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2009

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Publication details

Post-print of: Lamont, MJ 2009, 'Reinventing the wheel: a definitional discussion of bicycle tourism', *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 5-23.
The publisher's version of this article is available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14775080902847363

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Reinventing the Wheel: A Definitional Discussion of Bicycle Tourism

Abstract

The relationship between cycling and tourism is increasingly attracting scholarly attention as cycling experiences a resurgence as a recreational, leisure and sporting activity. Whilst several attempts at defining bicycle tourism exist, current literature is fragmented by the use of inconsistent parameters in characterising bicycle tourists. Disparity also exists regarding the range of cycling activities and participation characteristics that distinguish bicycle tourists from other tourists. At the same time, some potentially significant tourism markets related to cycling have been overlooked or unreasonably excluded from existing definitions. This paper critically examines existing definitions and proposes a technical definition of bicycle tourism aimed at facilitating more rigorous and consistent statistical measurements regarding this form of tourism. Implications of the parameters used in the proposed definition are also discussed throughout the paper.

Keywords

Bicycle tourism, cycling, definition, leisure, recreation

Introduction & Background

During the 1890s the bicycle represented a means of independent transport for most societal classes prior to the mass-production of motor vehicles. Cycling was extremely popular until around 1920, when motor cars became affordable to the middle-to-upper classes, then gradually fell from prominence as motorised travel was embraced. The "bicycle boom" left a legacy in the form of touring organisations such as the League of American Wheelmen, and the Cyclists' Touring Club in the United Kingdom, whom continue to lobby for high quality cycling infrastructure and increased bicycle usage (Tobin, 1974).

Today, however, evidence is emerging that suggests cycling for leisure, recreation and tourism is undergoing resurgence. Ritchie (1998) has pointed to data indicating a boom in bicycle sales across Europe, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, whilst Australian government sources demonstrate an increase in cycling for leisure and recreation between 1997 and 2006 (Department of Communications, Information Technology & the Arts 2006) . The development of infrastructure to support leisure and recreational cycling, and to stimulate tourism, is becoming increasingly prevalent as planners and policy-makers recognise the potential for cycling to contribute to economic revitalisation, particularly in rural communities (Ritchie & Hall, 1999). Further, Faulks, Ritchie and Fluker (2006) have noted the increasing prevalence of organised, participatory cycling events in Australia, which often generate substantial economic benefits for host communities, of which the *New South Wales Big Ride* and *Great Victorian Bike Ride* are examples.

Numerous initiatives aimed at stimulating independent cycling holidays exist. Such initiatives generally involve the construction of infrastructure coupled with marketing campaigns. The *National Cycle Network* in the United Kingdom is an initiative of British sustainable transport charity, Sustrans. The vision of this project is to create a nation-wide, high-quality cycling network catering for commuters, recreational cyclists, as well as encouraging tourism (Sustrans, 2007). Similar to the National Cycle Network, *Eurovelo* is an initiative of the European Cyclists' Federation that aims to provide safe, high-quality cycling routes across the continent, minimising interaction with motor vehicles. In excess of 60,000km of routes are planned, and although local commuters are the primary focus of Eurovelo, tourism is a consideration as the route will ultimately enable cyclists to ride across the continent unimpeded (European Cyclists' Federation, 2007).

The potential of cycling-related tourism to contribute to economic development in rural Australia is gradually being recognised. For example, the *Munda Biddi Trail* in Western Australia meanders over 900km through a mostly forest setting and through numerous small towns. The trail is constructed from old forest tracks and disused railway corridors. Most visitors reportedly spend around three days cycling on the trail, with trail usage stimulating demand for overnight accommodation, bicycle hire, transport, and food and beverage supplies in many of the towns the route passes through (Munda Biddi Foundation, 2005).

Despite the increasing prevalence of supply initiatives and demand for bicycle tourism products, scholarly inquiry into the relationship between cycling and tourism is scarce. There has been little discussion regarding characteristics that distinguish bicycle tourists from other tourists, resulting in questionable measurements regarding the size of the bicycle tourism market, as well as potentially inaccurate statistical measurements regarding this form of tourism. Stimulating debate regarding technical parameters that could be used to define bicycle tourism may contribute to more rigorous research into market size, valuation, and benefits and impacts on host communities attributable to bicycle tourism. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to contribute a technical definition, which may assist in clarifying the range and nature of activities that can be considered forms of bicycle tourism, as well as suggesting parameters for researchers in distinguishing bicycle tourists from other tourists.

Definitions & Statistics Regarding Tourism

When undertaking research, the phenomenon under investigation must be clearly defined. Dredge and Jenkins (2007: 3) suggest that ‘definitions clarify what it is we are looking at’. Further, embedded concepts in definitions must have unambiguous meanings so as to clearly articulate what is being measured (Neuman, 2006). Technical definitions are precise, unambiguous delineations of phenomena under investigation and serve in prescribing to researchers what is to be included and excluded. In the context of tourism research, technical definitions facilitate the collection of statistics such as arrivals, departures, and measuring impacts and benefits attributable to tourism (Leiper, 2004). Burkart and Medlik (1981) argued that tourism statistics are necessary for three reasons.

Firstly, to establish the value and significance of tourism to destinations; secondly, to aid in planning and demand for infrastructure and services to cater for the needs of tourists (such as airports, hotels and transport services); and thirdly, to contribute to the compilation of effective marketing strategies.

