

2011

Selfish leisure? competing priorities and constraints in triathlon event travel careers

Matthew James Lamont
Southern Cross University

Millicent Kennelly
Griffith University

Erica Wilson
Southern Cross University

Publication details

Lamont, MJ, Kennelly, M & Wilson, E 2011, 'Selfish leisure? competing priorities and constraints in triathlon event travel careers', in MJ Gross (ed.), *Tourism: creating a brilliant blend: proceedings of the Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE) Conference*, Adelaide, SA, 8-11 February, School of Management, University of South Australia, Adelaide, SA. ISBN: 9780987050700.

ePublications@SCU is an electronic repository administered by Southern Cross University Library. Its goal is to capture and preserve the intellectual output of Southern Cross University authors and researchers, and to increase visibility and impact through open access to researchers around the world. For further information please contact epubs@scu.edu.au.

Selfish Leisure? Competing Priorities and Constraints in Triathlon Event Travel Careers

Matthew Lamont

Associate Lecturer

(Corresponding Author)

School of Tourism and Hospitality Management*

Southern Cross University

PO Box 157, Lismore NSW 2480

Telephone: (02) 6626 9428

Facsimile: (02) 6626 9155

Email: matthew.lamont@scu.edu.au

Millicent Kennelly

Senior Lecturer

School of Tourism and Hospitality Management

Griffith University

Email: m.kennelly@griffith.edu.au

Erica Wilson

Southern Cross University

PO Box 157, Lismore NSW 2480

Telephone: (02) 6626 9428

Facsimile: (02) 6626 9155

Email: erica.wilson@scu.edu.au

Abstract

The term *event travel career* refers to a potentially lifelong desire to travel to events pertinent to an individual's preferred leisure activity that is characterised by progression, evolving preferences, and modified behaviour. This paper applies the concept of an event travel career to non-elite triathletes. It is argued that for these serious sport tourists, ongoing pursuit of an event travel career is constrained by competing priorities that intervene between their day-to-day life and their event life. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 non-elite triathletes engaged in a triathlon event travel career. Interpretive analysis of the interview data revealed seven domains of competing priorities that constrained the nexus between day-to-day life and pursuit of an event travel career. These domains included relationships, sociability, domestic, financial, leisure, wellbeing and work/education. The theoretical implications of this research are discussed, along with avenues for future enquiry.

Keywords: competing priorities, constraints, event travel career, serious sport tourism, triathlon

Tourism: Creating a brilliant blend

8–11 February 2011

The Hawke Building

University of South Australia, Adelaide



Selfish Leisure? Competing Priorities and Constraints in Triathlon Event Travel Careers

Serious sport tourism and event tourism are contemporary phenomena attracting increasing scholarly attention. Recently, Getz (2007; 2008) suggested that persons engaged in *serious leisure* (Stebbins, 1992) can initiate a career of travel to special events that are linked to an individual's chosen leisure activity: 'many people will find intrinsic motivation to travel to events, such as amateur athletes and competitive events' (Getz, 2008, p. 416).

Getz (2008) proposes five criteria that characterise an *event travel career* (ETC). He suggested that there should be: i) an intrinsic desire to travel to events; ii) progression in the events travelled to and benefits sought; iii) progression in the scale of travel to events over time in geographical terms (e.g. from local events to events overseas); iv) evolution in individuals' preferences relating to event characteristics (e.g. perhaps in terms of branding, or level of competition); and v) modifications in behaviour, such as the combination of holidays with travel to events. An omission in Getz's criteria, however, is the role of constraints in the *ongoing* pursuit of an ETC at the individual's desired level. In discussing possibilities for future research into event tourism, Getz (2008) did pose two important questions in this regard: 'What constraints are most important in shaping demand and attendance at different types of events? How are constraints negotiated for intrinsically and extrinsically motivated event attendance?' (p. 417). This paper contributes to the literature on ETCs by exploring the impact that resource-related constraints have on non-elite triathletes' ability to pursue an ETC.

A combination of swimming, cycling and running, the sport of triathlon is a suitable context in which to study constraints to pursuing an ETC because there is an international event schedule with a range of event formats ranging from shorter sprint triathlons, to the gruelling Ironman (refer to Table 1). McCarville (2007) has noted that triathlon events 'are now held worldwide ... These events involve dozens of communities, thousands of volunteers and virtually dominate the lives of participants and their families' (p. 160). As such there is extensive scope for triathletes to engage in an ETC. However, pursuing an ETC in triathlon arguably places significant resource demands on participants. These resource demands give rise to constraints that must be overcome if the ETC is to be pursued at the individual's desired level.

Table 1 Typology of Triathlon Events (Source: original for this study).

