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ADVENTURE SPORT TOURISM IN WALES: THE ROLE OF THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ECONOMIC REVITALISATION

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ABSTRACT

Adventure Sport Tourism (AST) represents a dynamic intersection of outdoor recreation, culture, and language, offering both economic opportunities and pathways for cultural preservation. This chapter examines AST in Wales, focusing on its relationship with the Welsh language as a key cultural and economic asset. Drawing on Wales' diverse natural landscapes – from the mountains of Eryri to the coastal trails of Pembrokeshire – the discussion explores how both 'hard' and 'soft' adventure activities can serve as platforms for linguistic and cultural engagement. Despite its rapid growth, AST remains under-researched globally, and particularly within the context of minority or indigenous languages. By analysing the integration of Welsh into tourism services, interpretation, and branding, the chapter identifies AST as a potential driver of linguistic revitalisation and cultural authenticity. It further addresses challenges such as limited Welsh-speaking representation in the sector and perceptions of AST as an exclusive pursuit. Ultimately, the chapter argues that embedding the Welsh language within adventure tourism practices not only strengthens the sector's identity and competitiveness but also supports broader efforts toward linguistic sustainability and cultural resilience, positioning Wales as both an adventure destination and a model for culturally grounded tourism development.

Keywords: Adventure, Sport, Tourism, Wales, Welsh language

1. Introduction

Adventure Sport Tourism (AST) is a growing sector that integrates outdoor recreation with cultural and linguistic experiences, offering unique opportunities for local and global engagement. This chapter explores AST in Wales, focusing on its relationship with the Welsh language as a cultural and economic driver. Wales'

varied natural landscapes, such as the rugged terrains of Eryri and the Pembrokeshire Coast, provide a rich backdrop for both 'hard' and 'soft' adventure activities, attracting diverse participants. However, the sector remains under-researched, especially concerning its role in minority language preservation.

Welsh, as a minority language, faces challenges such as declining speaker numbers and economic pressures in rural areas, compounded by in-migration and the dominance of English. Despite this, AST presents an avenue for linguistic revitalisation by integrating Welsh into tourism services, signage, and guided activities. These efforts contribute to cultural authenticity, enhancing the visitor experience while supporting the broader aim of Welsh language sustainability.

While Adventure Sport Tourism is constantly growing in popularity, it is severely under researched globally but, more specifically, in Wales. AST has been even more scarcely researched in relation to indigenous, minority languages. Many popular AST locations including Wales, New Zealand, and the Andes Region are also home to minority languages (Costa and Chalip, 2005). This chapter aims to explore AST in Wales, assessing the role, impact, and development of Welsh language use within the sector.

This chapter highlights the dual role of Welsh in AST: as a practical tool for tourism engagement and a symbol of modern Welsh identity. It also examines barriers within the sector, including low Welsh-speaking workforce representation and the cultural perceptions of AST as an exclusive activity. Addressing these challenges requires aligning language revitalisation strategies with economic development initiatives.

By situating AST within the context of socio-cultural and linguistic dynamics, this chapter highlights its potential to balance economic growth with cultural preservation. This chapter proposes that promoting Welsh through AST not only bolsters the sector's appeal but also enriches its cultural significance, contributing to Wales' vision of becoming the UK's adventure tourism capital while preserving its linguistic heritage.

2. Adventure Sport Tourism

Adventure Sport Tourism is conceptualised as a distinct category of physical activity that emphasises active participation and is frequently characterised along a continuum of 'soft' to 'hard' adventure experiences (Costa et al. 2005). Varley (2006) articulates this spectrum as ranging from original, unmediated forms of adventure to those that are increasingly commodified and structured for broader participation. Such activities are often underpinned by competitive elements (Costa et al. 2005; Getz and McConnell 2011; Mackenzie, Hodge, and Filep 2020). According to Lynch and Dibben (2016), adventure sport typically encompasses endurance-based competitions situated within challenging natural environments

involving disciplines such as white-water rafting, mountain biking, kayaking, rock climbing, and mountaineering undertaken either individually or in groups. As a result, AST attracts a diverse range of participants, enabling involvement across generations, genders, and abilities, with individuals able to engage at their preferred pace. Traditional perspectives on adventure sport, including adventure sport tourism, have typically framed participation motives around concepts such as risk or thrill-seeking, sensation-seeking traits (Carter 2006; Lyng 2005; Zuckerman 2007), or the pursuit of 'rush' experiences (Buckley 2012).

