Motivating stakeholder collaboration within the aerial adventure industry

Key words: stakeholder collaboration, adventure tourism, aerial adventure, motivating, resource dependency theory, social exchange theory

Summary

This paper outlines the motivations behind stakeholder collaboration within the US aerial adventure industry. With an encroaching public stakeholder, stakeholder collaboration becomes a requisite if the industry desires any involvement in its regulation. Through a qualitative case study, this paper finds a number of motivations for stakeholder collaboration, particularly regarding resource dependency and social exchange theories. The main contribution can be found in the creation of the relational resource dependency theory, a reflection of the key motivational factors behind stakeholder collaboration within the US aerial adventure industry. The authors call for leadership within the industry to motivate industry-wide collaboration.

Introduction

Limited research exists on the aerial adventure industry (AAI), a new type of adventure tourism visitor attraction within the tourism system (Leask, 2016), despite its considerable growth in recent years. Perhaps due to its infancy, an official definition of the activity is hard to come by. Nevertheless, organisations within the industry describe the activity as an obstacle course set between ten and sixty feet in the air offering a novel and above-the-ground physical challenge for participants (Treego, 2014; Sibille, 2017; Synergo, 2018). An aerial adventure park consists of elements including, but not limited to, rope bridges, tight ropes, ladders, cargo nets and zip lines (Jiminy Peak, 2013). Originally used in an educational context and made popular through the Outward Bound USA program during the 1960s, it has today become one of the fastest growing sectors within tourism in the US (Wagstaff, 2015; Smith, 2015; ASTM, 2013). Whilst estimates vary, it is likely that over 200 parks exist, generating revenues of $800 million in 2015 (Smith, 2015).

Leask (2010) classed aerial adventure parks as outdoor visitor attractions, which would seem applicable. Yet, due to their shared similarities, the authors of this paper believe they should also be classed as adventure tourism visitor attractions. As an example, canopy tours, a very similar type of visitor attraction, are included under ‘soft adventure’ (McKay, 2013). The key attractions of adventure tourism are risk, personal challenge, play and excitement (Bentley et al, 2010; Buckley, 2012; Page et al, 2006; Cater, 2006).The most immediate similarity between adventure tourism and aerial adventure parks arguably lies in the word ‘adventure’. Yet, such action words as the ones mentioned above are often used when describing the aerial adventure activities in general (Xola, 2015; Adventure Park Insider, 2016; Edelen, 2018). These activities are but another strand of commercialised adventure products, where participants seek to conquer their fears, challenge their personal boundaries and, through that, experience positive highs in a safe environment (Edelen, 2018). Indeed, the popularity of aerial adventure parks is increasing, with a number of number of existing destinations and attractions, such as ski resorts, amusement parks and family entertainment centres, adding these parks to their

portfolio (Cummings, 2018). This is, in part, due to the wide-range of participant demographics aerial adventure parks attracts, with ages reportedly ranging from four to eighty (Adventure Park Insider, 2016).

With the growth of the industry, an increase in accidents of 55.8% has occurred in a relatively short space of time (Billock et al, 2015). As a result, the industry is understandably concerned about its sustainability, with studies and articles calling for more effective risk management (Billock et al, 2015; Annas, 2016). Within the US, many states are today recognising the need to regulate the industry and are either doing so or considering doing so (Borodaeff, 2018; ACCT, 2018). Today, thirteen states regulate aerial adventure parks or ropes courses (Hubbard-Merrell, 2018). With this in mind, communication among public and private stakeholders becomes key (Christiansen and Thrane, 2014) if the industry desires any involvement in its regulation. Certainly, knowledge transfers are a key aspect of risk management with regards to the identification, assessment and response to risks to ensure knowledge is transferred within the industry as a whole (Mikes, 2011; Drew et al, 2006). This latter point evidently requires effective collaboration within the industry.

The aim of this explorative research is to address the motivations behind forming stakeholder collaborations as the industry endeavours to improve risk management procedures. Informed by social exchange theory (SET) and resource dependency theory (RDT) and in light of the findings, this paper contributes through the development of a new theory: relational resource dependency Theory (RRDT). The US AAI was chosen as the setting for the case study in light of the perceived forthcoming need for public and private stakeholders to collaborate. The literature review begins with a brief discussion of risk management and the challenges faced by the AAI.

Literature review

Risk Management and Adventure Tourism

Risk is widely believed to be one of the key attractions to adventure tourism, as well as aerial adventure parks (Holyfield and Fine, 1997; Miles and Priest, 1999; Cater, 2006; Page et al. 2006; UNWTO, 2014). Yet, some academics argue that commercial adventure tourism lacks real risk, however, with the actual risk having been managed out of the experience and replaced with a perceived, or illusion of, risk (Cater, 2006; Fletcher, 2010). On the other hand, experts argue that without risk there is no adventure (Weber, 2001; Kane, 2010). Kerr and Mackenzie (2012) seem to concur, arguing that adventure tourism is comprised of two components of adventure: physical risk (physical), social (humiliation) and emotional risks. These risks seem critical as they eventually provide participants with positive emotions and thus a satisfying experience (Holyfield, 2005).