	Swim	Cycle	Run	Examples
Sprint Distance	750m	20km	5km	Luke Harrop Memorial, Gold Coast
Olympic Distance	1500m	40km	10km	Noosa Triathlon Mooloolaba Triathlon
Half Ironman	1900m	90km	21.1km	Capricorn Half Ironman, Yeppoon QLD Ironman 70.3 World Championship, Florida USA
Ironman	3800m	180km	42.2km	Ironman Australia, Port Macquarie Ironman World Championship, Kona, Hawaii

In this paper, the term 'competing priorities' is proposed to describe a potential clash between day-to-day needs and desires (such as happy relationships, being able to socialise with friends, career aspirations) and needs and desires relating to an ETC (such as meeting challenging goals, competing at prestigious events, place-getting). *Resources* have been defined as 'things within an individual's control that can be used to resolve the demands placed on him or her' (Robbins, Judge, Millett, & Waters Marsh, 2008, p. 698) and for most persons pursuing an ETC, limited resources mean that it is not always possible to entirely satisfy day-to-day needs and desires along with those relating to their ETC. It is therefore proposed that the pursuit of an ETC is constrained by an individual's unique set of competing priorities in combination with the resources at their disposal. It is further argued that these constraints are negotiated by accepting opportunity costs, which subsequently impact upon the trajectory of an ETC, along with other aspects of life in general. This paper aims to explore these issues in the context of non-elite triathletes pursuing an ETC, and its specific objectives are to:

- report and discuss the findings of preliminary in-depth interviews with 10 non-elite triathletes regarding areas of their life in which they experience competing priorities that constrain them in pursuing an ETC at their desired level
- identify, categorise and discuss the competing priorities that constrain the pursuit of an ETC amongst non-elite triathletes
- suggest avenues for future research.

Serious Sport Tourism

In 2005, Green and Jones responded to Gibson's (2002) call to integrate concepts from the broader fields of leisure, tourism and sport, into sport tourism studies. They deployed Stebbins' (1992) concept of serious leisure to examine the behaviour of committed sport tourists. Serious leisure is defined as:

...the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience. (Stebbins, 2001, p. 3)

Serious leisure is defined by six distinct qualities according to Stebbins (2001). These include i) the need to persevere and possibly to negotiate constraints in order to maintain participation in a given leisure activity; ii) the development of a *career* in pursuit of the given activity, complete with progression through stages of achievement; iii) an investment of significant personal effort in order to acquire knowledge or skills pertinent to the given activity; iv) the resultant experience of durable benefits, such as feelings of accomplishment and self-gratification; v) the resultant sense of identification with the chosen leisure pursuit; and vi) entry into the unique social world around that activity.

Green and Jones (2005) argued that for many individuals, leisure activities such as sport tourism hold 'importance' and 'involve obligations, commitment and responsibility' (p. 166). They subsequently coined the term *serious sport tourism* to delineate the practice of 'travel to participate in serious leisure' (p. 175). Serious sport tourism has since been discussed in relation to amateur distance runners (Shipway & Jones, 2007; 2008) and mountain bikers (Getz & McConnell, in press).

Event Travel Careers

According to Green and Jones (2005), 'serious leisure, and travel to participate in serious leisure, are mutually reinforcing activities' (p. 175). They argued that travel facilitates participation in serious leisure because it: i) enables an individual to construct, 'parade and celebrate' (p. 175) their social identity in the company of others who understand the unique ethos of their chosen leisure pursuit;

and ii) enables an individual to build rungs on their leisure career *ladder* and to signal *career stage* to others.

Shipway and Jones (2007; 2008) have observed career progression among amateur distance runners. They noted that career progression was not just related to event duration, but also to the level of challenge involved and event reputation. Consequently, these serious amateur distance runners developed a desire to travel to events to 'collect places' or significant events (Shipway & Jones, 2007, p. 380). Likewise, Green and Jones (2005) stated that active sport tourists might 'move from competing in local competitions, to competing regionally or even internationally' (p. 177).

Subsequently, Getz (2008) proposed that people who have interests in specific leisure activities can embark upon *event travel careers*, 'that evolve and can last a lifetime' (p. 412). As previously mentioned, an event travel career (ETC) describes how highly involved and committed individuals can initiate a career of travel to events surrounding their chosen leisure activity. Adapted from Pearce's (2005) idea of a *travel career trajectory*, progression in an ETC is characterised by a shift in motivations from lower order needs (such as escape), to higher order needs (such as self-development). This progression may manifest through higher levels of involvement, evolution in the manner, length and number of trips to events, the distances travelled (local to international) and the challenges sought (Getz, 2007; 2008). In particular, individuals may seek bigger or more prestigious events in which to compete.

Getz (2008) has described events as 'spatial-temporal phenomenon' (p. 404), in that they are time-bound and perishable. However, for serious sport tourists their ETC can transcend the spatial-temporal boundaries of events. Indeed, Green and Jones (2005) concluded that the significant personal effort exhibited by serious sport tourists extends beyond mere involvement in a leisure activity. Researchers must therefore realise that in endurance sports such as triathlon, day-to-day activities such as swim and cycle training sessions are an important foundation upon which an ETC is built. The day-to-day rituals of training and socialising with fellow athletes are where the seed is sown for travel to events, and these rituals should be considered inseparable from the act of travelling to compete. Atkinson (2008) supports this contention in stating that 'triathletes' collective penchant for the sport cannot be separated from the broader social patterns and relationships in which the athletes are situated' (p. 177).

Pursuing an ETC can produce costs, however. These costs may manifest through failing to achieve personal expectations (Frew, 2006), or having to negotiate the competing priorities of day-to-day needs and desires versus those of the ETC (Lamont & Kennelly, 2010). Consequently, those pursuing an ETC may be confronted and constrained by a number of these competing priorities that intervene between travel to participate in events, as well as continued ongoing participation in an ETC.