Higham and Hinch (2018) include adventure and outdoor recreation within their categorisation of sport tourism, even if these forms are often treated as peripheral compared to more codified or spectator-based sports. However, their typology also highlights the growing importance of heritage-oriented sport tourism, where participation is motivated not only by physical engagement but by cultural meaning. This perspective aligns with Ramshaw's (2019) work on heritage sport, which argues that sporting practices themselves can constitute forms of intangible cultural heritage. While UNESCO's (2003) Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage is frequently cited in relation to language, it also recognises traditional games and physical practices as valid domains of cultural transmission. Positioning AST within this framework enables a reframing of adventure tourism in Wales – not merely as recreational consumption of landscape, but as a contemporary medium through which cultural identity, including linguistic heritage, may be enacted and sustained.

Wales is a paradise for thrill-seekers, offering a diverse array of adrenaline-focused adventure sports including: coasteering along the Pembrokeshire Coast, caving within Dan-yr-Ogof caves, and abseiling in the Ogwen Valley. The continuum of 'hard' and 'soft' adventure experiences originating in outdoor recreation literature, is used to depict varying levels of challenge, uncertainty, novelty, and skill required for different activities (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie and Pomfret 2003). On the softer end of the continuum, soft adventures present lower levels of real risk, demand minimal commitment and basic skills, and are often led by experienced guides (Hill 1995). In Wales, examples can be activities such as climbing the famous Pen-Y-Fan mountain in Bannau Brycheiniog, surfing in Eryri, or kayaking in Sir Benfro. Charitable events across Wales such as 'coast-to-coast walks' also fall within the soft AST category. The most recent Welsh Outdoor Recreation Survey stated that walking was the main activity undertaken by nearly 72% of all adults in Wales (Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru 2017). This highlights the significance of accessible outdoor pursuits requiring minimal equipment, skills or facilities. In contrast, rock climbing or caving (3.6%), off-road driving or motorcycling (2.9%), off-road cycling or mountain biking (9.1%) are less popular (*ibid*).

Furthermore, the motives of soft adventurers are often described as encompassing escapism (Ewert 1989), the desire to experience new environments, self-discovery (Lipscombe 1995), novelty, excitement, and social interaction (Pomfret 2006). In contrast, hard adventures are characterised by activities involving higher levels of risk, requiring significant commitment and advanced skills (Rantala, Hallikainen, Ilola and Tuulentie 2018). In the Welsh landscape, hard adventure sports can range from largely English branded events such as The Roc Wales, Red Bull Hardline (downhill mountain bike racing), or abseiling in National Parks. Hard and soft adventure experiences are also differentiated based on the nature of risk involved. Hard adventures are associated with actual or objective risks, while soft adventures are characterised by perceived or subjective risks (Williams and Soutar 2005).

Hungerberg, Gray, Gould, and Stotlar (2016) identified a diverse range of motivational factors influencing adventure sport tourists, encompassing both sport-specific dimensions, such as the pursuit of enhanced self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, and personal autonomy, and broader contextual elements related to destination culture and the potential for social interaction and connectedness. With this in mind, space and place are increasingly recognised as socio-cultural constructions rather than purely physical and visual locations. In the context of AST, the concepts of space and place are crucial for understanding how these activities are not only geographically situated but also socially constructed. For example, Tuan (1977) distinguishes between these concepts noting that "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (p.6). Space and place in adventure sport tourism are complex socio-cultural constructs that are shaped by multiple forces: cultural narratives, historical legacies, economic interests and power relations. An example of this in Wales would be Eryri National Park, located in the north with vast rugged landscapes of mountains, valleys, and lakes. The Park can be characterised by its physical features, e.g., Yr Wyddfa (the highest peak in Wales) and its surface for rock climbing. However, Eryri is more than space; it is a culturally constructed place with deep historical, social, and emotional significance. Adventure sports take place in natural or extreme environments, but these environments are not neutral. They are created and framed by human activity, influenced by tourism industries, local cultures, and the desires and behaviours of tourists themselves. How adventure tourism interacts with these spaces can both enrich and transform the meaning of place, shaping both the identities of tourists and the future of the spaces they seek to explore.

