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Exploring the world together: The colonial continuity of family adventure travel

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journals.sagepub.com/home/tou**Katarina Mattsson** 

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Abstract

The article examines notions of family holidays in the marketing of family adventure travel, a small but growing segment of the alternative tourism sector in Sweden. In family adventure travel, the family vacation is oriented toward exotic destinations in the Global South. The analysis is conducted through a multimodal discourse analysis of web-based marketing material from seven Swedish travel agencies. It shows that the travel style of family adventure travel is constructed through a novel discourse, filled with overlapping meanings of family life, authenticity, and adventure. The article offers a unique approach to family tourism research by theorizing family adventure travel from a post-colonial perspective. It demonstrates how family adventure travel entails a colonial continuity, where notions of exploring and discovering the world become reproduced and re-negotiated in the context of family tourism. In the marketing of family adventure travel, the family vacation is reimaged as a journey of discovery.

Keywords

family adventure travel, family tourism, colonial continuity, multi-modal discourse analysis, post-colonial tourism research, travel style, tourism marketing

Take the family on a real adventure! Our adventure trips are suitable for families with children from the age of five and up and take you to a large number of places around the world. Here you are offered exciting experiences on everyone's terms.

Let yourselves explore and discover the world together!

(Carpe Adventure)

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Introduction

This article explores notions of family holidays in the marketing of family adventure travel, a tourist niche that is previously unresearched in family tourism research. Family adventure travel occupies a small but growing segment of the Swedish family tourism market. Typically, the family-oriented journeys are offered as pre-arranged group tours by small-scale, personalized travel companies, and meet the demands of middle-class travel-enthusiasts (Harrison, 2003). They are explicitly marketed in terms of authenticity and adventure, with marketing materials that call on families to embark on an adventure together: “Let yourselves explore and discover the world together!” Like other travel arrangements in this segment of the Swedish travel industry, the journeys are oriented toward exotic destinations outside the Western cultural sphere and are marketed with a focus on cultural differences, exoticism, and the uniqueness of place (Grinell, 2004; Mattsson, 2016a).

The article demonstrates how family adventure travel is marketed through a new discourse of family tourism, which renegotiates the concept of family vacation through narratives of adventures and notions of authentic travel experiences. The article offers a unique contribution to the growing field of family tourism research (e.g. Backer and Schänzel, 2012, 2013; Carr, 2011; Cheong and Sin, 2019; Gram, 2005; Haldrup and Larsen, 2003; Larsen, 2008, 2013; Mattsson, 2016b; Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt, 2015; Mikkelsen and Cohen, 2015; Obrador, 2012; Schänzel and Smith, 2014; Schänzel et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2008) by investigating touristic narratives of authenticity and adventure in a family tourism setting. In doing so, the article draws on post-colonial tourism research to theoretically frame and conceptualize the colonial legacy of family adventure travel (Hall and Tucker, 2004; Tucker and Akama, 2009), particularly research on the marketing of destinations in the Global South (e.g. Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Grinell, 2004; Huggan, 2001). In the theoretical framework, the concept of “colonial continuity” (Hebron, 2007) is proposed to be a fruitful concept for a detailed analysis of how the marketing of family adventure travel reproduce and renegotiate colonial forms of exploring and discovering the world.

The context of family tourism research

In international tourism research, tourism has often been theorized with the masculine figure of the adventurous, authenticity seeking solo-traveler or backpacker in mind (Obrador, 2012). As a result, tourism and travel has been conceptualized with a focus on the move away from everyday life at home and a detachment from family life (Larsen, 2008; Obrador, 2012). In this respect, the growing field of family tourism research has made a substantial contribution to tourism research by emphasizing the need for a parallel *re-socialization* of tourism theories (Obrador, 2012) and *de-exoticization* of tourism research (Larsen, 2008). Family tourism research underlines that going on holiday is not only fueled by a desire to visit new and exotic places, but often constitutes a precious moment for spending time with family and friends and an opportunity to solidify family bonds (Cheong and Sin, 2019; Gram, 2005; Larsen, 2008; Larsen et al., 2007; Obrador, 2012; Schänzel and Smith, 2014). Family vacations can indeed feel like an “obligation” (Backer and Schänzel, 2013), but as

Gram notes, for many, family vacations are appreciated for “giving time for recovery and rest in the pleasant companionship of the family” (Gram, 2005: abstract). For modern families who are feeling the squeeze of everyday life, going on vacation together may indeed seem like one of few opportunities for families to “‘come home’ to the family” (Cheong and Sin, 2019: 17). This close connection between vacations and family life invests family holidays with values such as intimacy, sociality, and domesticity and a “cultivation of togetherness” (Obrador, 2012: 412).