Leisure Constraints

Over the past three decades, many definitions and conceptualisations of leisure constraints have been proffered. One of the earliest definitions described them as those factors that 'inhibit people's ability to participate in leisure activities, to spend more time doing so, to take advantage of leisure services, or to achieve a desired level of satisfaction' (Jackson, 1988, p. 203). Since then, leisure constraints theory has been applied to a range of recreational activities and experiences, including adventure (Little, 2002; Dimmock & Wilson, 2009), sports (e.g., Alexandris & Stodolska, 2004; Hudson, 2000), and travel and tourism (Pennington-Gray & Kerstetter, 2001; Wilson & Little, 2005). The impacts of constraints have also been investigated as to their impact on individual sub-groups, such as women (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993; Little, 2002), people with disabilities (Freudenberg & Arlinghaus, 2010) and young people (Carr, 2000). While numerous theorisations exist, central to

constraints theory is the notion that people have the freedom and the desire to participate in leisure, but that certain factors may hinder, impinge upon or even stop that freedom and desire (Raymore, 2002).

In the trailblazing leisure constraints work of the late 1980s and early 1990s, constraints were conceived of largely belonging to three types of *barriers*: interpersonal (social/relating to others), intrapersonal (personal/psychological) and structural (societal/institutional) (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 1985). These barriers prevented access to or involvement with leisure, and participation was the key outcome and focus of attention. Subsequent thinking suggested that elimination of constraints results almost automatically in leisure participation. It was also proposed then by dominant writers in the field that constraints presented in a hierarchical order. In Crawford et al.'s (1991) model of constraints, intrapersonal constraints were encountered first and foremost, followed by interpersonal and then structural barriers. Only when all three of these constraints types were dealt with could participation be guaranteed.

Later theorisations of constraint moved beyond defining and labelling *barriers* to try to understand how they might be *negotiated*. The concept of negotiation was largely borne from the work of Shaw, Bonen and McCabe (1991), Kay and Jackson (1991) and Jackson, Crawford and Godbey (1993), who suggested in various ways that leisure could occur despite constraint. In this way, constraints were more likely to modify and impact upon participation rather than foreclose it altogether. Such findings challenged earlier assumptions about the nature of constraints, and demanded more complex ways of thinking about the constraint-participation issue.

Ultimately, these developments have broadened our thinking, particularly around assumptions that constraints are always *negative* influences on the leisure experience. In moving beyond the 'cup is half empty' analogy which Shogan (2002) laments, discussions of negotiation have widened to include enabling, facilitating, and even necessary elements of constraints in people's everyday leisure lives (Raymore, 2002; Shogan, 2002; Little, 2007).

Despite these advances in constraints theorisation, very little research has explored how constraints are experienced in the contexts of serious leisure and sport tourism. Moreover, the leisure constraints literature appears to have given only cursory consideration to the notion of how constraints intervene and impact on one's ability to effectively meet the needs and demands associated with an ETC. Furthermore, by conceptualising constraints as competing priorities which are negotiated by accepting opportunity costs (Lamont & Kennelly, 2010), this perspective may yield a more holistic and integrated understanding of how constraints are negotiated. The competing priorities approach considers the wider impacts on the individual's life, along with the impacts on their significant others brought about by the constraints negotiation process. This thereby helps to overcome some of the limitations and narrowed perceptions of some earlier constraints negotiation theories.

Methods

In a previous study based around secondary data collected from an Internet forum, Lamont & Kennelly (2010) demonstrated that non-elite triathletes face a range of competing priorities in pursuing an ETC. However, this method was limited in its ability to explore in-depth the full range of competing priorities faced by those triathletes. This paper responds to Lamont and Kennelly's call for the collection of primary qualitative data surrounding these issues.

An interpretive, exploratory design employing qualitative methods was deemed appropriate for the present study. This design allowed for the gathering of data rich in detail and also for pertinent

concepts to emerge from the data itself. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 amateur triathletes between May and August 2010. Participants were invited to take part in the research on a purposive basis, which Neuman (2006) describes as employing ‘the judgement of an expert in selecting cases ... with a specific purpose in mind’ (p. 222). Participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- The participant must have engaged in at least one overnight trip in the previous 12 months to a location at least 40 kilometres from their home for the purpose of participating in a triathlon event.
- The participant must have been pursuing an ETC. For the purposes of this study, this was characterised by progression in the triathlon events the individual has participated in with reference to distance, challenge or social prestige.
- The participant must have been an *age group* competitor in triathlon. That is, they could not be the holder of a professional racing licence permitting the holder to compete for prize money.

An effort was made to ensure that a spread of demographics were included in the study, such as older and younger triathletes, children and no children, and length of involvement. Prior to being interviewed participants also completed a brief questionnaire that collected basic demographic information to facilitate cross-case analysis. Table 2 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the 10 interviewees.

Table 2 Demographic overview of the research participants.