3. Cultural and heritage tourism in Wales

Richards (2018) emphasises the significance of cultural and heritage tourism as a key driver of tourism consumption, contributing to approximately 40% of

global tourism activity. In recent decades, there has been a noticeable increase in demand for authentic cultural experiences, particularly in peripheral regions, along with heightened interest in indigenous and minority communities, especially within the context of sport tourism (Pietikaines and Kelly-Holmes 2011; Richards 2018).

UNESCO (2003) defines Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as encompassing oral traditions and languages, both as distinct cultural artifacts and as essential elements for the transmission of culture. Recent research has increasingly recognised the growing appeal of ICH among cultural tourists, who seek to engage with the living heritage of communities (Seyfi, Hall and Rasoolimanesh 2020; UNWTO 2018).

UNESCO (2003) summarise ICH as comprising:

> the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups, and in some cases, individual recognise as part of their cultural heritage. (p.5)

The UNWTO (2018) further identifies several domains in which ICH manifests, including inter alia oral traditions and languages, which serve as primary mechanisms for the intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage (Lonardi 2022). Additionally, numerous scholars in the field of linguistics emphasise the interdependent relationship between language and culture, noting that language serves as a reflection of population's collective behaviours, identities, values and social norms, as evidenced in its lexicon, grammatical structures, syntax and colloquial expressions (Bradley and Bradley 2019; Fishman 1991). Consequently, minority languages can serve as powerful differentiators within destinations, offering visitors access to unique cultural experiences (Greathouse-Amador 2005; Whitney-Squire 2016).

Historically however, the preservation of cultural heritage, including language, has been more closely aligned with ecotourism and cultural tourism frameworks than with adventure-based models. Ecotourism, with its explicit focus on sustainability, education and local benefit, has often been regarded as the natural home for ICH protection. In contrast, AST has traditionally prioritised physical challenge and landscape engagement over cultural immersion, which may explain why linguistic or heritage dimensions have not been systematically incorporated into AST in Wales. Nonetheless, as adventure and heritage motivations increasingly converge in contemporary tourism, the boundaries between these categories are becoming more permeable.

The impacts of tourism are multifaceted, encompassing both tangible effects such as infrastructural development and intangible consequences including shifts

in cultural practices and language use (Thomas et al. 2017). In the Welsh context, achieving equilibrium between promoting physical attractions and preserving cultural integrity is complex. Tourism may inadvertently marginalise the Welsh language or distil cultural expressions into commodified symbols, thereby undermining authenticity. Therefore, it is essential to advance forms of cultural tourism that educate visitors while safeguarding Welsh traditions from commodification and cultural erosion (Thomas et al. 2017).

4. Yr Iaith Cymraeg: A Cornerstone of Cultural Identity and National Distinction

Research suggests that the intersection of ICH and AST presents several challenges regarding minority languages. The term 'minority language' is generally understood to refer to languages that differ from the dominant or official language of a region, typically spoken by a smaller segment of the population (Council of Europe 1992; Bradley et al. 2019). Wales is recognised by UNESCO (2021) as a minority language region, with Welsh classified as potentially vulnerable. The increasing appeal of linguistic and cultural experiences among tourists is often attributed to globalisation, which fosters a desire for distinctive and 'authentic' encounters that stand in contrast to cultural homogenisation (Butler and Hinch 2007; MacCannell 1997; Urry 1990; Yang 2011). Cohen (2002) further asserts that the rarity of minority languages and remote regions enhances their value as tourist destinations.

As AST continues to evolve in Wales, there is growing recognition that cultural engagement should accompany physical immersion in landscape. Positioning Welsh not simply as a background feature but as an interpretive layer within adventure experiences offers a practical means of reinforcing place identity while supporting national language revitalisation goals. Rather than fundamentally redefining AST, modest integration of language into guiding, instruction and interpretation could enhance authenticity without diminishing the sector's adventure appeal.