Moreover, previous research has shown that family vacations entail a complex intra-family dynamic (Gram, 2005), since “family members are both connected to one another and separate from one another” (Schänzel and Smith, 2014: 126). Children play a central role in the notion of the family holiday, as the presence of children tend to change the focus and activities of tourism and children also influence family decision-making on how to spend the holiday (Blichfeldt et al., 2010; Nickerson and Jurowski, 2001; Thornton et al., 1997). Research shows that children experience tourism in their own ways (Cullingford, 1995; Wu et al., 2019), and that children and parents may have very different thoughts on how to spend a vacation (Carr, 2006, 2011; Schänzel and Smith, 2014; Small, 2008). Parents also experience significant social pressure to organize a happy holiday (Backer and Schänzel, 2012, 2013; Carr, 2011), which must be understood in light of cultural changes in parental models and discourses of parenthood (Carr, 2011; Shaw, 2008; Shaw and Dawson, 2001). As Shaw points out, “today’s parents take on a much more active, and deliberate parenting role” (Shaw, 2008: 694). Influenced by the idea of purposive leisure time, parents stress the need for planning and organizing family leisure time and family vacations in such a way that children learn important values and become exposed to positive influences and environments, while at the same time reducing negative influences (Harrington, 2015; Shaw and Dawson, 2001; Shaw et al., 2008).

However, it is important to stress that notions of how to spend a family holiday are not uniform. In different tourist contexts, we find significant variances in how family life during vacation is envisioned, including distinctions in parental models and ideologies. For example, in coastal mass tourism, the presence of families with children constitutes a significant consumer base for hotels and restaurants (Schänzel et al., 2012). In the marketing of family tourism to sun drenched resorts, the vacation is invested with notions of spending quality time and expectations of a more intense family life (Carr, 2011; Mattsson, 2016b; Obrador, 2012). Other common family-oriented tourist activities, such as theme parks, are primarily focused on giving children a chance to have a fun and enjoyable experience in a clean and safe environment, which sometimes leaves parents with the feeling that they are babysitting (Johns and Gyimóthy, 2002, 2003). In animal parks and zoos, the experience of close encounters with exotic and familiar animals is intimately interconnected with notions of family quality time (Hallman and Benbow, 2007) and strengthening the social bonds between parents and children (Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2015). Another popular way to spend a family vacation is in a summer home or camper/RV, which reflects a more mundane form of family vacation where the boundaries between home and away become blurred (Larsen, 2013; Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt, 2015; Mikkelsen and Cohen, 2015).

Research on family adventure tourism is scarcer, but highlights the importance of studying family tourism outside more traditional family tourism contexts (e.g. Carr, 2011;

Mattsson, 2016b; Obrador, 2012). Existing research confirms that contemporary families are increasingly engaging in more experiential and adventurous forms of tourism (Southall, 2012). However, research has primarily been focused on recreational activities within the context of outdoor leisure (Jamal et al., 2019; Pomfret, 2019; Pomfret and Varley, 2019). In this segment of family tourism, families participate in adrenaline-boosting activities, such as hiking, snorkeling, and mountain climbing. These activity-oriented family vacations reflect an active lifestyle at home and are focused on engaging in activities and doing things together. For children, being exposed to a range of activities outside their “comfort zone” is seen as crucial for fostering “human qualities such as perseverance, toughness, care, and team working” (Pomfret and Varley, 2019: 505). Moreover, spending an active family holiday is associated with the health and well-being of the family and gives families a chance to spend unmediated time together. It is seen as a valuable tool to strengthen family bonds and create a sense of family through the construction of shared experiences and collective memories (Pomfret and Varley, 2019).

As a more recent addition to the offerings of family tourism, family adventure travel falls on the border between family tourism and the alternative travel industry. As the introductory quote shows, the adventurousness implied in family adventure travel is linked to the idea of discovering and exploring unknown and exotic places together. In other words, the segment of family adventure travel is shaped around other connotations of adventurousness than the activity-centered family vacations in the context of outdoor leisure (Jamal et al., 2019; Pomfret, 2019; Pomfret and Varley, 2019). With the use of the term family adventure travel, this article emphasizes that the niche of family adventure travel emerges in a wider context of adventure travel in contemporary tourism. It constitutes a distinct form of family tourism which is constructed around notions of authentic travel experiences and narratives of adventures, which have previously been associated with backpacking and independent travel (Elsrud, 2005; Lozanski, 2011). Another prominent feature is the understanding of travel as a profoundly meaningful activity linked to learning and personal development, as well as a central part of a lifestyle (Harrison, 2003). As we will see, this means that the travel style of family adventure travel is constructed through a new discourse that reimagines what a family holiday entails.

