.5 |
| I respect all forms of plants and animals that I encounter in the mountain. | 2.96 | A | 1 |
| I remain compliant with conservation measures even if others violate | 2.84 | A | 4 |
| I assist fellow mountaineers during emergencies. | 2.59 | A | 14 |
| Grand Mean | 2.74 | A | |

Legends: 3 (2.34 – 3.00) Always; 2 (1.67 – 2.33) Sometimes; 1 (1.00-1.66) Never

Respondents' climbing profile shows their repeated adventure in the mountains. It can be interpreted that the development of their environmentally responsible behavior can be related to their familiarity with the natural mountain environment brought about by their frequent exposure. Ballantyne et al. [56] suggested that nature-based tourists' experiences increase their sympathy for the natural environment and animals, increase conservation knowledge, environmental awareness, and environmentally responsible behavior [57]. These experiences comprise individual thoughts, emotions, feelings, knowledge, and skills formed when mountaineering.

However, the statements, "I am interested in paying more as the amount or quality of the environmental good to be provided increases," "I assist fellow mountaineers during emergencies," and "I correct the attitude of other climbers who violate environmental conservation" with mean scores of 2.35, 2.59 and 2.61 respectively, surface as the least of their responsible behaviours, though described as observed continuously. Ong and Musa [58] describe responsible mountaineering behavior as a complex behaviour that needs to be performed by the mountaineers to guarantee their safety and security while mountain climbing. From the self-assessments, they affirm to demonstrate responsible behaviours all the time when

mountaineering. It can be interpreted that their regular exposure to the activity honed them to become sensible with nature, as their climbing profile indicates. Similarly, these findings illustrate that mountaineers have a profound environmental sensitivity. Sia et al. [59] and Chen and Yeh [60] have suggested that sensitivity to the environment is the best ERB predictor. Environmental sensitivity refers to a person's understanding of ecological problems, developed through various experiences, such as nature-based recreation activities [61, 62].

Consequently, people with greater environmental sensitivity tend to engage in more ERB. With the fast development of mountaineering activities, there is a maturity in responsible mountaineering behavior among the participants. Bear, Manning, and Izard [63] agree that "responsible behavior requires self-motivation and self-guidance, and not obedience and compliance to laws merely in compliance to external monitoring, rewards, and punishment."

It can be inferred that mountaineers least prefer financial actions based on their responsible behavior, thinking that the government allots funds for conservation. Most nature-based tourist destinations charge minimal charges like entrance fees, environmental fees, and fines for violations, constituting their conservation fund. However, some are intentionally set high to discourage visitations. Tourists pay entrance and activity fees to access a protected area (PA) or natural site of interest, consume its facilities, and specific site-based recreational activities. Revenues from these fees can subsidize biodiversity conservation through maintenance by specific sites or protected area systems, revenue allocation bargains with communities, and apportioned allocation from the central government or agencies. Introducing entrance fees to natural attractions may help counteract the threat of inadequate public funds for site maintenance and management [43]. Inappropriately, many other protected areas, particularly in mid-and lower-income countries, set fees beneath the cost of providing the needed infrastructure for tourism, regardless of lacking steady substitute subsidy sources. This may be practiced to promote tourism, through the concern of rivalry from other sites or countries, or a deficiency of information about what visitors would be willing to pay to visit the site [64-70]. In the study of Wang and Jia [71], most of the respondents (73.6%) were cooperative to take a higher entrance fee for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection. In contrast, the remaining

26.4% were unwilling to pay a greater entrance fee. The most usual justification cited for the unwillingness to pay was the government's obligation to protect biodiversity and the environment. Witt's [72] findings suggest visitor demand was examined as relatively inelastic, with aggregate fee rises of 26% estimated to result in a 5% decrease in visitation.