Name [*]	Gender	Age	Employment status	Children (ages)	Marital status	Importance of Triathlon [#]	Length of involvement in triathlon (approx. years)	No. of Ironmans [†]
Emma	Female	37	Unemployed (home duties)	2 (10, 6)	Married, living with partner	Extremely Important	<1	0
Kate	Female	37	Employed part time	3 (11, 9, 6)	Married, living with partner	Important	1.5	0
Grant	Male	32	Employed full time	0	Separated/divorced	Extremely Important	1.5	1
John	Male	42	Employed full time	2 (18, 16)	Married, living with partner	Extremely Important	21	0
Nathan	Male	42	Employed part time	2 (7, 5)	Married, living with partner	Important	15	4
Bill	Male	42	Employed full time	3 (16, 14, 9)	Married, living with partner	Extremely Important	4	2
George	Male	53	Employed full time	2 (23, 21)	Married, living with partner	Important	17	10
Rob	Male	31	Employed full time	0	Married, living with partner	Important	15	9
Greg	Male	36	Employed full time	0	Single	Important	3	10
Lisa	Female	35	Employed part time	0	Married, living with partner	Important	3	2

^{*} Pseudonyms are used to protect informants' anonymity

[#] Measured on a five point scale Extremely unimportant – Extremely important

[†] Number of Ironman distance triathlons the informant has competed in. Ironman triathlons consist of a 3.8km swim, 180km cycle and 42.2km run. These events usually take considerably more time to prepare for than other triathlon distances

Yin (2003) recommended that qualitative researchers undertake their enquiries to the point of *literal replication*. Literal replication is the point where no new information is uncovered. After 10 interviews, the researchers noted that no new areas of competing priorities were coming to the fore. Although participants' perspectives were diverse, preliminary data analysis suggested that the overarching areas of competing priorities had been identified.

Interviews were semi-structured and typically lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. An interview schedule was used to give the interviews some structure, however the conversation was allowed to deviate to explore emerging issues. Participants were questioned about their initiation into triathlon; their training, travelling and competition experiences; and which areas of their life they feel they have to make sacrifices, trade-offs, or limit themselves in order to pursue an ETC. All interviews were voice-recorded with the participant's permission. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and were analysed using a three-stage, grounded approach to coding consisting of open, axial, and selective coding (Neuman, 2006).

Trustworthiness is the qualitative equivalent of reliability and validity in quantitative studies, and is an important consideration in producing rigorous qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Merriam (1998) advocates the importance of acknowledging researcher bias in enhancing the trustworthiness of a study. The two authors who undertook the in-depth interviews were both triathlon participants themselves. One has over 10 years' experience, the other one year, and both could be described as pursuing their own triathlon ETC. It is therefore acknowledged that some biases and assumptions carried by the researchers could have influenced the way that the data was collected, analysed and interpreted. However, in interpretive studies such as this, the researchers' supposed bias is repositioned as a distinct advantage (rather than a limitation), as this *insider's perspective* lends a unique depth, insight and understanding into the phenomenon of the triathlon experience (Sparkes, 2002).

To achieve trustworthiness in the data, the third author, a non-triathlete, coded the interview transcripts independent of the first and second authors. The outcomes were then compared and agreed upon before selective coding was undertaken. The third author's codes resonated strongly with the other authors' codings, demonstrating intercoder reliability and the strength of the data collected.

Findings

The data revealed a range of areas (*domains*) where the triathletes experienced competing priorities. Seven domains emerged that captured the range of competing priorities that constrained the triathletes' nexus between their everyday lives and pursuing their ETC. These domains were labelled 'relationships', 'sociability', 'domestic', 'financial', 'leisure', 'wellbeing', and 'work/education' (refer to Figure 1). These domains are not presented nor discussed in any particular order or hierarchy.

Figure 1 shows that essentially, triathletes have two sets of competing needs and desires: i) those of a day-to-day nature; and ii) those relating to the ETC. It is these competing needs and desires that are referred to as 'competing priorities'. In support of Figure 1, Table 3 presents a summary of these two competing types of needs and desires that were also expressed by triathletes in their interviews. Given the reality of limited resources it is generally difficult to entirely satisfy both sets of competing priorities, thus these priorities constrain the triathletes' ability to attend certain events or to pursue an ETC at their desired level.