Some risks are inherent in adventure tourism and are instead managed to a certain extent, causing a balancing act between delivering perceived risk and actual risk (Kerr and Mackenzie, 2012). Maintaining the balance between actual risk and perceived risk would appear to be critical for the long-term sustainability of adventure tourism, and indeed the AAI, as highlighted by Williams and Soutar (2009). This paradoxical relationship with risk becomes apparent with actual risk clearly representing something negative, but the perceived risk enabling participants to experience positive emotions. As such, with perceived risk being essential to the activity, one could argue that the relationship is somewhat reminiscent of the yin-yang symbol, depicted in figure one, with both negative and positive connotations of risk required to exist together. This creates an adventurous experience, in turn creating a never-ending struggle between the two types of risk in the same way that yin-yang represent the continuous balancing-act between good and evil to create something complementary. Innovation has thus far played a key role in achieving this balance. The technological innovation taking place in the AAI has enabled operators to maintain the illusion of risk whilst reducing actual risk considerably (Sweeney, 2016). This is, for example, achieved through the smart belays, which has removed some chances of human error occurring and thereby removed some of the uncertainty in that regard (Annas, 2016).

Nevertheless, due to a number of serious accidents in recent years, the AAI is facing questions over its risk management procedures (Billock et al., 2015; Annas, 2016). An industry report carried out by Adventure Park Insider (2018) discovered a drop in consumer confidence due to serious incidents occurring resulting in negative coverage in mainstream media (see Adams, 2014; Fowler, 2016; Fox KRBK, 2018 for examples). Further, in December, 2014, a fatality occurred at a park in Florida due to equipment malfunction (Adventure Park Insider, 2015), whilst another fatality occurred at a park in Delaware in 2016, seemingly due to human error (Horn and Small, 2016).

The AAI is therefore faced with a conundrum in a bid to sustain its long-term sustainability: how does it create an exciting and thrilling, yet safe activity? Currently, the industry appears split into groups depending on what safety standard each stakeholder adheres to (Billock et al., 2015). Like the tourism system in general, the AAI consists of linkages and interdependencies among stakeholders from different sectors with different views and values (Jiang and Ritchie, 2017). This has undoubtedly created a complex and dynamic environment, whilst also making cross-sectoral collaboration critical in managing such a complex issue (Bramwell, 2011). Yet the literature has acknowledged that accidents and incidents have a wider impact than simply on the individual organisation, affecting the overall industry (Callander et al., 2003). Thus, a re-orientation of focus to the collective industry is required. As a result, stakeholder collaboration becomes pivotal, as does motivating the stakeholders to participate (Jiang and Ritchie, 2017).

Motivating Stakeholder Collaboration

Various motivations or influences for wanting to participate in collaborative arrangements have been identified in the literature. Motivations for stakeholder collaboration include swift technological changes in an industry (Bramwell and Lane, 1999), financial difficulties or to quickly enter a new market (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007; Fyall and Garrod, 2004; Lei and Slocum, 1992). However, one critical source of motivation is resources, as stakeholders seek to gain access to important external resources (Fyall et al, 2000; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Such resources may include new innovative products, but knowledge is often the desired currency (Hjalager, 2015). Indeed, organisational learning is one of the key benefits of stakeholder collaboration (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007). In the case of this paper, such knowledge could be of risk management procedures and lessons learned, with the industry currently lacking accident/incident data (Billock et al., 2015). Indeed, Fyall and Garrod (2004) argue that stakeholders may want to collaborate in order to reduce risks. Reducing, or managing, risk through collaboration is central to this paper and thus Fyall and Garrod's work (2004) would appear to support this idea. RDT helps us understand this motivation to collaborate, with a focus on the use of resources to form collaborations (Jiang and Ritchie, 2017; Falk, 2017; Pennington-Gray et al, 2014; Fyall et al, 2012). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argued organisations are dependent on external resources to achieve their targets and remain competitive, whilst isolation would only hamper progress. Thus, industry stakeholders need each other to succeed. Chen and Paulraj (2004), for example, posit that for organisations within a destination to be successful, their focus has to move from competitive advantage to collaborative advantage, which in turn will lead to remaining or becoming competitive. This, too, is arguably the case in the AAI on the subjects of risk management and public safety. Once again, shifting the focus from an individual stance to the collective.

RDT has, today, become one of the most dominant theories within the strategic management and organisational theory spheres (Hillman et al., 2009). According to Fyall et al. (2012) RDT implies that resources are limited and that organisations who possess these resources seek to influence others through these resources. As such, these organisations are more powerful than the others, being in possession of a resource in demand (Hillman et al., 2009). Contrarily, those that do not possess such resources seek to collaborate with those that do, thus leading to stakeholder collaboration. Indeed, by its very nature, resource sharing is considered the foundation of stakeholder collaboration (Nyaga et al, 2010). RDT posits that stakeholder collaboration offers an opportunity to achieve industry-wide improvement on risk management by consolidating such capabilities as assets and knowledge (Falk, 2017; Barney, 1991). Given the majority of stakeholders within the AAI are SMEs, many do not possess a broad access to the resources required, hence the need for collaborating with fellow stakeholders. The larger stakeholders may have more operating experience, for example, and may therefore possess the knowledge desired by the SMEs. As such, power plays a key role in RDT, with the stakeholders in possession of the desired resource being more powerful than others (Fyall et al., 2012).