The Welsh language is not only regarded as an enriching element of the tourist experience but also serves as a fundamental aspect of Welsh identity. Contemporary research on identity predominantly adopts a constructivist perspective (Coupland, Bishop and Garrett 2006). As Anderson (1983) contends, from this viewpoint, national identity is imagined rather than inherently real, as members of nations cannot personally know all other members. Renan and Thom (1990) further argues that the assertion of nationhood often relies on a shared historical narrative. The Welsh language is intimately tied to a distinct cultural identity; however, the dominance of England and the English language as the prevailing power and medium of communication has contributed to the marginalisation of Welsh, placing its future at risk. While some scholars

emphasise the detrimental effects of diglossia, which has led to a gradual decline in language speakers (Davies 1999; Drakeford and Lynn 1999; van Morgan 2006), others highlight its potential constructive role in fostering a linguistically centred ethnic identity (Madoc-Jones, Parry and Jones 2013). Although the national census in the UK indicates that the percentage of people in Wales with some knowledge of the Welsh language decreased from 80% to 18.7% between 1801 and 1991 (Higgs, Williams and Dorling 2004), it is often asserted that, unlike other Celtic nations such as the Scottish, Cornish or Irish, the Welsh have maintained a strong sense of national identity closely tied to their language. One potential explanation for the differing centrality and vitality of the Welsh language in shaping identity, compared to its Celtic neighbours, lies in the historical trajectory of Wales. After being effectively Anglicised, Wales lacked the distinct legal and administrative structures that Scotland and Ireland retained from England (Piette 1997). As a result, a broader array of identity markers was available and employed in those nations. In contrast, language in Wales has become the most prevalent and defining marker of cultural distinction. This led Livingstone, Spears, Manstead, and Bruder (2009: 759) to note that "a key aspect of Welsh national identity is the importance of the Welsh language. It is the most important dimension defining Welshness, even for those who do not speak it". Given this deep-rooted connection between language and national consciousness, integrating Welsh into adventure tourism practices would not merely enhance visitor experience but actively reinforce the cultural distinctiveness that makes Wales a unique adventure destination.

5. AST in Wales

Rural areas in Wales continue to face significant economic challenges, marked by ongoing economic hardship (Williams 2017) and a concomitant trend of outward migration among young people (Mackie 2018). Employment opportunities in these regions are predominantly concentrated in agriculture and tourism, both of which are characterised by seasonality and job insecurity (Williams 2017). The creation of stable long-term employment opportunities for future generations within these sectors is complicated by the geographically constrained and weather-dependent nature of the work.

Simultaneously, this process highlights the natural beauty and socio-cultural distinctiveness of Wales, which, in turn, fosters in-migration, particularly by monolingual individuals. This influx of newcomers often leads to an increase in property prices, making housing unaffordable for local young people. Consequently, this demographic shift may contribute to a decline in the overall proportion of Welsh speakers within the community (Morris 2010). This

demographic trend presents challenges, as the viability of a minority language or ethnolinguistic identity depends not only on the number of speakers but also on the capacity of the language community to discursively consolidate its internal diversity and to construct a shared, collective identity among its speakers (van Morgan 2006).

Against this backdrop, AST has increasingly been positioned not only as a recreational outlet but as a strategic tool for rural retention and cultural resilience. Unlike passive forms of tourism, AST requires interaction – between guide and participant, visitor and host community, individual and landscape – making it particularly well placed to support both economic and linguistic vitality. If Welsh is embedded naturally within instruction, signage and guiding practice, AST could function as a lived space where language is experienced rather than merely observed.

Despite population growth in the period 1891 to 2021, the number of Welsh speakers fell by 372,389, with a related proportionate decline of 36.6%. By any standard, this is significant, and UNESCO (2010: 11-38) states:

> Welsh, with a strong speaker base and much institutional support… is nevertheless regarded as vulnerable, similar to almost all other minority languages, which can indeed be justified on the basis of continuing English domination in practically all fields of life.