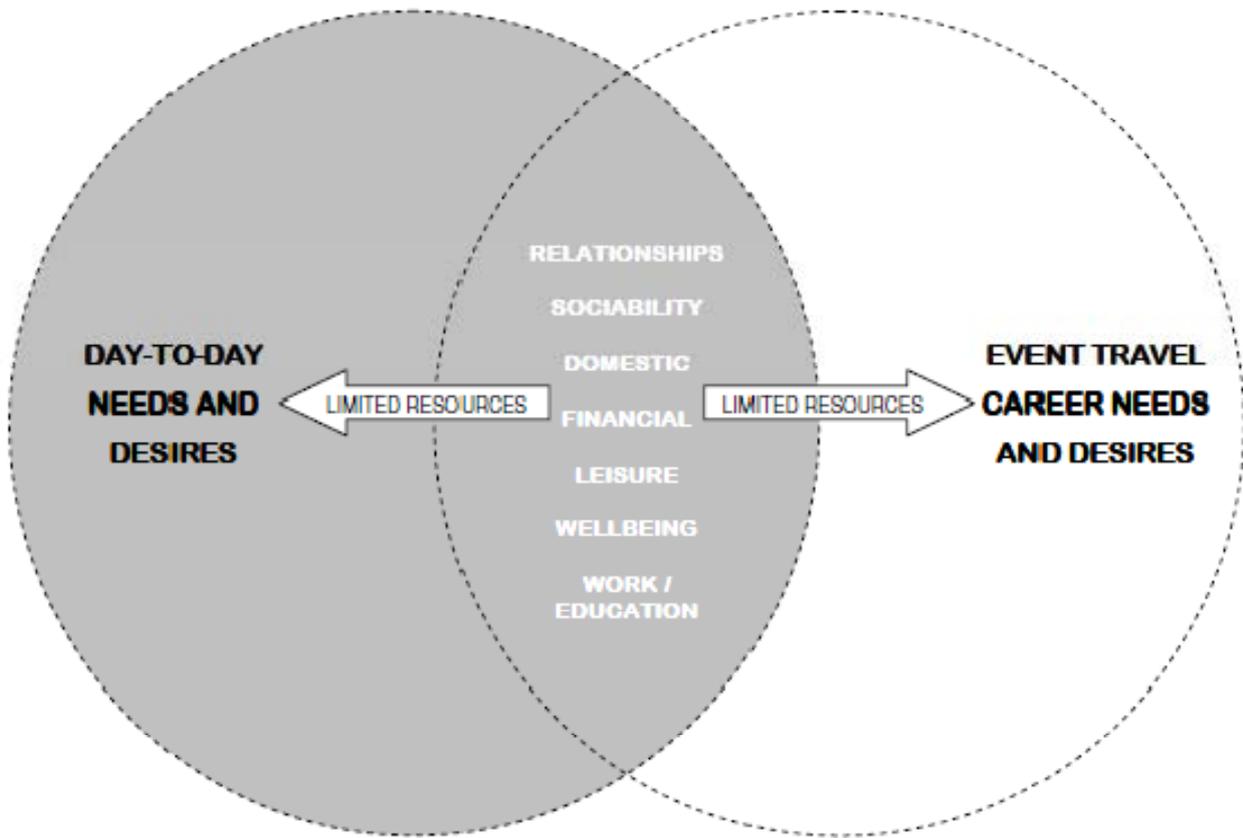


Figure 1 Domains of Competing Priorities Experienced by Non-elite Triathletes Pursuing a Triathlon ETC.

Table 3 Summary of Day-to-day and Triathlon ETC Needs and Desires (competing priorities) Identified in this Study

Day-to-day needs and desires	Event travel career needs and desires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy/stable relationship with family, spouse and/or children • Quality time with family, spouse and/or children • Being able to socialise with friends outside the triathlon social world • Fulfil domestic responsibilities, e.g. house chores, being a good parent • Being able to fund leisure activities aside from triathlon, e.g. family holidays • Being able to provide financially for self and/or family • Being able to participate in leisure activities aside from swimming, cycling and running, with and without family or friends • Being able to use annual leave from work for leisure aside from triathlon • Preserve physical and mental well-being, e.g. remaining free of injury and mental stress • Being able to enjoy the food and drink without restriction • Be an effective performer at work • Realise career aspirations, e.g. climb the career ladder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having the necessary time to complete the desired level of physical training necessary for competition • Being able to complete training on frequent and consistent basis to achieve goals that have been set • Having the necessary time to physically recover from training, competition, and travelling to compete • Maintain physical and mental state that enables the individual to cope with training for competition • Minimise excess body weight that may reduce performance • Travel to triathlon events in locations that are appealing holiday destinations • Compete in triathlon events that are likely to help the individual produce good performances by helping them exploit their strengths • Being able to socialise with people who share an interest in triathlon and who also live compatible lifestyles (e.g. avoid late nights, alcohol etc.) • Ego enhancement, i.e. seeking out means of enhancing one's credibility in the eyes of others • Satisfaction/happiness, i.e. experiencing the satisfaction and/or happiness triathlon can bring as a result of successfully meeting the challenge • Being able to own equipment that may boost performance and/or is likely to be held in high regard by others • Being able to keep up with the latest equipment trends/fads • Progression in equipment owned, i.e. gradually acquiring equipment that is of a higher quality and/or social standing and previous equipment owned • Travel to compete at events that are held in high regard by the triathlon community because of its challenge, location, and/or prestige • Improved upon previous performances in terms of time and/or competition placings • Discard habits that may be unhealthy in favour of living a healthier lifestyle • Remain fit and healthy (physically and mentally) as one ages • Seek out euphoric sensations brought about by meeting the challenge • Achieving goals/challenges set by self or others • Participation, i.e. be part of the triathlon community by taking part in events, with time and other measures of performance being of little importance

Relationships

This domain incorporates relationships with the individual's children, spouse, and family unit as a whole. Pursuing an ETC could have both negative and positive impacts on the relationships domain. Triathletes who had children spoke extensively of being constrained in achieving their ETC goals. For example, Kate explained that she struggles to fulfil her entire range of priorities: 'I feel like if there was three of me I would cope really well! I could have the mum, the triathlete ... and the business person.'

For some, the time required to prepare for triathlon events meant a reduction in quality time that could be spent with children. Bill noted that although he reserves time to spend with his teenage sons, time pressure from work and ETC commitments reduces time available for family bonding: '... we never sit down as a family really and talk.'

For some, triathlon was a vehicle for improving relationships with their children. Emma's daughter had recently taken up junior triathlons, giving Emma and her daughter a common interest: '... it's cool hearing [her] talk about, 'look, they've got a disc wheel mum!' (Laughing). It's great' (Emma).