Much research has been devoted to discovering the motivations behind stakeholder collaboration, particularly within the destination literature (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007; Beritelli, 2011; Fyall et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2013). The tourism destination management literature was considered particularly appropriate given the shared characteristics with the AAI, such as the fragmented nature of the stakeholders, motivations, requirements and barriers to stakeholder collaboration (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007). Wang and Fesenmaier's (2007) case study identified four preconditions to stakeholder collaboration within a destination: crisis, competition, organisation support and technological support. Crises seemed to bring stakeholders together in this case, with the acknowledgement that these situations were better handled in unity, thus a recognition of mutual dependency, an area also covered by Fyall et al. (2012). In the same sense, stakeholders were aware of the competition at an individual level, but were also able to see the bigger picture of competing with other destinations and thus chose to collaborate as a result. Similarly, Wang et al. (2013) found that stakeholders within a region were motivated to collaborate by the idea of increasing competitiveness through knowledge transfers and thus benefitting the region. These benefits would, in turn, help improve the individual organisation within the region. Indeed, such recognition of mutual dependency is seemingly a requisite for effective stakeholder collaboration to take place at such a large scale. This is known as social exchange theory (Beritelli, 2011) and provides the other part of the foundation of this paper.

Due to the complex nature of risk management, social exchange theory (SET) also supports this motivation for stakeholder collaboration. Ap (1992: 668) opined that SET is "a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation". Fyall et al. (2012) argue that complex problem domains, in this case getting public and private stakeholders to collaborate on risk management procedures at an industry level, make collaboration appealing to stakeholders, particularly in light of a down-turn in consumer confidence and the encroaching public stakeholder. Yet, Coulson et al. (2014) argue that stakeholder collaboration takes place only when stakeholders believe social exchanges offer greater benefits than other options currently available, meaning that stakeholder collaboration may be seen somewhat as a last resort.

Nevertheless, SET posits that stakeholders collaborate largely to serve their own interests, with the understanding of mutual dependency and the requirement of reciprocity to achieve common goals (Paraskevaidis and Andriotis, 2017; Fyall et al, 2012). In the context of this paper, the common goal is public safety, a goal that benefits both public and private stakeholders. This type of collaboration is based on the premise that all relationships consist of give and take in regards to rewards and costs (Kaynak and Marandu, 2006; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011). Emerson (1976) argued that when presented with a choice, people naturally undergo a cost-benefit analysis and consider alternatives before making a decision. By definition, if industry stakeholders believe the benefits from participating in these exchanges outweigh the costs, i.e. time, they are likely to participate (Lee, 2013). Thus, a recognition of mutual benefits to be derived from the process is required in order for stakeholders to be motivated to participate (Jamal and Getz, 1995). As such, SET is perhaps

more of a framework rather than a theory, in light of its explanatory and predictive power being based on how individuals fit into its composition (Lee et al., 2014). Emerson (1976), for example, argued that two parties exist within a transaction and within these parties exist a cost and a reward, meaning the negative or positive consequences of an exchange.

Once again, stakeholder power is critical (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011). Contingent upon the perceived fairness of the exchange, the parties involved may have varying degrees of satisfaction and equity, and the resulting levels of dependence, independence and interdependence influence the strength and balance of the relationship (Blau, 1964; Lee et al., 2014). Nunkoo's (2016) Exchange Outcome Matrix portrays the power and mutual dependency relationship and its resulting impact on stakeholders' motivation to collaborate. Quadrant 1 shows both actors therefore benefitting from collaborating, with both being mutually dependant on each other and the power-relationship is balanced. In quadrants 2 and 3 the relationship is changed in favour of one or the other, whereas Quadrant 4 highlights an altogether unbalanced and unrewarding relationship.