AST activities tend to be more popular and widely known in North Wales than in South Wales due to a combination of natural geography, infrastructure, and historic investment patterns. Outdoor activity providers report that North and Mid Wales benefit from greater institutional support from Visit Wales, while providers in the South are typically smaller, less developed and receive limited promotion (Miller et al. 2023). Data beyond 2019 is sparse, and the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the sector.

Grin (1996) asserts that the economy-language link is inseparable, a view echoed by Crystal (2002), Kaplan and Bauldauf (1997) and Williams (2000). Lewis and McLeod (2021: 260) similarly argue that "economics has always been central to the prospects of minority languages", suggesting that economic participation is itself a form of language support (Royles 2019). This principal underpins Welsh Government policies, which align economic and linguistic vitality within its language and economic strategies.

Within this framework, AST emerges as a sector where economic development and linguistic resilience can be jointly advanced. By incorporating Welsh into guiding, certification or destination branding, AST could transform activity into lived linguistic presence.

6. Efforts to arrest the decline of the Welsh language

The history of the minority language of Wales, its culture, and the experiences intended for adventure sport tourists are important aspects to consider. Although "the history of the Welsh-speaking population in the 20th century is a history of decline" (Baker 1985: 1), the same period witnessed substantial revitalisation efforts. The Welsh language is described as one of the treasures of Wales (Welsh Government 2017). It is widely positioned as central to national identity. The 20th century witnessed significant transformations in the institutions that legitimised standardised forms of the Welsh language (Robert 2010). These changes were driven by social and political developments (Robert 2011). In the 1960s, Thomas (1967: 242) argued that Welsh possessed "a standard spoken language acceptable to all Welsh speakers, whether they be illiterate, whether educated, a language which is familiar to all Welsh speakers and used by them if they are competent in it".

Globally half of languages spoken today are classified as vulnerable or at risk of extinction (European Parliament 2016). Nelde, Strubell, and Williams (1996) observed that the demographic size of a language group does not necessarily guarantee linguistic vitality, noting that some of Europe's largest language groups face threats. Rather, Nelde et al. (1996) identified recognition and support of minority languages by the state and civil society as more critical indicators of long-term viability. Specifically, the degree to which languages are 'legitimated' and 'institutionalised' within nation-states plays a decisive role in their sustainability (May 2020). This principle underpinned the Welsh Language Act 1993.

The Welsh Language Act 1993 established a statutory framework mandating the equal treatment of Welsh and English, marking a pivotal moment in Welsh language advocacy and promotion (Williams 2015). The Act required public bodies to offer services in both English and Welsh, as far as was reasonably practicable (Robert 2011). Similarly, the 1997 referendum on devolution shifted political authority to devolved governance (Williams, 2011) and created the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 (Welsh Government 2011). This formally embedded minority language policy within mainstream governance (Williams 2011). Within this framework, the Welsh language holds official status in Wales (Welsh Government 2011). However, this provision does not guarantee full rights for Welsh speakers and instead focuses on the pragmatic use of the language (Gwynedd Parry 2012). The Welsh Language Measure (2011) also led to the establishment of the Welsh Language Commissioner in 2015. The Commissioner's responsibility is to promote and facilitate Welsh and ensure public bodies comply with standards for its use (Evans 2022).

7. Revitalisation efforts

The role of the Welsh language in contemporary society is multifaceted, shaping Wales' culture, education, and social identity, while also being central to the nation's revitalisation efforts. According to the 2021 Census, 17.8% of the population, or around 538,300 individuals aged three or older, reported being able to speak Welsh (ONS 2022). The highest concentrations occur in North-West Wales, in Gwynedd (64.4%) and Ynys Môn (55.8%), while the lowest rates are recorded in South Wales (Welsh Government 2023). This represents a decrease of 23,700 Welsh speakers since the 2011 Census, largely due to a reduction in young people speaking the language (Welsh Government 2023).