The application of consistent definitions facilitates comparison of research outcomes, and uniformity between different studies investigating a given phenomenon (Burkart & Medlik, 1981; Leiper, 2004). However, the application of inconsistent definitions in tourism research appears widespread. Mason (2004: 15) has noted that 'one of the key problems in assessing the scale, importance and hence impacts of tourism is the inconsistency and incompatibility of figures collected'. Hence, it is often impossible to compare facts collected regarding tourism between different countries, nor between jurisdictions within individual countries. As will be demonstrated later in this paper, this is also true of existing studies addressing cycling-related tourism.

The outcomes of many studies addressing cycling and tourism cannot be compared due to the application of inconsistent definitions. Whilst this is problematic from a uniformity perspective, a broader dilemma exists in that existing definitions are not concurrent regarding the characteristics that distinguish bicycle tourists from other tourists. A similar situation exists in the case of ecotourism, of which various authors have attempted to operationalise this concept (Blamey, 1997; Bottrill and Pearce, 1995; Ballantine & Eagles, 1994). Blamey (1997) has argued that a technical definition of ecotourism is needed if this market is to be understood in terms of its size, value, benefits, impacts, and

to enable segmentation, given ecotourism's topical nature in government, academic, and industry circles in recent times.

The same may be said for cycling-related tourism given statements by various groups regarding the supposedly environmentally sustainable qualities of bicycle tourism (Rural City of Wangaratta, Alpine Shire & Indigo Shire, 2008; Sustrans, 1999), and the role bicycle tourism may play in revitalising rural economies (Ritchie & Hall, 1999). There is a need for a clear definition of bicycle tourism under which research may take place to validate such claims.

Furthermore, some existing definitions of bicycle tourism or bicycle tourists exclude or overlook a range of cycling-related activities with links to tourism, such as spectators at cycle racing events, and persons who travel to participate in cycle racing events. Without a clear understanding of what distinguishes bicycle tourists from other tourists, it is impossible to accurately measure the size, economic value, and benefits and impacts of the bicycle tourism market. It is also necessary to place boundaries around the range of activities that may be considered forms of bicycle tourism to enable segmentation of the market. Segmentation is of particular importance to operators, planners and policy-makers, as each segment could possess unique needs which have to be catered for.

Failure to precisely define the phenomenon under investigation may result in ambiguous interpretations of research outcomes, or misleading conclusions. In the case of bicycle tourism, the use of slovenly definitions may lead to the falsification, exaggeration, or

understatement of statistical measurements due to the inclusion of incidental participants, and/or the exclusion of groups whose travel bears strong links with cycling. Ambiguous interpretation of research outcomes and/or false conclusions may lead to misguided decision-making regarding infrastructure provision, fiscal support, or the management of bicycle tourism initiatives. Therefore, the first aim of this paper is to collate and critically examine existing definitions of bicycle tourism and the embedded parameters which make up existing definitions. The second aim is to propose a technical definition aimed at facilitating more coherent and comparable research into the relationship between cycling and tourism. In doing so, a case for the inclusion of cyclists whom travel to compete in cycle races, and also persons who travel to observe cycling events as bicycle tourists, is put forward.

Bicycle Tourism: A Critical Review of Existing Definitions

In developing a scoping paper for the development potential of bicycle tourism in Britain, Lumsdon (1996) described bicycle tourism as a spectrum of cycling activities, with an emphasis on cycling as a fundamental component of a journey outside an individual's immediate home region:

> Recreational cycling activities ranging from a day or part-day casual outing to a long distance touring holiday. The fundamental ingredient is that cycling is perceived by the visitor as an integral part of an excursion or holiday, i.e. a positive way of enhancing leisure time (Lumsdon, 1996: 27).

A concern with Lumsdon's definition is the application of the concepts "recreation" and "leisure", as delimiting the study of bicycle tourism to recreational cycling activities may be problematic. When the conceptual meaning of recreation is considered, this definition would restrict the analysis of bicycle tourism only to cycling activities engaged in for the purpose of mental and/or physical rejuvenation. Distinguishing between participating in bicycle tourism for recreation or leisure is dependent upon an individual's motivation(s) for doing so. As will be discussed later, bicycle tourism may serve recreational or leisure purposes. Therefore, defining bicycle tourism as a strictly recreational phenomenon may be overly restrictive.

Simonsen and Jorgenson's (1998) study of bicycle tourists in Denmark was one of the first studies to develop demographic and travel profiles of bicycle tourists. They adopted an original interpretation of bicycle tourists, whom were defined as:

> A person of any nationality, who at some stage or other during his or her holiday uses the bicycle as a mode of transportation, and to whom cycling is an important part of this holiday. Short trips to the 'corner shop', etc. are not included (Simonsen & Jorgenson, 1998: 20).

The clause 'who at some stage or other during his or her holiday uses the bicycle as a mode of transportation' may be too broad to adequately encapsulate this specialised market. Under Simonsen and Jorgenson's definition, a person who uses a hire bicycle to briefly explore the surrounds of a resort they are staying at overnight, may be considered a bicycle tourist. This is problematic as statistical measurements may be unduly inflated

by the inclusion of persons whom may be more aptly described as general interest tourists.

Ritchie's (1999) doctoral dissertation investigated the travel patterns, motivations, demographics, and perceptions of bicycle tourists on the South Island of New Zealand. Ritchie proposed the following definition of independent (or "nomadic") bicycle tourists:

> A person who is away from their home town or country for a period not less than 24 hours or one night, for the purpose of a vacation or holiday, and for whom using a bicycle as a mode of transport during this time away is an integral part of their holiday or vacation. This vacation may be independently organised or part of a commercial tour and may include the use of transport support services and any type of formal and/or informal accommodation (Ritchie, 1998: 568-569).