However, stakeholder trust is another critical theoretical construct of SET (Paraskevaidis and Andriotis; 2017). Trust is key to social exchanges as it is not a given that others will reciprocate the exchange, with no obligations placed on the receiving parties (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011). Stakeholders instead trust that other stakeholders will reciprocate in the future (Blau, 1964). Further, the collaborative arrangement is strengthened over time through the establishment of trust, which is developed through satisfaction, continued collaboration and shared values (Lee et al., 2014). This eventually creates commitment to the cause through further exchanges of resources, governed by normative rules (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Different types of social exchanges exist; reciprocal and negotiated (Coulson et al, 2014). Reciprocal exchanges occur in a non-organised manner in which actors are unaware as to what extent others will reciprocate (Frémeaux and Michelson, 2011). On the other hand, negotiated exchanges take place in a more formal manner with both actors seeking clarity in regards to agreement on the terms of the exchange (Coulson et al, 2014). The latter may, for example, combat trust issues that may exist as the participating stakeholders are obligated to reciprocate the exchanges. To date, SET's most significant contribution has been to the field of residents' perception of tourism (Nunkoo, 2016). In this context, SET argues that residents are more likely to support tourism development if the benefits are greater than the costs (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2011). Using this cost-benefit analysis, one could argue that the idea of improving public safety levels within the AAI would far outweigh the costs of participating, knowing that an incident at one park is likely to impact negatively on the industry in general. As such, there is a level of mutual dependency as well as a need for the sharing of resources. Interestingly, Fyall et al. (2012) and Jamal and Getz (1995) argued RDT and SET could provide the motivations simultaneously for collaborating, thus not requiring one or the other.

Methods

The primary research of this paper was supported by a qualitative method for gathering data. Further, a case study approach was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the motivations behind stakeholder collaboration and its importance to the aerial adventure in regards to risk management procedures. Case study research is the study of a problem setting explored through single or multiple cases (Creswell, 2007). Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) argue that such an approach is relevant to research projects seeking to gain a deep understanding of the issue being researched. Key to the design, however, was defining the case and setting its limits (Yin, 2014). In the case of this paper, the setting of the case being studied was the AAI in the USA, therefore a single case study. As such, the case was not too vague, thus enabling the researcher to delve deep into the study (Yin, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken to gather the primary data. Whilst developing the research design it became clear that to address the research questions, a research method developing an understanding for 'the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience' was required (Seidman, 2013: 9). This was of particular importance to this paper given the limited academic research into the AAI that had been undertaken prior to this. This is supported by Horn (2009) who states that qualitative research is "interested in exploring meanings, perceptions and understandings" and the authors deemed that conducting interviews was the most suitable option as a result. One advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews lies in the process of open discovery generated by this approach to build theory (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Further, these interviews were also what Yin (2014) classifies as Prolonged Case Study Interviews, as they lasted two hours or more. Horn (2009) also argues that qualitative research using an inductive approach researches the general and turns to the more specific. This approach was also used for this paper with a look at the motivations behind stakeholder collaboration within tourism, in particular RDT and SET, during the literature review and then turning towards the more specifics through the data gathered in the interviews. In total, twenty interviews were undertaken and took place over Skype with the conversations recorded and afterwards transcribed by the authors. To provide some structure to the interviews, an interview guide consisting of a number of questions relevant to this paper, was devised by the authors. These questions were largely derived from the objectives and research questions behind this paper, as well as the literature. Questions included "how do you collaborate with other stakeholders within the industry?", "what are the benefits of collaboration, in your opinion?" and "how do you believe other stakeholders within the industry can be motivated to participate in a collaborative arrangement?". However, in light of a semi-structured approach to the interviews, the authors did not stick entirely to the interview guide. It merely provided a structure to the conversation.

Selecting the right sampling strategy was critical to the quality of the interviews and the overall validity of this paper. Thus, the link between sample and the sample universe, the right choice of sample strategy, the strength of the sample sourcing approach and the general fit between the research questions and the total sample strategy was crucial (Robinson, 2014). For this

paper, non-probability sampling techniques were utilised as using random sampling was not deemed feasible. This was due to only certain stakeholders being considered for this paper, and not all cases within the sample universe. A combination of convenience sampling, snowball sampling and purposeful sampling techniques were employed. Initially, the authors combined a list of stakeholders to approach, including ones known to the authors. However, during the initial interviews further stakeholders were suggested by the interview participants. In some cases, introductions were made between the authors and new potential interview participants through existing interview participants, resulting in further interviews being conducted.

Silverman (2010) argued that it is key for the researcher to monitor and respond throughout the data collection to ensure that too much data is not gathered, which would constitute an ethical issue in terms of wasting participants' time. Thus, monitoring the levels of saturation was critical. Further, Horn (2009) and Creswell (2007) argue that it is not possible to represent the entire population through these samples and it may therefore be difficult to generalise the results. One could argue, however, that having reached saturation, for example when no new information is being introduced during interviews, as originally opined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), this should therefore also represent the majority of the population. However, there is confusion as to when data saturation has been reached (Francis et al., 2010). This paper, nevertheless, follows the method put forth by Glaser and Strauss (1967). First step in the sampling strategy was defining the sampling universe (Robinson, 2014).