Theoretical framework: The colonial continuity of travel styles

Theoretically, the article frames family adventure travel with the help of post-colonial tourism research, which emphasizes that contemporary global tourism is deeply embedded in and reinforces neo-colonial structures of inequality and discourses of difference (Hall and Tucker, 2004). A post-colonial approach to tourism underlines the colonial legacy in tourism in both structural and ideological terms (Tucker and Akama, 2009). Post-colonial studies of tourism marketing show, for example, that the tourist sphere is permeated by images of “the other,” and destinations in the Global South are often portrayed through a cultural lens of exoticism and primitivism (e.g. Echtner and Prasad, 2003; Grinell, 2004; Huggan, 2001). Thus, contemporary tourism is characterized by a colonial nostalgia, which is not only reflected in the images of tourist destinations and their inhabitants, but also in the different cultures of travel (Gregory, 2001). In

promotional material, travel guides and travel books, tourists are invited to reimagine colonial adventures and experience a touristic version of “the great expedition to the deepest, darkest frontiers” (Echtner and Prasad, 2003: 675). In this way, the culture of contemporary tourism offers an opportunity to travel in the footsteps of colonial exploiters, traders, scientists, and adventurers (Echtner and Prasad, 2003).

Moreover, we can also trace a colonial legacy in different ways of traveling. In the article “Travel as performed art,” Adler (1989) suggests that travel styles exhibit a remarkable stylistic stability over time, as tourists and travelers of today reproduce and mimic travel styles of the historical past. Travel styles, Adler suggests, consist of both explicitly formulated and implicitly shared “codes of performance” (Adler, 1989: 1371). Travel styles are mediated culturally through travel magazines, tourist brochures, and marketing materials, and can be defined as culturally shared norms and conventions of what it means to go on an adventurous journey or a sun-drenched vacation on the beach (Edensor, 2000, 2001, 2007). These shared norms and conventions are reflected in the concrete organization of the travel experience, for example, in travel arrangements and itineraries, but also in how destinations are imagined and approached in a more cultural sense (Adler, 1989). It draws our analytical attention to distinct stylistic elements of different modes of travel, for example, the design and pace in which the traveler or tourist moves through time and space “in a conventionally stylized way” (Adler, 1989: abstract). In this understanding, travel styles also include embodied dispositions and assumptions of “which clothes, styles of movement, modes of looking, photographing and recording, expressing delight, communicating meaning and sharing experiences are appropriate in particular contexts” (Edensor, 2007: 203).

By investigating family adventure travel as a distinct travel style, encompassing a particular set of tourist practices and habits (Edensor, 2001), the ambition of this article is to examine the colonial legacy of family adventure travel. For this purpose, **the concept of colonial continuity** is useful for a detailed examination of how the travel style of family adventure travel not only reproduces, but also modifies elements of colonial travel styles. The concept of colonial continuity was coined by Hebron (2007) in a research project on white Canadian development workers. Hebron aimed to analytically capture how colonial discourses and subject positions are reproduced over time in processes where they are also adapted to the prevailing conditions in different contexts but are still “recognizable for the similarity to their original colonial manifestations and effects” (Hebron, 2007: 7). Hence, the concept of colonial continuity is not used to suggest that there is a pre-determined stability of colonial travel styles over time. Rather, the argument is that stylistic continuity emerges as a result of a historically situated and continuous connectivity between contemporary travel styles and colonial forms of traveling. Thus, the conceptual framework serves the purpose of enabling a rich and detailed analysis of the various elements of family adventure travel and allows for a discussion of the colonial continuity of this family-oriented travel style.

Methodological approach

The article focuses on the marketing of family adventure travel and the methodological approach consists of a multimodal critical discourse analysis, which emphasizes that the

cultural meaning of discourses is co-constructed through written texts and visual images (Jancsary et al., 2016; Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996, 2001; Machin, 2013). The purpose of this kind of critical academic interpretation is not only to describe and thematically order the content, but to “expose meanings that are not always immediately obvious” (Weaver, 2019: 791). Therefore, the discourse analysis has been carried out through a careful mapping of both explicit and implicit meanings in the material, which requires an active and analytical interpretation and a theoretical and contextual reading of the content (Jancsary et al., 2016). The approach provides an insight into the wider cultural terrain in which family holidays takes place.

The analyzed material has been collected from the websites of seven Swedish travel companies (listed below). The companies have been selected because they offer pre-arranged family travel packages to long-distance destinations and operate within the alternative segments of the Swedish tourism market. The material consists of web-based marketing material and travel itineraries, both written texts and visual images, that includes the following categories of material: (i) vision statements and general descriptions of the companies’ travel arrangements, (ii) descriptions and definitions of the companies’ family travel concepts, (iii) travel itineraries and information about specific family journeys to different destinations, (iv) photographs and visual material attached to the travel itineraries.