Ritchie broadened the scope for studying bicycle tourism because his definition was the first to acknowledge commercially organised tours. Whilst Ritchie's definition was aimed at a specific segment (independent bicycle tourists), it is arguably too restrictive for defining bicycle tourism as a phenomenon. The temporal parameter, that is, a person must be away from their home region for a period exceeding twenty-four hours, excludes persons who travel to engage in cycling activities on a day trip basis. Although the inclusion of day trips is a contentious issue in defining tourism per se, the exclusion of day trips in Ritchie's definition omits from the study of bicycle tourism, day trips related to cycling, including single-day cycling events, which may yield significant economic benefits to host communities (Faulks et al., 2006).

Sustainable transport charity, Sustrans, are a driving force in the promotion of walking and cycling throughout the United Kingdom. Sustrans have produced a number of publications advocating sustainable transport options, including bicycle tourism. For the purposes of their research, Sustrans defined bicycle tourism as:

> Recreational visits, either overnight or day visits away from home, which involve leisure cycling as a fundamental and significant part of the visit (Sustrans, 1999: 1).

The Sustrans definition is useful because it recognises cycling as a fundamental component of a bicycle tourism trip. However, it would appear that the conceptual definitions of recreation and leisure have not been given due consideration. As will be discussed later, leisure and recreation (whilst closely related), exhibit subtle conceptual differences. Sustrans do not specify the context in which recreation and leisure apply in their definition, making for ambiguous interpretations of the phenomenon. Questions may be asked such as, are persons who travel to compete in bicycle races considered leisure cyclists? Does the term “leisure” imply active or passive participation? The Sustrans definition of bicycle tourism is not precise enough as a technical definition under which statistical measurements related to bicycle tourism can be collected.

A study by Roy Morgan Research (2006) represents the first attempt at quantifying the size and scope of the bicycle tourism market in Australia. The research was commissioned by the statutory tourism body, Tourism Australia, and was undertaken using yet another original definition:

> ‘Cycle tourists’ are defined as Australians aged 14+ who have taken a holiday in the last 12 months and who rode a bicycle as a form of transport on their last holiday (Roy Morgan Research, 2006: Online).

In terms of active participation, this definition contains the broadest parameters for defining bicycle tourism of existing definitions. However, the definition is arguably flawed because it fails to stipulate cycling as an integral component for a journey, an important parameter put forward by prominent authors in the field (Lumsdon, 1996; Ritchie, 1998; Simonsen & Jorgenson, 1998). Further, this definition specifies a bicycle tourist as any person who rode a bicycle for any purpose on their last holiday. There is great scope for inflation of figures through the inclusion of incidental participants in studies undertaken using the Roy Morgan definition. At the same time, this definition is limited by not considering events, spectators at events, and competitive participation in cycle racing.

Finally, the *South Australian Cycle Tourism Strategy* is a policy document developed by the South Australian Tourism Commission (2005). Its purpose is primarily to facilitate the leveraging of tourism benefits from the state’s portfolio of cycling events, themed cycling trails, and other tourism niche markets that could be bundled with cycling to create value-added products (for example, with wine tourism products). The strategy adopted a broad definition, presumably to facilitate the leveraging of tourism from the widest spectrum of cycling activities possible, which may result in more favourable measures of benefits attributable to cycling-related tourism:

> Cycle tourism visits are considered to be for the purpose of holidays, recreation, pleasure, or sport; and to include either overnight stays or day trips to other tourism regions which the visitor either engages in active cycling, or is a spectator at a cycling event (South Australian Tourism Commission, 2005: 3).

The South Australian definition acknowledges that bicycle tourism may extend to competitive cycling, and is the first to include spectators at cycling events. However, this definition is arguably flawed because it stipulates that a bicycle tourism trip should be characterised by the tourist either engaging 'in active cycling, or is a spectator at a cycling event'. As with several existing definitions, this parameter also allows for the inclusion of persons whom are not special interest tourists, but are general interest tourists, leading to exaggerated measures of the tourism impacts and benefits attributable to bicycle tourism. This definition also nominates recreation as a delimiting concept, restricting the study of bicycle tourism only to activities where participants' motivations are linked with mental and/or physical rejuvenation.

Having discussed the merits and limitations of existing definitions of bicycle tourism, several parameters were identified which may or may not be appropriate in compiling a technical definition for research into to this form of tourism. Attention is now paid to critically examining the appropriateness of such themes, and the proposition of a new technical definition of bicycle tourism.

Critiquing Existing Delimiting Concepts for Defining Bicycle Tourism

As can be drawn from the previous discussion, parameters that characterise bicycle tourism include 1) that the cycling experience takes place away from a person's home region; 2) bicycle tourism may extend to single-day or multi-day trip durations; 3) the nature of the cycling activity is non-competitive; 4) cycling should be the main purpose of the trip; 5) participation in cycling occurs only in an active context, and 6) bicycle tourism is a form of recreation or leisure. These parameters are now scrutinised, with the view to determining their suitability for inclusion in a technical definition of bicycle tourism.