Sampling universe

Smith (2015) identified 252 aerial adventure parks in the US, though little specific information was available on these parks. There are 50 states in the US, all of which regulate or may regulate the industry. However, the exact amount of builders and insurance providers within the US is not clear. The ACCT's Preferred Vendor Member list has 34 US-based Preferred Vendor Members (PVM), constituting builders who are ACCT members and meet certain criteria. As a result, the PVM list acted as a guidance for this paper's sampling strategy. Further, only insurance providers offering insurance for organisations within the AAI were approached. With these facts in mind, the researcher had at least 336 stakeholders, and thus potential participants as industry stakeholders, namely private, public and third sector stakeholders. Some interview participants held multiple roles within the industry. Six Builders, eight operators, one insurance provider, one engineer, six potential/actual regulators and one standard writer were interviewed. Senior managers from the respective organisations were approached to participate due to their knowledge and influence in regards to risk management procedures and industry collaboration. Participants were approached either through email, via phone or through recommendation from an existing interview participant. The states with the most aerial adventure parks were given priority in the hope that they would have more experience and understanding of collaborating with the industry. States represented by the interview participants included Florida, Colorado, North Carolina and Oklahoma. Further, some operations were SMEs, whereas others were major operations or part of larger resorts/brands.

The sampling strategy was further aided by Mitchell et al's (1997) theory of stakeholder identification and salience. This framework recognises all stakeholders, but prioritises certain stakeholders over others. As a result, it was deemed this framework was most suitable for this paper. Stakeholder legitimacy was the attribute used to guide stakeholder identification for the paper. In total, twenty interviews took place. The data gathering was concluded upon reaching data saturation.

Data analysis

Accurate data analysis was key to the overall paper, with the following interpretations developed as the authors made sense of the data at hand as well as the lessons learned throughout the writing of the paper (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Creswell (2007) argued that these interpretations may be based on hunches, insight or intuition formed via the larger meanings gathered from the data. As the case study focused on an industry, but gathered data through speaking to various stakeholders within it, an embedded analysis was employed. This allowed the case study to focus on the industry as a whole, whilst not forgetting the "sub-units", or stakeholders, that ultimately make up the industry (Yin, 2014).

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was used to carry out the analysis of the data to assist in this. According to Boyatzis (1998:1), thematic analysis is 'a way of seeing'. Qualitative research is particularly diverse and thematic analysis provides the foundations to qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Using this approach, researchers are able to see what others might not as patterns or themes are discovered within the data collected (Boyatzis, 1998).

Thematic analysis increases the accuracy and sensitivity of the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the data collected. Creswell (2003) points out that the themes showcase numerous perspectives from participants that can further be supported by the literature. For example, the themes developed for the paper were supported by segments from the interviews (Creswell, 2007). The thematic analysis process involved three stages: deciding on sampling and design issues, developing themes and a code and finally validating and using the code (Boyatzis, 1998). Creswell (2003) further argues that this approach is ideal for designing useful descriptions for case studies. For this paper, an abductive approach was chosen as this involved developing thematic codes from the literature as well as the data collected. Given the interview guides were guided by the literature, it was inevitable that themes in the data collected would also reflect the literature. The subsequent name for the code should relate to the purpose of the research (Saunders et al, 2012). Bearing this in mind, one code was devised, namely stakeholder collaboration. Three themes were further developed as a result: the benefits of stakeholder collaboration, motivating stakeholder collaboration and more data needed.

Results

Theme one – Benefits of stakeholder collaboration

The value of collaboration for the AAI was largely positive among the interview participants. Whether they were actively engaged in collaboration or not it seemed that the participants understood and appreciated how stakeholder collaboration may help them individually and the industry as a whole. It appeared that the main benefit of collaborating was the sharing of knowledge. Participants simultaneously acknowledged the lack of this resource and the reciprocal value of sharing it. Participant 3 commented on the benefits of collaboration and the ensuing learning it brought:

"I think I learned as much, if not more, by going out and secret shopping and reviewing other sites that I can actually provide to anybody else".

Many participants spoke of the co-learning taking place as a result of collaboration, which in turn, they argued, would seemingly improve standard operating procedures. As an example, participant 19 commented :

*"*I think it would help in our standard operating practices. […] *We can learn from it […] that happens in small groups, throughout the industry, but it doesn't happen industry-wide".*

Further, participant 5 spoke of how collaboration helps improve risk management for the individual organisation:

"We increase our knowledge base so we know more and we can statistically analyse what our risks are".

Participant 17 also spoke of how outcomes can turn out greater through collaboration, thereby improving the industry as a whole:

"There is a bar that we're expected to meet. […] when we start to put our minds together […] we end up with something that exceeds the bar and the standard and something that pushes the industry forward".

Participant 16 spoke of the importance of collaboration, particularly for smaller organisations that may not have access to vast amounts of data, such as injury-data:

"I think collaboration is great for people that don't have big data sets."

Further, participant 9 argued that their organisation had improved immensely due to collaborating with others in the industry:

"It helps us […] we're trying to reduce costs and improve throughput, improve staff, staffing model, create a better guest experience, reduce accidents".

Similarly, participant 20 spoke of the improvements collaboration bring, particularly in regards to innovation:

"Collaboration leads to invention. That invention leads to competitiveness and competitiveness always leads to safety. It starts with collaboration".