The material was first collected in 2019, but it has been updated as of October 2020, to reflect changes ensuing from the covid-19 pandemic. Due to national travel restrictions, most of travel programs to date were temporarily canceled. But information and travel itineraries remained available online, and travel companies plan to resume travel programs when restrictions are lifted. All seven travel companies provide material in these four categories on their websites, although some companies have more extensive materials in terms of vision statements and definitions of their family travel concepts (e.g. The adventure crowd), while other companies present their travel concept, but less wordy (e.g. Världens resor). Still, the most important difference in the material provided by the companies is the number of tours offered for families, which range from 4 to 12 tours (JamboTours, Världens resor, Läs & Res, The Adventure Crowd) up to 18–30 tours (Carpe Adventure, Winberg Travel, Äventyrsresor).

The collected material has been analyzed together, which allows for the different parts of the material to inform each other. The analysis has been carried out in three steps. In the first step, explicit themes and recurring vocabulary in the material have been identified and coded (Jancsary et al., 2016). Also, the visual material has been described in terms of its most manifest meaning. In the second step, an in-depth analysis of the broader structures of meaning in the material has been carried out. This step includes a close re-reading of the written material line by line and an articulation of the latent meanings of the visual material in order to identify patterns and articulate implicit assumptions and suppositions. In the third step, the aim is to reconstruct the broader social and interdiscursive contexts of the material and its individual elements (Jancsary et al., 2016). In this phase, a theoretically informed interpretation of the material has been carried out, with focus on how family adventure travel reproduces, but also transforms, elements of colonial travel styles. In the presentation of the findings below, the citations that best illustrates an identified discursive theme have been included.

Findings: Marketing family adventure travel

In the following sections, the analysis of the marketing material used in family adventure travel will be presented. The presentation is structured around five thematic sections. The first section “Family holidays—filled with adventures” provides a brief overview of the characteristics of the travel arrangements of family adventure travel. The second theme, “Adventurous children—adventurous parents,” focuses on how the family holiday is rationalized and described in relation to notions of adventurousness. The third section, “Educational adventures,” explores how the marketing material presents the family trip as an opportunity for children’s learning and development. The fourth part “The shared travel experience” explores the idea that travel is an activity that should preferably be undertaken together rather than alone. The final section “The family holiday—a journey of discovery” examines how the family holiday is represented as a journey of discovery in family adventure travel.

Family holidays—filled with adventures

As mentioned in the introduction, the niche of family adventure travel is marketed by small-scale travel agencies that operate within the alternative travel industry in Sweden. The companies in question offer pre-arranged group travel to destinations outside the Western hemisphere, with an emphasis on authentic travel experiences (Grinell, 2004; Mattsson, 2016a). With the use of small-scale and well-planned travel arrangements, the travel companies present themselves as an alternative to the standardized travel arrangements of the large-scale tourism industry. The travel agencies promote an alternative way of organizing travel experiences, which is highly influenced by the anti-tourist position that is often associated with contemporary backpacking and solo travel (Mattsson, 2016a). This ambition is reflected in the mission statements of the companies, as well as in the names of the travel agencies, for example, by including words such as adventure, travel, or world. Examples of agency names are Adventure Travel (in Swedish: Äventyrsresor), World Travel (in Swedish: Världens resor), and Read and Travel (in Swedish:). Four of the companies use English names, which creates the image of a company that offers a worldly and international travel experience.

Within the range of travel options, the agencies offer, the family trips are presented as a thematic specialization. The majority of the family trips are designed as pre-arranged group trips, with a handful of families traveling together. However, some of the travel companies also offer individually arranged, tailor-made family trips. The cost of the trips¹ permit the conclusion that they are aimed at a relatively well-off segment of the Swedish population. Generally, the family trips are intended for families with school-age children, and the information provided about a particular journey often specifies an age range or a minimum age for children. The travel arrangements have been adapted to the presence of children by, for example, keeping to a slower pace, being less physically demanding and containing fewer travel days, and the travel companies emphasize that their travel arrangements will suit “the whole family” (Äventyrsresor). Several companies have even developed special family travel concepts. For example, the family journeys offered by the company Äventyrsresor are named “FamilyExpeditions” and presented as “family vacations filled

with adventures.” However, what constitutes a family is a question often taken for granted by the promotional material. Only a few of the travel companies explicitly state, like The Adventure Crowd, that “all family constellations are of course welcome.” But in general, the nuclear family remains the silently implied norm.