The cycling experience should take place outside a person's home region

Determining the suitability of this parameter for defining bicycle tourism requires an examination of the operative concept, *tourism*. No single definition of tourism is widely accepted (Leiper, 2004). Tribe (1999: 75) noted that this has implications for research in that 'the valuation of tourism will vary greatly according to what is included and excluded'. However, a common thread exists amongst many definitions of tourism in that tourism is characterised by a person's temporary departure from their home region. Smith (1989: 1) postulated a tourist as 'a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home', while Mathieson and Wall (1982: 1) defined tourism as 'the temporary movement to destinations outside the normal home and workplace'. Further, the definition adopted by the World Tourism Organization positions tourists as 'persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment' (World Tourism Organization, 2007, Online).

Given the importance placed upon a person's temporary departure from their home region to be considered a tourist, it would seem prudent to define bicycle tourists similarly. However, "away from their home region" is a concept not easily operationalised. According to Smith (1999), this concept may be operationalised in four ways. Firstly, by allowing tourists to define it themselves; secondly, using trip frequency; thirdly, using administrative boundaries; and finally, using distance thesholds. Smith (1999: 139) advocated distance thresholds as being preferable because they provide an objective parameter for defining tourists, and further noted that 'most statistical agencies use a distance criterion in compiling tourism statistics'. However, an issue with the use of distance thresholds is determining an appropriate operational distance.

Because of variations in distance thresholds adopted in different countries and jurisdictions, it may be prudent to adopt a parameter congruent with distance thresholds used by statutory statistical agencies in a given country or jurisdiction when undertaking research into bicycle tourism. Doing so would allow valid comparison of measures relating to bicycle tourism with other forms of tourism in that country or jurisdiction. For example, studies addressing bicycle tourism in Australia could adopt a 40 kilometre distance threshold for overnight visitors, and a minimum 50 kilometre round trip and minimum four hour period away from home for day trips. Doing so would permit comparisons of data with information derived through the National Visitor Survey (Tourism Research Australia, 2007), as Blamey (1997) suggested in defining ecotourism visits in Australia. Similarly, Canadian studies might adopt an 80 kilometre distance

threshold for overnight bicycle tourists, consistent with that used by Canadian statutory tourism agencies (Smith, 1999).

Given that bicycle tourism occurs away from tourists' home regions, it is implicit that cycling journeys of a utility nature such as cycling to work, to the local shops, to school/university, or to run errands, are not considered forms of bicycle tourism (Lumsdon, 1996; Ritchie, 1998; Simonsen & Jorgenson, 1998). This exclusion is also prudent because the use of a bicycle in this context is not undertaken for the purposes of leisure or recreation, an important characteristic of bicycle tourism according to several authors (Ritchie, 1998; Simonsen & Jorgenson, 1998; Lumsdon 1996).

Bicycle tourism may be extend to single-day or multi-day trip durations

The difficulty with defining tourism per se, and thus in defining bicycle tourism, is exacerbated by the debate of whether trips not incorporating a minimum 24 hours duration, or one night away from home, are included. Leiper (2004) argued for the study of persons who are away from their home region for less than one night to be distinct from "tourists" whose journey does incorporate at least one night away from home. He suggests they be treated as two separate phenomena: *tourists* and *excursionists*, on the basis that statistics would be biased towards the excursionist (or day trip market), which are, anecdotally, more prevalent than trips involving overnight stays.

Hall (2003: 13) suggested, however, that 'the inclusion of day trips makes the distinction between recreation and tourism even more arbitrary', and noted that it is becoming increasingly common for tourism to be referred to in light of all visitor activities,

including overnight and excursionist markets (United Nations, 1995, in Hall, 2003). When examining the existing literature on bicycle tourism, it appears that this observation holds true in that excursionists and tourists have been studied mostly on an interchangeable basis.

A report into the scope and significance of bicycle tourism in Australia (Faulks et al., 2006) acknowledged that excursionists and tourists are commonly conceptualised as two separate phenomena, but nevertheless went on to discuss a range of single-day events under the umbrella term of bicycle tourism. Lumsdon (2000), Downward and Lumsdon (2001) and Bull (2006) are examples of studies which have treated bicycle tourism as a hybrid of overnight and same-day visitors, whilst Cope, Doxford and Hill's (1998) monitoring study of "tourism" along a section of the National Cycle Network included same-day and overnight cyclists. Only Ritchie (1998) has made a distinction between bicycle tourists and excursionists, which he termed "recreational cyclists" and defined as:

> A person involved in any recreational cycling activity or excursion, which is undertaken within a time period not longer than 24 hours or one night from their home destination, and for whom cycling is seen as a positive way of using leisure time (Ritchie, 1998: 569).

However, Ritchie (1999: 13) advocated that as a market, bicycle tourism 'should be defined as any activities, whether cycling or non-cycling, that are undertaken by those who are on vacation overnight, and those who are undertaking an excursion for whom the bicycle is an integral part of their trip'. To propose a technical definition conforming to the notion of tourism incorporating a mandatory overnight stay would change the

landscape of research into bicycle tourism. Such a definition would necessitate a distinction between “bicycle tourism” and a separate phenomenon involving cycling day visits, which a majority of previous researchers and practitioners appear to have been reluctant to do hitherto.

The definition proposed in this paper advocates the inclusion of both overnight and same-day visitors for whom cycling is of the main purpose for their journey. However, it would be prudent for researchers to provide separate statistics for same-day and overnight bicycle tourism trips to avoid ambiguous interpretation of research outcomes. Doing so would allow for evaluations of the characteristics of day trip and overnight bicycle tourism trips, whilst at the same time reducing ambiguity in interpreting research outcomes. Separate reporting of day trip and overnight bicycle tourism visits would enable planners and policy makers to evaluate the worth of each segment in their own right. For example, if overnight bicycle tourism trips are found to be of higher economic yield than day trip visits in a given jurisdiction, efforts could be made to encourage potential day trip visitors to stay one or more nights, enhancing the economic benefits attributable to bicycle tourism in that area.