As such, the data seemed to indicate number of benefits of stakeholder collaboration to both public and private stakeholders. Co-learning and co-understanding appeared some of the main benefits, leading to continuous improvement and development of the activity and the industry as a whole. Further, collaboration also appeared to improve the relationships within the industry, which bodes well for further stakeholder collaboration. Indeed, the interview participants spoke of how collaborating with each other not only improved their own operations, but the industry in general. Thus, bearing the data in mind, it would seem that everyone in the industry benefits from collaborating with each other.

Theme two – Motivating stakeholder collaboration

A number of the interview participants opined how to motivate their fellow stakeholders to collaborate and become more active in the industry. Participant 19, for example, argued for more electronic tools being made available provided by organisations, such as the ACCT or ASTM:

"I think the best way for everybody to collaborate is to, somehow, do it electronically".

Similarly, when asked about virtual conferences in the industry, participant 19 commented:

"One of our major goals […] is to have like a virtual class-room to do webinars, to video-tape some of the presentations".

Nonetheless, Participant 3 spoke of the changing regulatory landscape within the industry and how this might motivate, even force, stakeholders to collaborate:

"[…] it will get to the point where all states are regulating and it will be more and more important for people to collaborate".

On the other hand, participant 1 was less enthusiastic on the prospect of motivating stakeholders to collaborate more:

"[…] there's always going to be people don't want to be friendly or open or sharing of ideas".

Yet, seemingly, some participants felt that the numerous safety standards existing within the industry had split it into several groups and thereby preventing collaboration. Combining the standards, it was argued, would provide stakeholders with motivation to collaborate. For example, participant 5 commented that:

"It would be really nice [if the standards were combined] […] it's a discussion that comes up all the time […] both the ACCT and the PRCA, even though they're so harmonious with ASTM".

Participant 10 also argued that such a combination would be beneficial to the industry:

"I think it is always helpful when there's just one".

Participant 20 also argued for the combination of all standards, arguing that it would help bring the industry closer together, rather than split into different camps. When asked whether it would be beneficial to combine the standards, they replied:

"Most definitely. […] Not a lot of the players are playing in the same sandbox or want to play in the same sandbox".

However, in order for the standards to be combined, leadership seemed critical, according to the data. Indeed, with only a small fraction of the industry apparently engaged in collaboration, the importance of leadership was discussed during the interviews. Participant 19 spoke of the importance of leadership in ensuring buy-in among stakeholders:

"I think it's [leadership] huge. […] it's going to take the big leaders in the industry to buy in so everybody else buys in".

In a similar vein, participant 10 spoke of the need for effective leadership to motivate industry-wide collaboration:

"Oh, I think that it has to start at the top. It has to be, at least, that it's of value right at the top, that's the philosophy".

Likewise, participant 15 also spoke of the need for a top-down approach to encourage collaboration:

"I think, within the industry, it probably comes from the ACCT and has to be pushed from the ACCT downwards".

Another motivational factor of stakeholder collaboration seemed to be openness. Participant 10 spoke of how their open-door policy motivates resource sharing and reciprocity through the creation of trust:

"We're actually going to listen and engage and consider their feedback"

Similarly, participant 18 spoke of their open-door policy and the importance of such an approach in motivating and facilitating collaboration, whilst perhaps also alluding to isolationism existing within the industry:

"[…] having an open-door policy and being honest with each other, that helps a lot. […] When you have that [negative] type attitude, it makes it difficult to exchange information".

Indeed, isolationism was a recurring theme and concern during the data gathering, with some fearful of what it might mean for the industry as a whole. Participant 3, for example, commented:

"We're going to find that, if we're unable to bring a larger portion of those people into these networks […] we're really going to struggle".

Indeed, participant 15 argued that only around 15-20% of the industry was actively collaborating:

"Because, people don't realise the bigger picture. People don't realise exchange of ideas and information is a good thing".

Similarly, participant 7 commented on isolation and argued how it might impact the industry as a result:

"It weakens the industry".

These thoughts were echoed by participant 20, who commented that:

"It's not the 95%, it's the 5% on the outskirts that are going to affect the industry in a negative way".

However, participant 6 proposed that an organisation, like the ACCT, ought to mandate its members to be actively involved. When asked how stakeholders could be motivated to collaborate, they replied:

"That has to be facilitated. […] you have to demand it".

It seemed a lack of trust towards fellow industry stakeholders was an apparent issue within the industry, a critical element of collaboration. Participant 20, for example, argued trust is key, whilst also, seemingly alluding to the shared goal of the industry:

"If they trust you and […] you truly have their backs, you're in a partnership […] everyone's out there for the public to make sure it's a safe operation."

Similarly, participant 9 spoke of the need for trust to motivate stakeholders to collaborate, whilst openness, once again, came up in conversation as did reciprocity:

"Both parties have to trust each other. […] both parties have to have […] true intent to be willing to share and be open […] both parties have to have something to give".

However, participant 14 argued trust had to be earned and required efforts to do so from both parties:

"You have to build trust. You have to earn that trust and that goes both ways."

The importance of having a common goal was also stressed by participants 8 and 18. Participant 8, for example stated:

"I think everybody has to agree on the outcome and that's the main thing. Everybody has to know where we're all headed".