Pursuing an ETC appeared to strain the relationship between the triathletes and their spouse because of the volume of leisure time that the triathletes apportioned to pursuing their ETC:

I was probably out of the house at the weekend for ... anything up to 16 hours over the weekend. That was something that was just never going to continue. It's not sustainable and not only am I out, but when you're back in the house you're good for nothing. (Nathan)

Whilst the degree of strain did seem to vary according to individual couples' circumstances, couples in which the triathlete's spouse was not a triathlon participant appeared to be the most vulnerable. John explained that tension exists between himself and his wife, who does not share his interest: 'My wife doesn't do them [triathlons], so she doesn't understand ... the need for me to train six days per week ... I know it is a sore point sometimes in my family.'

Where relationships were showing signs of stress or deterioration, pursuing an ETC appeared to accentuate the problems. For example, Grant had recently divorced, and noted that although there were underlying issues with the relationship, his progression from short distance triathlons to Ironman racing caused additional strain: 'I think if there are underlying issues that you have in that relationship then doing something like that can kind of bring them out.' Several others also alluded to the impact on their sex life.

Sociability

The sociability domain incorporates the competing priorities of socialising, versus the pursuit of ETC goals. The time required to pursue a triathlon ETC meant that many of the triathletes prioritised training and competition over socialising with friends who do not share their interest: 'there is always a trade-off between your triathlon mates and your social mates' (Greg). Another described how she finds it difficult to find time to socialise with her usual mothers' group:

... we would all congregate down here at [café] ... whereas now it is like 'no I need to do this so I can do that block of training', so now I don't actually have time to sit and have coffee with these mothers (Emma).

Triathlon had become an engrossing part of many interviewees' lives, and some now find it difficult to engage with people who do not share that interest: 'I can't really talk about my bike ride with these other mothers ... they're not really interested' (Emma). Many of the triathletes spoke about having to prioritise between socialising with non-triathlon friends, who generally have different lifestyles, against realising their ETC goals. For example, some talked of avoiding late nights and

alcohol as these could jeopardise training sessions planned for the following day. Grant gave an example of how constraints were felt in his social life and how those in turn threatened his preparation for an upcoming event in Yeppoon, Queensland:

... I've got a mate coming up just before Yeppoon ... and he's coming to stay with me for a week and I'm thinking 'oh shit he's going to want to go to Byron all the time and it will be a week before Yeppoon'. Like one of the sacrifices that I've made is that I don't drink any more, and I'm mentally trying to work out 'oh he is going to want to go out, I'm not going to want to?' (Grant).

While many explained that they were reluctant to completely abandon their non-triathlon friends, some described those friends as having difficulty understanding that late nights and drinking alcohol are counter-productive for their ETC: 'if it doesn't involve other tri people, they just don't get it. So you're better off not going' (Emma).

Domestic

This domain emerged through the triathletes' descriptions of how they struggle to fulfil their domestic responsibilities and concurrently achieve their ETC goals. Basic chores around the house were mentioned by some: 'I need to cut some trees back (laughing). And I look at them and think 'oh, not today'' (Emma), however the dominant theme here was the constant and ever-present tension between juggling of parental responsibilities and achievement of ETC goals. This theme is differentiated from the relationships domain as it relates more to managing logistics of a household than to the spousal or family bond.

Division of parental responsibilities was mentioned frequently. This was a source of tension both for triathletes whose partners were also participating in a triathlon ETC, and for those whose partners were not. Both Kate and her husband were triathletes, and found the struggle of competing priorities constraining:

... with the children it is very tricky ... the long rides are a bit of a challenge, as you're paying someone to come and babysit them so that we can go and do things like that (Kate).

The issue above also links back to the relationships domain as the division of parental responsibilities can strain the spousal relationship, particularly when one parent spends extensive time training, leaving their spouse to care for the children. Nathan explained that his ETC aspirations have been scaled back since having children, as his wife was not prepared to be the primary caregiver:

I feel very balanced about everything, but it's taken me a lot of years to get there 'cause I did my first Ironman when my son was 6 months old ... then I wanted to do more and more but then my responsibilities were getting heavier and heavier ... our lives revolve around our kids, end of story.

Others also noted that spending extensive amounts of time and energy pursuing an ETC potentially jeopardised their effectiveness as a parent:

...my parents bag me out about it a bit, they say ... you don't spend enough time with the kids and something like that ... and I think they're right, I think they're right ... but when you're obsessed about something it's very hard isn't it? It's an addiction (Bill).

... it's their social livelihood that it impacts on, so yeah, they kind of go without friends over and things like that (Kate).

Financial

The financial costs of participation were mentioned extensively by the interviewees. For triathletes who were in a relationship and/or had children, the cost of participation versus other discretionary spending was a significant area of competing priorities: 'we did a skiing holiday three years ago, the kids would still love to do that every year but yeah, that's ... out of reach' (Kate).

Cost was also an aspect of participation that could strain spousal relationships. John described the range of equipment needed, but lamented that having a family meant he could not always purchase everything he wanted:

... you've gotta have a road bike, gotta have a time trial bike, you gotta have the best shoes, you've gotta have training shoes, you've gotta have racing shoes; you've gotta have cycling shoes. Obviously money comes into it; it's a huge limiting factor when you've got a family to support.