The nature of cycling should be non-competitive

According to Simonsen and Jorgenson (1998:21) cyclists ‘to whom bike-racing is the main feature of their visit … are not considered cycling tourists but sports tourists as the main purpose of the holiday is racing’. As such, definitions of bicycle tourists proposed by Simonsen and Jorgenson (1998) and Ritchie (1998) have excluded persons who travel

to compete in bicycle races. Simonsen and Jorgenson's rationale in excluding racing cyclists on the basis that such travellers are sports tourists is, however, questionable.

Sport is defined by the Council of Europe (1992: 1) as 'all forms of physical activity, which through casual or organised participation, aims at improving physical fitness and mental well being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels'. When considering bicycle touring and bicycle racing, both arguably conform to the European definition of sport. Bicycle touring is a form of physical activity based around casual participation, which has been proven to contribute to the improvement of physical and mental well being (Hillman, Boyd, & Tuxworth, 1999), of which social interaction with other cyclists is of importance to participants (Downward & Lumsdon, 2001). Bicycle racing similarly fits into the European definition of sport, being a form of physical activity that improves physical fitness, and in which participants can strive to obtain results in competitive situations.

Definitions of sport tourism also conflict with Simonsen and Jorgenson's (1998) differentiation between racing cyclists and bicycle tourists. For example, Standeven and DeKnop (1999: 12) define sport tourism as:

> All forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organised way for noncommercial or business/commercial reasons, that necessitate travel away from home and work locality.

Standeven and DeKnop (1999) acknowledge both competitive and non-competitive participation in sports tourism. Therefore, excluding persons who travel for the purpose of competing in bicycle races from the study of bicycle tourism, on the basis that they are sport tourists, is erroneous when it is clear that both bicycle tourists and racing cyclists satisfy definitions of both sport and sport tourism. Persons who travel to compete in bicycle races should be included in a definition of bicycle tourism because they are engaging in tourism, and because cycling is the main purpose for their journey, albeit with the nature of the cycling activity varying from that of non-competitive bicycle tourists.

Bull (2006) recently argued for the recognition of racing cyclists as a potentially significant segment of the bicycle tourism market. He found that it is common for racing cyclists to undertake frequent short trips in pursuing their sport, thereby establishing a direct link between cycle racing and tourism. Utilising case study data of a cycle racing club in England, Bull (2006) found that the mean number of day trips undertaken by club members per annum to participate in competitions was 36.4, whilst the mean number of overnight trips was 8.2. He noted that the cyclists studied exhibited considerable expenditure in restaurants, cafes and pubs, supermarkets, car parks, and accommodation properties, which may generate economic benefits for host communities through the presence of such tourists.

Recognising competitive cyclists as bicycle tourists would provide scope for analyses such as the measurement of tourism benefits to host communities attributable to persons

who have travelled to participate in cycle racing events. A broader implication exists for determining the size and value of the bicycle tourism market, in that much existing research has excluded cyclists who travel to compete in cycle racing events. For example, Sustrans' (1999) valuation of bicycle tourism in the United Kingdom at £635 million per annum may be an under-valuation of this market, given the exclusion of racing cyclists in their calculations.

It should also be kept in mind that competitive cycling is not restricted to racing on the open road, but also extends to velodrome (or "track") events, mountain bike competitions, and also bicycle motor-cross (BMX). Cycle racing also exists at numerous levels of participation ranging from amateur club racers, through to international professional cyclists that travel the world competing in major cycle racing events.

A further consideration which could affect the size of the bicycle tourism market is whether competitors in triathlon events (swimming, cycling and running) should be considered bicycle tourists. Because cycling represents an essential component of such events, one could argue for the inclusion of triathletes who travel to compete, due to the integral role cycling plays in triathlons. Further, travel by triathletes is potentially significant. For example, there were 96,000 registered members of triathlon's governing body in the US as at July 2007, excluding participants who compete in events but whom are not members of USA Triathlon (USA Triathlon, 2007). Further, the Ironman distance triathlon world championships attract 1,800 competitors plus their entourage to Hawaii in October each year. Athletes must qualify for the world championships at one of the

similarly sized Ironman events, of which there is a global series of twenty-two events (World Triathlon Corporation, 2008), further illustrating the potential significance of travel by triathletes.

The recognition of competitive cyclists would clearly serve the interests of tourism "booster" groups, particularly cycling advocacy groups whom lobby for funding for cycling infrastructure. This is because the inclusion of competitive cyclists would inflate measurements of the size and value of the bicycle tourism market in any given country, which may be used as anecdotal evidence to support cases for increased expenditure on cycling infrastructure.

Cycling should be the main purpose of the journey

Brotherton and Himmetoglu (1997: 12) differentiate between special interest and general interest tourists, stating that 'the special interest tourist has a *specific, interest-based* motivation for his/her travel to another destination'. The intended destination and its resources typically act as the drawcard for general interest tourists. In contrast, it is the *activity* being pursued that is of most concern to special interest tourists; the destination merely acts as the component of the tourism system that supports the activity (Brotherton & Himmetoglu, 1997; Hall, 1992).