Theme three - More data needed

Many participants seemed to indicate that one of the leading arguments behind collaborating was the lack of data, or knowledge, on the incidents and accidents taking place within the industry. The interview participants seemed to concur the more knowledge transfers taking place, the better equipped each stakeholder would be in regards to managing risks. Participant 4, for example, felt a database was missing:

"Unfortunately, there's no national database for incidences".

Likewise, participant 9 spoke of the need for more data and how the lack thereof is currently hurting the industry:

"I think probably the most valuable thing that this industry could use […] would be true statistical data. […] the industry is functioning in a bubble […] that greatly hurts the industry and its ability to know how to improve safety and/or know how to respond to government regulators".

Further, participant 20 also commented on the lack of incident data being shared, whilst arguing for the industry to become more open:

"Without that [data], it makes it more difficult for people to learn […] they kind of sit on their own little island and they hold all that information in".

Participant 11 also spoke of the need for more data sharing to improve decision-making within the industry. It seemed that the participant was arguing such information would help improve operations throughout the industry:

"[…] if there was a little bit better sharing of information […] about the reality of any incidences […] that would be great".

Likewise, participant 19 called for more sharing of incident data for the benefit of the industry:

"Right now our industry does not share information about incidents and accidents".

Indeed, it would seem that data within the industry is so sparse that some participants lacked awareness of how many states currently regulate the industry. For example, when asked how many states currently regulate the industry, participant 17 replied:

"[…] currently there are two that are pretty involved".

On the other hand, participant 15 replied:

"I think we may be up to 7 [states regulating] now. […] we're still less than 10, I believe".

However, participant 3 had a different number in mind:

"[…] there's only, I think, 13 states right now that regulate zip lines"

According to participant 19, even more states regulate the industry:

"I bet we're up to about 20. I don't know for sure."

As such, it would seem that even basic data is missing within the industry. However, participant 9 argued that the insurance providers have much of this data and, thus, a partnership between the industry and the insurance providers might be beneficial:

"Often times it is insurance companies that hold that data so they can do a better assessment of rates."

Likewise, participant 15, an insurance provider, spoke somewhat positively in favour of such a partnership with the industry:

"Whether we would be willing to turn over data to the ACCT […] it's definitely something that I'd be willing to consider".

Yet, despite the lack of data, the interviews seemed to indicate that data sharing is critical to improve risk management procedures within the industry. Participant 16, for example, spoke of how their internal data sharing has improved their operations:

"Any time there's an injury we get a report and then every year we review those reports. […] As a simple example, […] the kids were peeing their pants all the time. […] the kids were afraid to get out of line and go pee, […] what we did, […] we've got signs up on all of our ropes courses now that you can get out of line and go to the bathroom and get back in line."

The data seemed to indicate that more incident-data sharing is required within the industry, though uncertainty as to how this might take place was evident during the interviews. Nevertheless, the need was recognised. Indeed, the lack of data sharing seemed to indicate the struggles the industry currently faces in regards to stakeholder collaboration as the data would seem to depict an industry where the individual stakeholder is uncomfortable sharing sensitive information for, somewhat, selfish reasons, despite the fact that it may improve both the individual stakeholder and the industry as a whole.

Discussion

The data seemed to indicate that the one critical resource currently lacking within the industry was true statistical data and that this provided the key motivation for collaborating to improve public safety. Indeed, data within the AAI seemed so sparse that interview participants were unsure how many states currently regulate the industry. With states becoming more involved in the industry, a resource-scarce industry may be forced to collaborate to manage potential further regulatory demands, linking to the main argument of this paper in regards to RDT. Jiang and Ritchie (2017), for example argued, RDT posits stakeholders collaborate due to resources being scarce at an individual level, thus needing to collaborate and pool resources together. In the case of this paper, the scarce resource is that of knowledge on incident data. The literature has long recognised the value of knowledge, describing it as the most meaningful resource today (Tzortzaki and Mihiotis, 2012). Essentially, knowledge transfers provide the foundations of collaboration (O'Leary and Vij, 2012) and can lead to innovation and improve operations, and thus lead to industry development (Tidd et al, 2005; Hjalager, 2002). However, it appeared the participants desired "negotiated exchanges" rather than "reciprocal exchanges" as put forth by Coulson et al (2014), thus indicating the desire for a more formal structure, perhaps due to trust issues. This follows along the argument of Trist (1983) that complex domains require more formalised structuring of a collaborative arrangement.