Like other travel arrangements in the alternative tourism segment, family adventure travels are oriented toward destinations in the Global South. Common destinations in the analyzed marketing material include countries in South America, Asia, and Africa; for example, Mexico, Borneo, Thailand, Vietnam, Kenya, and Tanzania. The destinations are extensively presented with a focus on cultural differences and the uniqueness of place (Grinell, 2004; Mattsson, 2016a). The marketing material is full of place-specific details, and visual images are oriented toward picturesque scenery: dramatic open landscapes, exotic wild animals, and pictures of local people in colorful local and national costumes. The focus of the travel arrangements is a rich and wide-ranging tourist experience. Travel itineraries are ambitious and cover periods lasting from 9 days up to 3 weeks. Often, the travel itineraries include a rich mixture of activities oriented toward both natural and cultural experiences, for example, visits to historical sites, religious temples, rural villages and family homes, as well as activities like snorkeling, hiking and canoeing, safari trips, and expeditions into rainforests. Typically, the group of traveling families will stay in one location for a few days before moving on to the next stop, a feature that seems to ensure that the travel experience will be full of exciting and enjoyable escapades.

Adventurous children—adventurous parents

In the marketing of family adventure travel, the travel experiences of children are often in focus. The family trips are repeatedly described as being designed based on children’s interests and wishes, but without losing attention to parents’ travel experiences. Sometimes, the marketing material explicitly targets children by promising exciting tourist experiences and “something to impress your friends with when you get home!” (Läs & Res). But more often, the child-oriented focus is reflected in a more indirect way through the visual material. The travel companies’ photo galleries often feature pictures of white children actively engaged in different activities, for example, climbing mountains, paddling canoes, snorkeling, riding horses, and camels. One of the travel agencies even refers to children as “young adventurers” (Äventyrsresor), and common images include children in sun hats who are looking out over a surrounding landscape through binoculars or photographing wildlife from a safari jeep. In this way, children are repeatedly presented as young adventurers who are experiencing an eventful and thrilling journey. Implicitly, the images convey a promise of an enjoyable vacation for children.

In other parts, the marketing material turns to parents with an encouraging message that “children are no obstacle to travel – rather the opposite” (Winberg Travel). In doing so, it becomes clear that the family adventure travel sector is targeting middle class parents, a group for whom long-distance travel is part of a wider lifestyle and identity (Harrison, 2003). A reoccurring assumption is that the potential clientele has previous adventure travel experience, and that they identify themselves as “adventurers”:

Adventure has no age limit. Just because you settle down and have children does not mean that life as an adventurer is over. (Carpe Adventure).

In this respect, a form of counterargument is formulated, which emphasizes that travel with children can indeed be adventurous. It must be understood in light of the well-established image of the adventurous traveler as a solitary figure and the image of children and family life as a hindrance to travel (Obrador, 2012).

Moreover, family adventure travel is presented as an alternative to more traditional family vacations. On the webpage of the travel agency The Adventure Crowd, the family trips are explicitly compared to the symbolic image of hedonistic charter tours:

Skip charter tours and Bamse clubs [a well-known children's club offered by TUI] – take the children on an unforgettable trip where they can experience the real Thailand instead! (The Adventure Crowd)

In comparison, family adventure travel is depicted as a “real” way of traveling that will provide a broader and deeper experience of the destination: “Travel for real and see more of the country visited!” (The Adventure Crowd). In these passages, the family trips are presented not only as an alternative to more traditional family tourism, such as charter tours, but also as a superior way to spend the family holiday. It reflects a moralizing anti-tourist position, which suggests that family adventure travel offers parents an opportunity to distance themselves from the generalized image of other parents who have adapted the family holiday to their childrens' needs.

Educational adventures

In addition, family adventure travel is promoted as an opportunity for parents to invest in their children's learning and personal development (Shaw et al., 2008). The family trips are repeatedly presented as a combination of exciting and fun activities, on the one hand, and educational and learning experiences, on the other. For example, the travel agency Äventyrsresor emphasizes that a family journey should be “a learning adventure.” In the marketing material for a family trip to the Galapagos Islands, the tour operator Carpe Adventure asks, “Do you want to give children a crash course in exotic wildlife? What could be better than to visit ‘Darwin's arena’ the Galapagos Islands?” This shows that the family vacation is constructed as an opportunity for something more than “just relaxation.” Rather, the emphasis is the importance of spending a meaningful vacation, rich with varied experiences. In line with the discourse of purposive leisure time, the family holiday is presented as having a higher or greater purpose and as constituting an important occasion for parents to convey desirable values and characteristics to their children (Shaw and Dawson, 2001; Shaw et al., 2008).