Bicycle tourism has been postulated by several authors as a form of special interest tourism (Hall, 1992; Ritchie, 1997). Evidence from New Zealand showed that independent bicycle tourists spent on average 74.5% of their time cycling, and just 25.5%

of their time at intermediate destinations (Ritchie, 1997). This suggests that the activity is of particular importance to bicycle tourists as opposed to the actual destination(s) visited because these tourists spent the majority of their time in transit. As such, cycling, involving active or passive participation, should be the main purpose of a trip to be considered a bicycle tourism trip. This contention is supported by several authors (Lumsdon, 1996; Ritchie, 1998; Simonsen & Jorgenson, 1998; Sustrans, 1999) who have previously offered definitions of bicycle tourism incorporating a similar parameter.

Identifying special interest tourists requires the use of objective criteria to distinguish them from general interest tourists, and furthermore, to distinguish participants in different forms of special interest tourism. Using main trip purpose as a delimitation is beneficial because it is recognised that a specific interest in an activity drives decision-making amongst special interest tourists (Brotherton & Himmetoglu, 1997), while Derrett (2001: 3) adds that special interest tourism 'is tourism undertaken for a distinct and specific reason'. Failure to adopt distinguishing criteria may have implications for tourism statistics, particularly market size and valuation. For example, without the use of distinguishing criteria based on main trip purpose, it may be possible for a single tourist's expenditure to be simultaneously attributed to two or more special interest tourism markets. Unless main trip purpose is determined, a tourist who incidentally rode a hire bicycle briefly around a resort, and undertook a bungee jump on the one trip, could concurrently be counted as a bicycle tourist and an adventure tourist even though neither activity may have been instrumental in that person's decision to take that trip.

To illustrate the previous point, research into the size and value of bicycle tourism in Australia (Roy Morgan Research Holiday Tracking Survey, cited in Faulks et al., 2006), defined bicycle tourists as persons over the age of 14 whom had taken a holiday in the previous twelve months, and rode a bicycle as a form of transport on their last holiday. This study estimated that there were 134,000 independent bicycle tourists in Australia during the 2004/05 fiscal year. However, because no means of determining the main trip purpose for participants in this study was implicit in the definition applied, the scope for inclusion of incidental cycling participants in this study was high. Respondents who engaged in other activities on the same trip such as visiting friends and relatives could have been simultaneously considered VFR tourists as well as bicycle tourists. Failure to delimit this research based on main trip purpose means that the number of tourists participating in cycling as a form of special interest tourism could have been overstated due to the inclusion of respondents for whom cycling was not the primary reason for undertaking that trip.

A contentious issue relating to this parameter for defining bicycle tourism, is that the extent to which cycling influences tourists' decision making potentially exists along a continuum. For some people, cycling may be an overarching consideration which requires the tourist to visit an area with extensive trail networks and/or scenic road routes with minimal traffic levels. For others, cycling may be a supplementary activity used to get some physical exercise whilst at the same time exploring a destination, but for whom cycling does not exert a lot of influence as to the destinations included in their itinerary. This causes a quandary as one must make a decision as to where along the continuum an

individual is considered a bicycle tourist, or is considered a general interest tourist. It also raises the question as to whether bicycle tourism, or for that matter, all special interest tourism phenomena, should be conceptualised as trip behaviour, or the purpose for undertaking a trip.

For the purposes of this paper, which proposes a technical definition for identifying bicycle tourists, precise parameters are needed. The concept of a continuum articulating the degree to which cycling influences tourists' decision making, may be problematic due to the fuzzy boundary between identifying special interest (bicycle) tourists and general interest tourists. Prescribing cycling as the main trip purpose in identifying bicycle tourism trips is useful here because it is an objective criterion – cycling is either the main purpose for a trip, or it is not.

How trips where cycling is involved, but is not the main trip purpose should be treated, is a matter for further scholarly debate. Perhaps segmenting bicycle tourists similarly to way Standeven and DeKnop (1999) divide sport tourists into *sport holiday tourists* (where participation in sport is the primary main trip purpose), and *holiday sport tourists* (where participation in sport is not the main trip purpose, or is incidental), could be considered. However, this paper is concerned with compiling a technical definition for special interest tourists whose trips are primarily structured around active or passive participation in cycling. Hence, cycling as the main trip purpose is advocated as the most appropriate criteria for doing so.

From a data collection perspective, instruments would need to pose a filter question to identify respondents whom are special interest (bicycle) tourists, such as "is participating in [cycling/cycle racing/this cycling event] the main reason why you undertook this journey?". In the case of studying spectators at events, the *Tour Down Under* in Adelaide, South Australia for example, a filter question might ask, "would you have made this trip to Adelaide if it were not for the *Tour Down Under* taking place at this time?". Respondents answering "no" to such questions would thus be excluded from the analysis.

Participation in cycling should occur only in an active context

Existing definitions of bicycle tourism have mostly discounted passive participation. The *South Australian Cycle Tourism Strategy* definition is the only definition that includes spectators at cycling events (South Australian Tourism Commission, 2005). Presumably this definition was formulated with the inclusion of spectators to favour economic impact measurements attributable to bicycle tourism events in South Australia, which may assist event organisers and tourism bodies in obtaining increased public and private funding for the staging and marketing of major cycling events.

Tenets of key sport tourism typologies support the inclusion of passive observers at events in a definition of bicycle tourism. Weed and Bull (2004) argue that spectators play a pivotal role in the sporting landscape and are thus recognised in their Sports Tourism Participation model:

> Those sports with significant numbers of spectators have developed to accommodate them and this has involved both the way the sport is played and the environment in which this occurs. In addition, spectators have provided much of the wealth that enabled sport to develop. As such, not to include spectators in any consideration of sports participation would seriously reduce the scope of the analysis and, given the significant number of spectators who travel, would greatly underplay the nature of sports tourism (Weed & Bull, 2004: 43).