The recognition of mutual dependency within the AAI further links back to Quadrant 1 from figure two, portraying a balanced social exchange for all stakeholders, as stakeholders rely on each other to achieve their common goal of public safety. However, in this case it could also represent a combination of RDT and SET, in light of their recognised dependency to gain access

to a certain resource. Interestingly, this point arguably links to Fyall et al's (2012: 23) argument that 'there is clearly no one best theory of collaboration', ending their study on the notion that collaboration theories could be combined. Figure three, below, highlights how SET and RDT relate. Figure four shows how the two combine to create RRDT. This new theory consists of a combination of SET and RDT and posits that stakeholders depend on each other to accumulate vital resources and are, under these circumstances, therefore motivated to collaborate. The data indicated stakeholders recognised the need for collaborating to get access to knowledge, such as incident data. Such knowledge was further acknowledged to be considerably scarce at an individual level, hence the need for collaboration at industry level. As such, power-levels may also be fairly balanced, with each stakeholder having knowledge to share. An exception to this could be in the event of a new entrant to the industry, who may not possess any knowledge to share and is instead relying on the rest of the industry to gain this knowledge.

Czernek (2013) argue industry-wide stakeholder prevents and solves stakeholder conflicts, combines resources and prevents resources deficiencies of the individual organisation. Issues such as isolationism can thereby be overcome through stakeholder collaboration, a point also made within the data. Seemingly, the data suggested many stakeholders have chosen to exist in isolation due to a lack of trust towards their fellow industry stakeholders. Waayers et al. (2012) recognised trust-building as a critical challenge in motivating stakeholder collaboration. The data appeared to suggest the ACCT or ASTM could provide the leadership, which in turn might motivate stakeholders to participate, thus removing the issue of isolationism within the industry. Further, the pooling of knowledge may result in power imbalances arising as a result of the insurance providers holding the incident data sought by the rest of the industry, placing them in a position of power (Hillman et al, 2009). In this case, leadership becomes critical in reducing power-resource-knowledge imbalances (Jiang and Ritchie, 2017). Such an approach finds support in the literature, arguing that a third-party convener may provide the forum or develop the opportunity for collaboration (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007). Indeed, Jamal and Getz (1995) argued that the convener should have characteristics such as legitimacy, expertise, resources and authority. Conceivably, apart from authority, these are characteristics possessed by the ACCT and, or, the ASTM. Collaborating with the public stakeholder would provide authority. As a result, this is perhaps also where the leadership could come from. Seemingly, by providing the required infrastructure and combining standards, the benefits of collaborating would outweigh the costs, thus encouraging stakeholders to leave the isolationist stance and collaborate, in line with SET (Fyall et al, 2012). Once again, relational and resource dependencies are evidently existing within the AAI, as depicted in the RRDT.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to outline the motivations for industry-wide stakeholder collaboration within the AAI in light of the increasing involvement of the public stakeholder. The industry has experienced incredible growth rates for a number of years, yet due to a number of serious accidents, states are beginning to play an increasingly involved role. Through the literature a number of motivations to collaborate were discovered, particularly in regards to resources and mutual dependency. In turn, the data gathering discovered a

resource-scarce industry with incident/accident data being particularly limited and stakeholders reluctant to share these with each other. Yet, the data also indicated an industry aware of its dependency on its stakeholders, both public and private, to aptly handle risk management procedures. The importance of doing so seemed indisputable with respect to the long-term sustainability of the industry. These discoveries within the data combined with the literature led to the key theoretical contribution of this paper, namely: the development of the RRDT, depicting the key motivations for stakeholders to collaborate within the AAI. Indeed, this paper confirms Fyall et al.'s (2012) argument that RDT and SET could provide the motivations simultaneously for collaborating. This new theory posits that it is not a case of either-or in regards to the motivations behind stakeholder collaboration, but that it is more complex than that. The stakeholders within the AAI lack a critical resource, knowledge, at a collective as well as an individual level. However, this resource is only accessible through collaborating with each other and becomes even more potent when collaborating at a larger scale, such as industry-wide. For that reason, the stakeholders interviewed for this paper recognise a mutual dependency, understanding that they need each other to obtain critical resources. This is particularly the case in light of a recent downturn in consumer confidence due to serious accidents having occurred recently. Thus, not only is the industry resource scarce, but the stakeholders also acknowledge that in order for them to combat this scarcity, they depend on each other.

This paper's contribution to industry can be found in the discovered need for one of the industry associations to take leadership in gathering the public and private stakeholders. Combining the existing standards within the industry would evidently make a concerted effort more effective, by removing the groups currently splitting the industry. However, some limitations exist within this research. First, bearing in mind the sample universe consists of 300+ stakeholders, 20 interviews evidently does not reflect the majority, but merely provides an insight into the industry. In this case, a quantitative study is recommended to reflect the wider opinions on collaboration within the AAI. This paper desired richness in the data, as explained in the methods section, and the authors decided this would not have been achievable through a quantitative study. Secondly, the stakeholders supposedly isolated from the rest of the industry were not included as the ones approached opted out of the study. Unfortunately, this has resulted in their voices not being heard. It would be valuable to learn what their motivations to collaborate are in order to eradicate the isolationism. Finally, due to the limited research currently existing on the AAI, research from similar academic fields, such as adventure tourism, as well as industry-specific research has been used instead. It is possible some academic research is not completely accurate in regards to the AAI as a result. As more research in this area is generated, this will further help establish the validity of future research.

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