This image of the family holiday as an educational journey reflects a common association between travel and transformation (Lean et al., 2014) and an idea of traveling the world as a form of school, which is reflected in the concept of world schooling (Molz, 2017). The travel company Carpe Adventure, for example, highlights the above-mentioned family trip to the Galapagos Islands as a chance for learning that is a step beyond regular school:

You get the best education through your own experiences. During our adventure trip, your children get an exciting and interesting lesson in biology and ecology that you can never get from any textbook. (Carpe Adventure)

The quote suggests that a family journey will offer a more active and direct learning experience that is also exciting and interesting. In its marketing materials, the company is rhetorically asking, “Who says science is boring?” A central theme is the idea that being exposed to different places and environments will provide a direct experience and unmediated knowledge (Hope, 2009; Jakubowski, 2003; c.f. Nairn, 2005). Thus, the direct and authentic travel experience is understood in relation to learning, and traveling the world is depicted as a chance for children to engage in processes of learning (Molz, 2017).

Some of the travel companies emphasize the cultural dimensions of learning. The travel agency Läs & Res, for example, has an explicitly formulated “travel philosophy” in which travel is presented as a better way to acquire an understanding of other cultures, but also a way to gain new perspectives on life at home. For children, travel is depicted as a chance to get important life lessons, for example, by learning to appreciate and navigate different cultural systems:

Children adapt quickly to the new unknown environments, and they learn a lot about countries and cultures that are different from our own, something that provides life experience. (Läs & Res)

An interesting detail is that children are simultaneously portrayed as effortlessly adapting to unknown environments and having a more genuine and direct way of approaching destinations: “And the wonderful thing about children is that they are curious, spontaneous and meet the world completely without prejudice” (Winberg Travel). Intriguingly, this depicts children as natural carriers of a series of positively framed traits, such as being curious, open-minded and free from prejudice, which will be activated and reinforced when they are exposed to new places. In this regard, the marketing material promises that children will acquire a sense of global citizenship, as they will learn to embrace new places and cultures, but also to travel the world with the travelers’ sense of entitlement (Molz, 2017: 20; c.f. Stoner et al., 2014).

The shared travel experience

In the promotion of family adventure travel, as noted above, the adventurous traveler is no longer a lonesome, masculine figure who is cut off from his family (Obrador, 2012). Rather, adventure travel is presented as an activity that should preferably be carried out in the company of others. Sharing the travel experience with other family members is presented as giving a richer travel experience, compared to traveling alone. In the introductory quote, for example, the travel company Carpe Adventure encourages families to embark on an adventure and to “Let yourselves explore and discover the world together!” In a similar manner, the tour operator The Adventure Crowd suggests that traveling with children will provide a chance for a shared travel experience: “Travel with your children and experience more together!” This suggests that the image of the family holiday is constructed around an idea of the joint exploration of the world, carried out by a collective of interrelated family members (Gram, 2005; Schänzel and Smith, 2014).

Moreover, traveling with children is presented as a fun and enriching experience that will also give parents a more intense and multifaceted travel experience. Traveling with children, Winberg Travel states, “can provide new perspectives and lessons, even for the most experienced globetrotter” (Winberg Travel). Thus, traveling with children is assumed to give parents new perspectives on the destination:

Traveling with children in new environments and cultures is very fun. (Världens resor)

Everything is new and exciting when you are a child. Travel with yours and discover the world for the first time again. (Carpe Adventure)

In this metaphorical quote from the travel agency Carpe Adventure, traveling with children is presented as an opportunity for parents to approach the destination with the innocence and curious eyes of the child, and thus to rediscover the world. It suggests that sharing the travel experience with children will enhance the authenticity of the travel experience of adults, rather than the reverse.

A recurring idea is that traveling together will enhance and intensify family relationships. Traveling together is consistently presented as a deeply meaningful activity that provides unique experiences and lifelong memories: “Expect impressions and experiences that neither you nor your children forget!” (Läs & Res). Traveling together is thus said to provide a travel experience that, despite the different positions of family members, is also a shared experience:

At the same time, you get a shared experience that will be very special for everyone – both old and young – and a guaranteed unforgettable journey. (Winberg Travel)

This suggests that the adventurous family vacation offers families an opportunity to form shared, life-long memories. Embarking on a joint exploration is represented as a moment for strengthening family ties, for example, by providing a common frame of reference and constructing a family travel history (Shaw et al., 2008).