Concerning civic action, attending to other mountaineers may not be their priority. Henley [73] reports that in Mt. Everest, climbers with their ardent desire to reach the summit would barely stop to help fellow climbers who are almost dying. Everest's argument around ethics has fumed since 2006, when a projected 40 climbers deliberately ignored a dying British mountaineer, David Sharp, without stopping. Instead, all mountaineers walked around David and continued toward the summit [74]. In an age when climbing Everest has become a practice of intense tourism open to anyone with \$10,000, human life comes to count for less than the gratification of a personal goal. Reports indicate an increasing number of climbers showing intentional neglect for the safety and suffering of sick climbers and self-interest in pursuing mountaineering goals, including behaviours affecting adverse environmental degradation [33, 49]. Simultaneously, correcting others who unknowingly or deliberately violate ecological rules is a persuasive action of responsible behavior. However, mountaineering participants who get to be prevented by fellow mountaineers from committing an environmental offense may feel insulted, thus preventing the responsible ones from interfering. A group instinctively desires to keep a friendly atmosphere. However, some pronouncements may threaten this pleasant atmosphere. Understanding each participant's motivations from the beginning must be recognized to determine the group's character and appraise possible pressures.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Men comprise most of the demand in recreational mountaineering, yet there is a remarkable surge of women's involvement. The age profile of the respondents is not purely homogenous. Although Millennials are the most active mountaineering participants, Generation X is still enthusiastic. Mountaineers are gainfully employed and highly educated. Mountaineering attracts a significant number of highly interested beginners. They have a profound desire to develop mastery by developing skills and experience in more frequent mountaineering activities

in the group. Accidents being inevitable in such an adventure activity, mountaineers incur minor and significant mishaps. Profiling a niche market like mountaineers helps obtain their perceptions, interests, and knowledge as a basis of mountaineering programs and activities that promote conservation, safety, and experience. Individual mountaineers and climbing organizations should prioritize more responsible mountaineering activities that have a direct impact on safety. Focusing on security could result in the sustainability of safe climbing destinations that improve health by promoting physical activities and could lead to an increasing number of climbers with diverse profiles, skills, and experiences.

Mountaineering is a highly fulfilling recreational experience, particularly in the domain of nature encounters. The experience involves many elements, and the composition of each mountaineer's experience is subjective. Their expectations, preferences, and desired experiences are complex and subject to exchanges. Destination managers need to design educational activities that promote conservation and match the adventure market's recreational experience preference. Climb organizers need to educate climbers regarding mountaineering perspectives to foster beneficial conservation, improved safety, and a more rewarding experience.

An appropriate mechanism to ensure the strict implementation of conservation and safety measures in mountain areas is not in place, which provides opportunities for some mountaineers to demonstrate irresponsible behavior. Conservation and safety measures have to be appropriately formalized, strictly implemented, and consistently monitored in mountain areas. The knowledge obtained on visitor impacts along recreational trails can be incorporated into monitoring visitor consumption and resource situations, integral to tourism planning frameworks. Monitoring programs then validate the efficiency of specific management actions or prompt that management needs to be modified to include impacts within tolerable parameters. Visitor and resource effects can promote decisions on management approaches or activities for access guidelines. Pursuing a management measure that can accommodate visitor arrivals without rising burdens on the mountain ecosystem is imperative. Conservation measures have to be respected, compiled, and designed by the stakeholders concerned. Park management and associations must employ a contributing management process containing essential trade-offs. Managers in transboundary mountain

regions should strive to synchronize the rules and management practices and exclude inconsistencies in methods. The information on all restrictions should be made available and easily understood on websites, in guidebooks, and precisely in the field (billboards, signs, etc.) and during mandatory pre-climb orientation. The mountaineering community should also aggressively participate in the broader policy and management deliberations to convey mountaineers' voices and practices to the decision-making table. Instruments such as sustainable tourism eco-labels and guidelines should be considered for the mountain context to propel improvements and best procedures on minimizing waste and greening the tourism sector in the mountains.

Mountaineers are seemingly self-motivated to carry out responsible behavior, while inaccurate implementations of rules and regulations are not considered as severe constraints. Instead, they reasonably count on their conventional behavioural beliefs, knowledge, and skills to steer their actions. Responsible behavior necessitates self-motivation and self-guidance and not obedience and submission to rules merely due to external regulation, incentive, and penalty. Identifying the responsible behaviours to encourage mountaineers can contribute to the protection of mountain environments, support safe mountaineering recreation and foster positive engagement with local communities. This has significant repercussions for management with their information and education programs made suited to mountaineers. The nature of programs is always more effective when there is a strong knowledge of the anticipated audience. Therefore, managers develop a wide range of opportunities (for visitors, in collaboration with stakeholders) to suit the changing recreational demands and boost prominent specifications of responsible behaviour.

As the study involved limited number of mountaineers, the findings can only be true and applicable to the specific subjects of the study, thus limiting the generalization of the conclusions. Future researchers may consider replicating the study to a wider group of respondents and possibly to other nature-based adventure destinations.

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