Furthermore, Standeven and Deknop's (1999) Typology of Sport Tourism model recognises both passive sport and active sport. Passive participants are further divided into *casual observers* and *connoisseur observers* according to the degree to which a sport has acted as the purpose for travel. In defining bicycle tourism, it is proposed that only connoisseur observers be included; persons who travel for the specific purpose of observing cycling events, to preserve congruency with the primary trip purpose parameter discussed previously. Persons who observe cycling events on an incidental basis would be more suitably described as general interest tourists, and should be excluded because cycling is not a motivation for their travel.

The inclusion of connoisseur observers at cycling events would widen the scope for studying the relationship between cycling and tourism. Research into spectators at cycling events is scarce, and a broader definition of bicycle tourism may open up some significant avenues of inquiry. For example, the Tour de France, considered the world's largest annual sporting event (Bull & Lovell, 2007), stimulates considerable tourism activity each year yet there is little research that quantifies the tourism benefits to the host country. Anecdotal evidence suggests that *Le Tour* attracts considerable numbers of

roadside spectators (Reed, 2003), reportedly in the vicinity of 15 million annually (Bull & Lovell, 2007; Desbordes, 2007), the proportion of whom are tourists is unknown. Bull and Lovell (2007) estimated that visitors outnumbered residents of Kent by two-to-one when Stage One of the 2007 Tour de France finished in the English city, hinting at the powerful catalyst for tourism *Le Tour* represents.

The recognition of persons who travel specifically to observe cycling events would most likely add considerably to the potential size of the bicycle tourism market worldwide. As discussed above, with just one event reportedly attracting in the vicinity of 15 million spectators, even if half were tourists, this could potentially mean up to 7.5 million bicycle tourism trips are attributable to the Tour de France annually. Recognising connoisseur observer spectators at cycling events would also inflate measures of economic benefits to host communities attributable to bicycle tourism. This would serve the interests of tourism booster groups and/or event managers, whom would find favourable economic impact measurements from events held elsewhere useful in soliciting sponsorship and/or fiscal support for the staging of their events.

Recreation or leisure: Which is the appropriate concept?

A number of existing definitions make reference to either recreation or leisure (and in some instances, both) to define bicycle tourism. Often the terms recreation and leisure are used on an interchangeable basis, however, they are indeed distinct concepts (Kraus, 2001). It is necessary to scrutinise their application in defining bicycle tourism.

Leisure has traditionally been defined as a residual concept, meaning that leisure is time remaining once work and other obligatory duties have been addressed (Torkildsen, 2005). Roberts (2006) noted that leisure as a residual concept is problematic because it ignores conceptions of leisure for the unemployed; the destandardisation of work time; and ignores that leisure pursuits may overlap with work for some people. Consequently, Roberts (2006) argued for leisure to be defined as an experiential concept, expanding the scope for analysis of the intrinsic meaning of leisure to the individual. Walmsley and Jenkins (2003) suggest that leisure may be delineated in terms of activity; a state of mind; or a volume of discretionary time. Meanwhile, Kraus (2001: 38) adopted both a residual and experiential approach in defining leisure:

> Leisure is that portion of an individual's time that is not directly devoted to work or work-connected responsibilities or to other obligated forms of maintenance or self-care. Leisure implies freedom and choice and is customarily used in a variety of ways, but chiefly to meet one's personal needs for reflection, self-enrichment, relaxation, or pleasure. While it usually involves some form of participation in a voluntarily chosen activity, it may also be regarded as a holistic state of being or even a spiritual experience.

Recreation on the other hand is postulated as activities undertaken for the purpose of restoring oneself, physically and mentally, from the rigours of work (Torkildsen, 2005), which take place *during* leisure (Mercer, 2003). Further, recreation has been often thought of synonymously with engaging in sport or physical activities. However, Torkildsen (2005: 54) believes that recreation is a psychological process undertaken to restore equilibrium, which may occur through any number of means, therefore 'participating in an activity does not in and of itself provide recreation. The psychological

response of the individual is what determines what is recreation for him or her'. An individual's motivation for engaging in an activity is therefore a key consideration in determining whether an activity is of a leisure or recreational nature.

Kraus (2001) has observed that recreation has been often linked with non-vigorous undertakings. However, because of reduced physical demands in contemporary society, recreation for some has become increasingly physical, as individuals seek to inject compensatory strenuous activity into their somewhat sedentary lives. In defining recreation, Kraus positioned recreation as activities embedded within leisure time, distinct from complete idleness, for the purpose of intrinsic satisfaction and reinvigoration:

> Recreation consists of human activities or experiences that occur in leisure time. Usually, they are voluntarily chosen for intrinsic purposes and are pleasurable, although they may involve a degree of compulsion, extrinsic purpose, and discomfort, or even pain or danger. Recreation may also be regarded as the emotional state resulting from participation or as a social institution, a professional career field, or a business (Kraus, 2001: 45).