The family holiday—a journey of discovery

This last section explores how the marketing of family adventure travel also reflects more stylistic elements of adventurous travel, expressed in spatial tropes and embodied dispositions (Adler, 1989; Edensor, 2000, 2001, 2007). In the promotion of family travel, references to famous fictional adventurers from movies and literature are used repeatedly. For example, a 10-day round trip to Jordan offered by Äventyrsresor is described as “a true family adventure in the spirit of Indiana Jones!” In a similar manner, the travel itinerary for a family trip to Malaysia offered by the travel company Läs & Res is said to be an opportunity to “play Robinson Crusoe.” By invoking these well-known fictional adventurers, the marketing material implicitly connects their travel offerings to a culturally shared repertoire of adventure narratives (Phillips, 1997), in which figurative images of the adventurer’s embodied practices and dispositions are also conveyed. In doing so, an intriguing embodiment of the adventurous travel style takes place, as the fictional

adventurers act as stylistic role models for family adventure travel and families are explicitly invited to mimic the travel styles of historical and fictional adventurers (Adler, 1989). Moreover, the playful references to familiar fictional characters seem to play the role of rendering adventure travel more accessible to families, as it creates an aura of familiarity around the travel style itself.

In the marketing materials for family adventure travel, references to safari excursions are numerous. With its focus on close encounters with exotic and wild animals, the safari tour is assumed to be something that is naturally interesting and exciting for children. In the visual material linked to the travel itineraries of the agencies offering safari tours, it is easy to identify safari-specific tourism imaginary in which wildlife, natural landscapes and “primitive people” are lumped together (Salazar, 2012). However, the travel itineraries also include graphic accounts of the expected travel experiences:

We stay in a safari tent at a cozy lodge with a pool. Feel the scents of the savannah, see the air flutter and hear the wild animals through the canvas. (Wingberg Travel)

Then we sit together around the fireplace under the stars and talk about today’s adventures and experiences. (Äventyrsresor)

This imagery of late evenings around the campfire and nights spent in safari tents, listening to wild animals, stylistically echoes and reproduces historical images of colonial exploiters, who gather around the light of a fire to share stories about their latest escapades. It shows how traveling families are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of previous adventurous travelers and explorers and how the family holiday is reimaged as a journey of discovery (Echtner and Prasad, 2003).

In the detailed descriptions of specific family journeys, the idea of the “jungle expedition” seems to have particular symbolic implications. Several travel companies explicitly promote “jungle expeditions,” for example, the family travel packages offered by the tour operator Läs & Res include a “Journey of Discovery into the Jungle.” In a similar manner, Jambo Tours offers “a real jungle adventure”:

Bring mom and dad to Borneo’s jungle!

Walk on suspension bridges among treetops, swim in thermal springs, look for orangutans and wild animals in the rainforest, go boating on the river, visit a jungle village . . . Finally, there is a real jungle adventure for juniors in Borneo – and of course for other family members who want to go on a voyage of discovery. (Jambo Tours)

The use of the somewhat outdated term “jungle” instead of the contemporary term “tropical rainforest” conjures images of an adventurous expedition into an unwelcoming and impenetrable environment. In this representation, it is easy to trace the well-known spatial trope of the journey of discovery, characterized by the movement into the unknown territories, beyond the borders of civilization (Echtner and Prasad, 2003). Moreover, in the promotion material of the travel company The Adventure Crowd, a family journey to India is portrayed as an opportunity for families “to experience the Jungle book for real.” In this reference to

Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and the famous Disney cartoons, it is no longer the destination that is to be experienced for real, but the jungle expedition itself.

Discussion

The analysis of the marketing material shows that the alternative travel sector has been “successful” in delimiting and defining a new market segment within the Swedish family tourism sector. Situated on the border between family tourism and adventure travel, family adventure travel explicitly targets travel-enthusiast in the affluent Swedish middle-class who have become parents, with a promise of combining adventure travel with family life. One of the key findings is that the travel style of family adventure travel is marketed through a new family tourism discourse, which is represented as an alternative to more traditional family tourism, such as sun holidays (Mattsson, 2016b; Obrador, 2012), theme parks (Johns and Gyimóthy, 2002, 2003), zoos (Hallman and Benbow, 2007; Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2015), and caravanning or summer houses (Larsen, 2013; Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt, 2015; Mikkelsen and Cohen, 2015). By offering family journeys to long-distance and exotic destinations with a focus on adventurous and authentic travel experiences, family adventure travel involves a radical reformulation of the very image of the family holiday.

Indeed, family adventure travel also shares important features with other segments of family tourism, for example, the influence of recent trends in parenting, particularly the development of parenting ideologies that emphasize the educational content of family leisure (Shaw, 2008; Shaw and Dawson, 2001). In line with the idea of purposive leisure time, the family vacation is presented as an opportunity for parents to invest in their children's development and learning. It reflects a positive view of travel that underlines travel as a transformative experience that provides in-depth knowledge and intercultural competences (Lean et al., 2014; Stoner et al., 2014; Molz, 2017). In relation to the accompanying children, the underlying promise is that the mere act of traveling will activate the development of traits associated with “global citizenship,” such as curiosity, openness and a lack of prejudice (Molz, 2017; Stoner et al., 2014). At the same time, family adventure travel is presented a way to introduce children to a future “career” as adventurous travelers, with all the colonial connotations and sense of entitlement this position reflects.