Travelling to events is a fundamental and also costly element of an ETC (the cost of 'getting there and staying there'). Further, when money is a shared resource, it was often necessary to obtain the spouse's permission before spending it. As such, the spouse is positioned as a *consent authority*, which also caused tension in some relationships. Grant explained that now he is divorced, he is free to spend his money on a new bike: 'And it's not like we couldn't afford it ... She didn't want to spend the money. So now I just do what I want, because it's only me (laughing)!'

Leisure

Allocation of leisure time was an area of competing priorities for the triathletes in numerous ways. Grant explained that another leisure passion had almost been eliminated because of his commitment to his triathlon ETC:

... I moved up here from Tasmania just to go surfing, but the last time I went surfing was at Christmas time, when was that ... six months ago ... I used to surf the Point all the time, but I don't want to go out there anymore in case I cut my feet.

The time available to engage in other leisure activities was also constrained because of limited annual leave from work, which is typically consumed by travelling to triathlon events: 'you know that you only get four weeks holiday a year and you're going to be using up two of those to do an event somewhere' (Rob).

Time pressure brought about by commitment to ETC goals meant that for some, travel to triathlon events became a quasi holiday. For others, travel to triathlon events was the only holiday they could afford, in terms of both time and money. The need to train consistently can also constrain choice in holiday destination:

... I didn't want to go overseas in my holidays because I wouldn't be able to train properly ... we used to go up to Noosa, so you can still train up there so it wasn't too bad (Grant).

Wellbeing

This domain encapsulated the competing priorities of preserving one's physical and mental wellbeing. Almost all interviewees cited 'measurable improvements in performance' as being amongst the primary reasons for involvement in a triathlon ETC. To achieve *personal best* performances requires the individual to push their physical limits, therefore there is a constant threat of physical damage to their bodies.

Most were prepared to push through pain to achieve personal best performances. Grant explained that in his last Ironman race he battled cramp, but pushed through the discomfort to achieve his goal time:

I knew I was running pretty close to 3 hours for the marathon, I was on the borderline of cramp in the last 7Ks, so you know how you could sort of pull back and maybe not cramp? I just keep running (laughing). Maybe just get to the end and then worry about it.

The constant juggle of competing priorities was a source of stress for some. Kate described the challenges of being a parent, business owner, and triathlete caused her worry: 'the mental struggle thing is very much ... sometimes I find it incredibly stressful, like I could just go and dig a hole.' Lack of sleep was also a challenge as many of the triathletes described having to extend their day to complete their training. Nathan explained that his sleep patterns changed in order to accommodate his training when his children were born:

You can't get up early and stay up late and continue that for a long period of time, it's just not sustainable, so you start getting up early, it's difficult to start off with, but then you start getting tired at night, your eating habits change and that just becomes your routine.

Diet was a further competing priority pertinent to the domain of wellbeing. Almost all the triathletes spoke of grappling with choices regarding the food they eat, versus the impact eating that food may have on their performance. Greg summarised that '... for a lot of people it is not even an option, you don't drink, you don't eat meat pies and parmigianas', while George mentioned that he doesn't 'drink or smoke.'

Work/Education

This domain captured the competing priorities of work and/or study and their impact on the pursuit of a triathlon ETC. As Grant mused: 'work just seems to interfere with the training that I want to do.' John held a similar view, explaining that '...training is probably as important or more important than my work sometimes.' John also described how his triathlon ETC has constrained progression in his career. He noted that it was a conscious decision to live in a regional area that is conducive to triathlon training, as opposed to relocating to places where there are enhanced promotional opportunities:

I've probably limited my career a bit by spending more time training than worrying about advancement in career, so I've stayed in this area and probably missed out on going to Sydney and getting promoted further ... the main reason I've stayed in this area is because of the triathlon lifestyle around here (John).

Greg raised the issue of reduced capacity to earn income, commenting that '...you probably lose income because ... I knock off early to go for a ride or run or something. Yeah, so I fit my training around [work].' Grant made a similar remark, noting that his training comes first, even at the expense of work time:

... I do understand that I have to work, but paramount will be fitting in those sessions, and if I have to do, if I'm a little bit late to work then I'm late for work. Provided I get that other stuff done.

Discussion

The seven domain themes that emerged in this paper demonstrate how non-elite triathletes are constrained by competing priorities that intervene between their everyday lives and their desire to pursue an ETC. While each of these domains were presented separately above, they should be viewed as interrelated. These domains are not mutually exclusive, and they do not influence a persons' ability to pursue an ETC in isolation. As such, it was evident that a decision to allocate financial resources in favour of ETC needs or desires could impact upon other domains. For example, Grant explained that his decision to purchase equipment strained his marriage (relating to the relationships domain), and also impacted his and his wife's ability to take holidays (relating to the leisure domain). This is line with much of the recent constraints literature which has moved away from linear conceptualisations to a more integrated and holistic idea of the interlinking of constraints types (Wilson & Little, 2005).

The hierarchical order of constraints initially postulated by Crawford et al. (1991) is also noteworthy. These authors suggested that intrapersonal constraints occur first and foremost, and must be overcome before one will face and must overcome interpersonal, and then structural constraints. The present study did not support such a contention. For example, those with young children spoke extensively about the logistical challenges that had to be overcome in order to engage in daily training, and to travel to events. These people had priorities relating to their children's welfare that could be categorised as interpersonal constraints, and these needed to be overcome first and foremost in order to fulfil ETC goals. Furthermore, money was a structural constraint that was also a notable domain of competing priorities amongst these triathletes. The initial outlay for equipment means that money is a structural constraint that must be overcome before some intrapersonal constraints intervene with participation.