In defining bicycle tourism, it is proposed that both leisure and recreation be used as delimiting concepts. Bicycle tourism may be regarded as an experience engaged in during non-obligatory time, exhibiting characteristics of leisure. Alternatively, depending on the motivations for participation, bicycle tourism may be regarded as a form of recreation. For example, an individual may opt for a weekend's cycling in a rural setting to restore physical and mental equilibrium from the stresses of work, which would constitute

bicycle tourism undertaken in a recreational context. Conversely, a person who travels to witness a prestigious cycle race such as the Tour de France, may be motivated by a life-long dream to see that event in person, as opposed to being motivated by physical or mental rejuvenation needs. Bicycle tourism in this case could be classified as leisure, because of the absence of motivations related to physical or mental revitalisation. It would therefore appear prudent to use recreation and leisure as delimiting concepts for the range of cycling activities in a technical definition of bicycle tourism to allow for the full spectrum of motivations for participation in bicycle tourism to be included.

Peddling a New Definition

Having critically examined the delimiting concepts used in existing definitions of bicycle tourism, a new technical definition is proposed. In proposing this technical definition, it is acknowledged that 'different definitions will be suited to different circumstances' (Blamey, 1997: 115). Although this reasoning does little in fostering a universally comparable body of knowledge regarding bicycle tourism, different technical parameters for defining tourists already exist between different countries. This definition may, however, contribute to more consistent data within individual countries by adopting national distance thresholds (where appropriate), as discussed earlier. For example, bicycle tourism in Australia could be defined as:

> Trips involving a minimum distance of 40 kilometres from a person's home and an overnight stay (for overnight trips), or trips involving a minimum non-cycling round trip component of 50 kilometres and a minimum four hour period away from home (for day

> trips) of which cycling, involving active participation or passive observation, for holiday, recreation, leisure and/or competition, is the main purpose for that trip. Participation in cycling may include attendance at events organised for commercial gain and/or charity (competitive and non-competitive), as well as independently organised cycling.

This technical definition emphasises that cycling, in the form of active participation or passive observation, should be the main purpose of the trip, delimiting the study of bicycle tourism to those who are special interest tourists. Excluding general interest tourists may assist in the gathering of more accurate statistical measurements relating to bicycle tourism. Faulks et al. (2006) suggest that researchers have mostly discounted participatory cycling events, despite the ability of these events to generate economic benefits for host communities, particularly in rural areas. This definition recognises participation in organised, mass-participation cycling events. Events such as *gran fondo* events, common in Europe (organised, long-distance, non-competitive, and fully-catered single-day bicycle rides), the *L'Etape du Tour* for example, allow members of the public to ride a stage of the Tour de France under controlled conditions. Scope is now provided for the study of participants in such events as bicycle tourists.

This definition also acknowledges bicycle tourism events organised for the purpose of charitable benefit. Whilst little research exists into charitable cycling events, frequent media reports of individuals or groups embarking on endurance bicycle rides to raise money for charity suggest that such endeavours may represent a sizeable segment related to bicycle tourism. The inclusion of charitable events in a definition of bicycle tourism allows scope for research into the interrelationship between cycling, tourism and charity.

The definition proposed has broadened the scope for the study of the relationship between cycling and tourism than existing definitions have allowed hitherto. Under this technical definition, it is likely that the global size and significance of the bicycle tourism market would be much larger than previous thinking suggests. This implication tends to favour tourism booster groups and cycling advocacy organisations, whose functions may be aided by larger measures of the significance of bicycle tourism. However, organisations that aim to foster more sustainable tourism practices (Sustrans, in the United Kingdom for example), who advocate bicycle tourism as an environmentally sustainable form of tourism, may be disadvantaged by inflated measures of the size of this market. Although cycling itself involves no consumption of fossil fuels, travel to destinations to participate in cycling is said to increase the number of trips made using fossil-fuelled vehicles, discrediting claims that bicycle tourism is environmentally sustainable (Lumsdon, 2000).

Conclusion

A relationship between cycling and tourism has been observed since the 1890s, however, this relationship has only recently attracted scholarly interest. Research into the full scope of this relationship appears limited by lack of debate regarding the characteristics that distinguish bicycle tourists from other tourists, which this paper has sought to redress.

Inconsistent definitions can result in fragmented knowledge, where it is difficult and often unwise to compare the findings of different studies. Several definitions of bicycle tourism exist to date, many of which are limited by parameters that are either too broad or too narrow; by deviations from well-accepted conceptual principles of tourism; by misguided application of embedded concepts; or by unreasonable exclusion of cycling activities with clear links with tourism.

This paper has critically examined existing definitions of bicycle tourism, and has critiqued of the concepts embedded within such definitions. As a result, a technical definition was proposed, postulating bicycle tourism as trips away from an individual's home region, of which active or passive participation in cycling are considered the main purpose for that trip. This new definition expands the scope for investigating the relationship between cycling and tourism by justifying the inclusion of persons who travel for the purpose of engaging in competitive cycling, in addition to persons who travel specifically to observe cycling events.

One aspect of this proposed definition which may spark further debate is the issue of differentiating same-day excursionists and overnight visitors. The present definition includes both same-day excursionists and overnight visitors as bicycle tourists, whilst at the same time emphasising that this is a highly contentious issue in the ongoing quest to formulate a universal definition of tourism per se. However, it was suggested that a prudent approach would be for researchers to provide separate findings for excursionists and overnight visitors, going some way to reducing the scope for ambiguous

interpretations of research outcomes, which may occur if data from both groups are combined. This would be particularly prudent in studies measuring tourism benefits in specific regions, attributable to same-day and overnight bicycle tourists.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback which assisted in improving this paper. Associate Professor Jeremy Buultjens, and Professors Neil Leiper and John Jenkins of Southern Cross University are also thanked for their constructive criticism. This research is an outcome of a PhD project supported by the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre, established by the Australian Commonwealth Government.

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