Speaking Welsh has increasingly gained linguistic capital, as it is now valued in the workplace and government sectors (Day 2002; Mann 2007), contributing to the rise of a 'new Welsh-speaking bourgeoisie' (Scourfield and Davies 2005). In response, the Welsh Government launched *Cymraeg 2050*, an ambitious strategy aimed at reaching one million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Welsh Government 2017). Rather than merely increasing speaker numbers, the strategy seeks to embed Welsh across public, social and economic life. The strategy emphasises early education, family language transmission, and the promotion of Welsh in workplaces and businesses. To meet this target, approximately 462,000 more people need to speak, understand, and use Welsh daily by 2050 (ONS 2021). Its success depends on viable Welsh-speaking communities and access to local employment (Welsh Government 2017).

Morris's (2010) research identified three language communities within Wales. The first category is Assimilating Communities, where newcomers are strongly encouraged to adopt the language. The second category comprises Distinctive Language Group Communities, where Welsh and English-speaking populations coexist with limited interaction (Mackie 2018). The final classification is Assimilated Communities, where English is treated as the normative language. These communities are particularly affected by in-migration, with nearly all such areas in Wales experiencing a recent influx of new residents (Morris 2010). According to Stats Wales (2022), areas with the biggest migration from the resr of the UK into Wales tend to be the South and rural areas. Outward youth migration is frequently offset by inward retirement migration. This dynamic is likely to result in a reversal of those who are most and least economically active, and arguably, of those most and least influential in shaping the social and cultural future of the community. The 'Brain Drain' plays a significant part in this, with Wales adversely affected due to the diaspora of young people for decades (Nation Cymru 2024). Such demographic churn presents both economic and linguistic challenges. This creates an issue of engagement with the Welsh language among migrants in the areas where

Adventure Sports take place. Therefore, there are ongoing tensions around issues of implementation, role and impact of Welsh within this sector.

8. Welsh language within the AST sector

The Welsh language can play an increasingly important role in the expanding AST sector. As outdoor tourism grows, driven by the country's landscapes, the Welsh language has the potential to support both cultural preservation and revitalisation efforts. Tourism contributes £2.4 billion to Wales' GDP (UK Parliament 2023) and the Welsh Government aims to position Wales as the UK's leading 'Adventure Tourism' brand, while promoting outdoor recreation, health and wellbeing (Business Wales 2016). Wales attracts visitors through its landscapes as well as its rich cultural heritage (Pritchard and Morgan 2001). The Wales Tourism Board has strategically promoted Welsh language and culture as a marketing asset, appealing to visitors in search of authentic and distinctive experiences (Wales Tourism Board 1994; Pritchard and Morgan 1996; Pritchard and Morgan 1998). Notably, 84% of international tourists reported it was essential that their trip had a distinctly Welsh character, with 59% wanting to hear the Welsh language (Welsh Government 2021).

Welsh is now increasingly used in materials, such as signage, maps, websites, and guided tours. Some guides incorporate Welsh terminology into instruction, embedding language in experience. Yet within the UK market, marketing continues to prioritise landscape over language, suggesting cultural integration remains uneven.

Research shows that minority languages are perceived as authentic by visitors (Bruner 2001; Dlaske 2014; Heller, Jaworski and Thurlow 2014; Moriarty 2015; Pietikäinen 2010; Pietikäinen 2015) whether expressed verbally or symbolically. In Wales, this may be through the use of Y Ddraig Goch (the red dragon), a daffodil, the colours red and green, or love spoons in the presentation of place. Symbolically, the presence of Welsh through these ways in the adventure sports tourism ecosystem contributes to a broader cultural dialogue. Symbolically, Welsh in AST signals a living identity rather than a symbolic or artefactual one.

The Welsh language not only plays a major role for participants, but instructors too. In Wales, the AST sector, contributes up to 6% of the Welsh economy and supports 31,278 jobs (WATO 2023). A study conducted by Muskett (2019) found that, overall, the proportion of Welsh-speaking staff employed by the organisations across Wales was relatively low, with very few AST providers offering activity sessions conducted in Welsh. A research project conducted by Thomas (2013, cited in Muskett, 2019) revealed that only 13% of the instructional workforce in Wales were able to speak Welsh. This is particularly notable in North West Wales, where higher levels of migration have contributed to a predominance of non-Welsh instructors. Given the low levels of both Welsh provision (Davies 2003; Thomas