The emergence of family adventure travel challenges implicit assumptions in previous research on family tourism, in particular the tendency to emphasize the social dimensions of tourism and equate researching family vacations with a move toward a *de-exotization* of tourism research (Larsen, 2008; Obrador, 2012). In the marketing of family adventure travel, the family holiday is motivated by the compounded desire to spend time with friends and family and a quest for extraordinary experiences in new and exotic places. In the idea of exploring the world together, the family trip is presented as an opportunity to visit new and exotic places in “the pleasant companionship of the family” (Gram, 2005: 2). Through the notion of the shared travel experience, traveling and exploring the world together is presented as crucial for strengthening family bonds and creating “a sense of family” (Shaw et al. 2008). In this way, the social and relational dimensions of family life are linked to elements of the adventurous travel style, and, as a result, the family vacation is constructed as a simultaneous and intertwined reproduction of social relations and consumption of place.

The analysis presented here contradicts previous conceptions of family tourism, which has often been associated with more mundane, less adventurous varieties of family holiday (Larsen, 2008; Mattsson, 2016b; Obrador, 2012). The findings show that by contesting the image of the adventurer as a solitary masculine figure, cut off from the sociability and intimacy of the family context (Obrador, 2012), family adventure travel reproduces but also renegotiates colonial notions of the adventurous journey. In the marketing of family adventure travel, the idea of “the real adventure” is renegotiated from an individual undertaking to a collective experience, and whole families are encouraged to travel in the footsteps of colonial explorers and historical adventurers (Echtner and Prasad, 2003). This means that two seemingly incompatible concepts—family life and adventurous travel—are brought together and combined in the travel style. As a result, the theoretical assumption that family tourism, on the one hand, and adventurous forms of traveling, on the other hand, constitute two discrete phenomena must be fundamentally reconsidered.

Conclusion

This article broadens our understanding of what a family vacation might entail, by examining a previously unresearched form of family holiday. The article demonstrates that the marketing of family adventure travel is reproducing narratives of authenticity and adventure and provides an understanding of how these narratives become modified and renegotiated in the context of family tourism and its emphasis on social and relational aspects of vacationing (Cheong and Sin, 2019; Gram, 2005; Larsen, 2008; Larsen et al., 2007; Obrador, 2012; Schänzel and Smith, 2014). In this way, the findings contest a preconceived popular assumption about family holidays that reappears in the research on family tourism, that is, that adventurous travel and family life are mutually exclusive phenomena (Obrador, 2012). Moreover, the findings challenge the assumption that family tourism would per se entail a de-exoticization of the tourist experience (Larsen, 2008). Rather, the article argues for the need of a re-exoticization of the tourist experience of families.

The article offers a novel approach to the study of family tourism, by theorizing family adventure travel from a post-colonial perspective (Hall and Tucker, 2004; Tucker and Akama, 2009). With a focus on the colonial continuity of travel styles (Adler, 1989; Hebron, 2007), the article examines how the marketing of family adventure travel—actively and creatively—cites, reproduces, and modifies elements from previous colonial forms of travel. At the same time, the study is limited to a discourse analysis of marketing materials. In this respect, we need more in-depth knowledge about how families who participate in family adventure travel understand and negotiate the ne-colonial dimensions of the travel style. One interesting question is whether the colonial legacy of family adventure travel implicates a more drastic shift in family relationships and parenting ideologies than what has been revealed here. Another possible line of enquiry is how traveling families balance and negotiate the underlying masculine connotations of adventure travel in relation to the feminized values of family life and parenting.

The article shows that historical forms of exploring and discovering the world are reproduced in family adventure travel. In a more critical reflection, we can argue that family adventure travel entails a colonial continuity, which is by no means innocent. An important result of the study is the appearance of a seemingly new tourist subjectivity in the tourist gallery, namely the *child traveler* or *young adventurer* who embark on journeys of discovery with their parents at a young age. This particular finding suggests that a colonial way of approaching and moving in the world is also passed on to new generations of travelers. Thus, it raises important questions about the ethical dimensions of family adventure travel and its colonial discourses and narratives of otherness. Especially since this form of traveling is portrayed as a more profound way of experiencing the world and a more desirable way of spending a family holiday than more traditional family vacations. In this respect we need more knowledge about what this adventurous travel style implies, particularly if and in what ways children who are introduced to adventure travel are adapting a neo-colonial worldview.

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Note

1. For example, an 11-day safari trip in Tanzania, with Läs & Res, costs approximately €2400 per adult, and €1700 per child. A 12-day trip to Borneo, with Adventure Travel, costs €3500 per adult, with discounted rates for children.

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