2013, as cited in Muskett, 2019) and participation (NRW 2017) in outdoor activities, it is hypothesised that significant improvements in either participation or provision cannot be achieved independently of one another. This hypothesis aligns with the Cultural Vicious Circle theory proposed by Thomas (2013, cited in Muskett, 2019), which suggests that a cultural cycle exists in outdoor activities where instructors outside the local community, tourist-oriented activities, high costs, and limited Welsh-language provision contribute to the perception that outdoor activities are predominantly middle-class and English-speaking. This cycle helps explain the low rates of local Welsh-speaking outdoor instructors and limited grassroots participation. However, despite the potential existence of such a cultural barrier, Davies (2003) and Thomas (2013, as cited in Muskett, 2019) also highlight positive trends, such as an increase in Welsh provision among instructional staff between 2003 and 2013, as well as a large rise in the number of outdoor activity clubs during the same period.

AST offers an avenue for the Welsh language to be perceived as modern, dynamic, and relevant in the 21st century, helping to shift perceptions away from viewing Welsh as a heritage language and instead portraying it as a language that continues to thrive in contemporary settings. Through these interactions, AST plays a crucial role in the revitalisation of the Welsh language, making it more visible, accessible, and relevant to both locals and tourists. The sector is not only a significant economic driver for Wales but also an important platform for cultural and linguistic sustainability, contributing to the broader movement of language revitalisation in the region.

9. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the intricate relationship between the Welsh language, AST, and efforts towards revitalisation, framed through the historical context of linguistic change in Wales. Yet, this connection does not emerge organically; adventure tourism has traditionally been structured around landscape and adrenaline, rather than heritage or language. Consequently, AST's contribution to language revitalisation is not inherent but conditional, shaped by rural economic fragility, demographic change and the perception of AST as socially exclusive or English-speaking. Addressing these barriers requires policy frameworks which actively bind language, culture, and tourism practice.

The role of the Welsh language within AST is therefore multifaceted. Practically, bilingual instruction and linguistic visibility enhance visitor experience. Symbolically, Welsh in AST spaces reframes the language as current and capable, rather than historical and ornamental. Nevertheless, low representation of Welsh-speaking instructors and inconsistent use of Welsh demonstrates that linguistic inclusion cannot be assumed – it must be designed.

AST can contribute significantly to revitalisation when language is embedded not as a surface-level marker but as a working language of instruction, risk communication and storytelling. For this to occur, Welsh-speaking communities must have influence over provision, supported through training pathways, youth access schemes and recruitment policies that recognise linguistic competence as cultural expertise. Equally, sector-wide training and marketing strategies must treat Welsh not as optional branding but as operational infrastructure.

As Wales seeks recognition as the UK's adventure tourism capital, aligning AST with linguistic and cultural revitalisation presents both an economic strategy and a cultural obligation. If Welsh is present only on signage and souvenirs, AST risks reproducing extractive models that separate landscape from the people who are part of it. By shifting instruction, leadership and representation toward a Welsh-speaking provision, adventure can become not only landscape-based, but language-led.

By harnessing the synergy between language policy, adventure sports and community development, Wales has the opportunity to pioneer a model of tourism founded not only on scenic spectacle, but on the everyday presence of Welsh as a lived language. A genuine Welsh form of AST would not simply use the landscape as a backdrop but, it would sound Welsh, feel Welsh and be led by those whose lives are rooted in that landscape. When tourists learn climbing commands in Welsh, hear placenames explained by local instructors, or encounter bilingual trail markers, they participate in more than leisure; they take part in cultural transmission. Expanding Welsh-language training within instructor qualifications, subsidising local youth access schemes and recognising linguistic ability as a form of professional expertise would help shift adventure from being delivered *to* communities to being delivered *by* them. This is not a call for exclusion, but for influence: AST in Wales should be an invitation to visitors to enter a living linguistic ecosystem on its own terms.

Further research must therefore examine not only where Welsh is currently visible within AST, but where it is absent – and why. The central question moving forward is not whether adventure sport tourism *could* support language revitalisation, but whether the sector is willing to redefine adventure itself as something spoken, shared and sustained through the language of the land.

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