The triathletes interviewed for this study also appeared to meet Stebbins' (2001) criteria for participation in serious leisure. Most interviewees approached activities to do with their ETC with a high degree of commitment, supporting McCarville's (2007) suggestion that involvement in triathlon can 'virtually dominate the lives of participants and their families' (p. 160). Many treated their ETC as if it was a job, whilst at the same time maintaining full-time work or primary care for their children. Time pressure was significant, illustrated by the way that some had sacrificed time with friends, family, children and/or their spouse, in favour of pursuing ETC goals.

The point above gives rise to the notion of 'leisure/life balance' among persons engaged in endurance sport ETCs. For some, work was of secondary importance, and their ETC assisted in filling 'emotional holes' (Atkinson, 2008, p. 171) attributable to jobs that may not make them happy. Others felt that they had neglected their parental responsibilities, while some withdrew from or scaled back socialising with non-triathlon friends to realise ETC goals. Triathlon and the associated travel to participate in triathlon events was an addiction for most of these people. As such, research avenues exist into the impacts of addictive leisure on the addict and others close to the addict.

Conclusions and Future Research

This paper is among the first to explore the role and impact of constraints on serious sport tourism. It is also one of the first to do so in the context of ETCs. Our understanding of leisure constraints has been broadened through this research by refashioning them as a series of complex and interrelated competing priorities that must be managed in order to maintain ongoing participation. This is in contrast to some previous studies which have generated lists of factors that merely prevent participation in certain leisure activities (e.g. Crawford & Godbey, 1987; McCarville & Smale, 1993; Alexandris & Carroll, 1997).

A further contribution made by this paper is the notion of realising opportunity costs as a means of negotiating constraints. Although an examination of strategies used by the triathletes to negotiate their unique set of competing priorities was beyond the scope of this paper, this research has highlighted the significant impacts that acceptance of opportunity costs can bring about as serious sport tourists make decisions regarding the allocation of resources between their competing priorities. The impacts of opportunity costs were not only observed at the individual level, but also extended to the triathletes' significant others. Therefore, an important implication arising from this paper is that research into constraints negotiation should consider the ramifications that negotiation strategies have not only for the individual, but also those around them.

In advancing knowledge about serious sport tourism and ETCs, future research might explore whether competing priorities intensify as one progresses in their ETC. For instance, there may be a need for organisations that promote and govern triathlon to make information available to new participants of the potential risks of addiction to the sport, the potential impacts on their families, and how negative impacts might be minimised and managed. Future research might also consider what constrains serious leisure 'addicts' from winding back their involvement in an ETC when the negotiation of competing priorities begins adversely affecting their life, and/or those around them.

Following on from the previous discussion of the interrelated nature of the seven domains of competing priorities, future research could examine how opportunity costs accepted in one domain impacts upon other domains. Such an approach would contribute an enhanced understanding of how constraints are felt, and how the resultant opportunity costs impact upon ETC participants' lives, and others close to them.

Furthermore, while the competing priorities engendered a constant tension in these triathletes' lives and could work to limit their desired level of involvement, no constraints actually *stopped* any of them from pursuing an ETC. Thus, it is evident that these individuals found ways to negotiate the competing priorities that constrain participation in an ETC. Further research on how triathletes negotiate their constraints to the ETC would be of substantial value.

References

- Alexandris, K., & Carroll, B. (1997). An analysis of leisure constraints based on different recreational sport participation levels: results from a study in Greece. *Leisure Sciences, 19*(1), 1-15.
- Alexandris, K., & Stodolska, M. (2004). The influence of perceived constraints on the attitudes toward recreational sport participation. *Society and Leisure, 27*(1), 197-217.
- Atkinson, M. (2008). Triathlon, suffering and exciting significance. *Leisure Studies, 27*(2), 165-180.
- Carr, N. (2000). An exploratory study of young women's use of leisure spaces and times: Constrained, negotiated, or unconstrained behaviour? *World Leisure, 42*(3), 25-32.
- Crawford, D., & Godbey, G. (1987). Reconceptualizing barriers to family leisure. *Leisure Sciences, 9*(2), 119-127.
- Crawford, D., Jackson, E., & Godbey, G. (1991). A hierarchical model of leisure constraints. *Leisure Sciences, 13*(4), 309-320.
- Dimmock, K., & Wilson, E. (2009). Risking comfort? The impact of in-water constraints on recreational scuba diving. *Annals of Leisure Research, 12*(2), 173-194.
- Freudenberg, P. & Arlinghaus, R. (2010) Benefits and constraints of outdoor recreation for people with physical disabilities: Inferences from recreational fishing. *Leisure Sciences, 32*(1), 55-71.
- Frew, E. (2006) Comedy festival attendance: Serious, project-based or casual leisure? In S. Elkington, I. Jones and L. Lawrence (eds). *Serious Leisure: Extensions and Applications* (pp. 105-122). Leisure Studies Association: Eastbourne.
- Getz, D. (2007). *Event studies: Theory, research and policy for planned events*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Getz, D. (2008). Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism Management, 29*, 403-428.
- Getz, D., & McConnell, A. (in press). Serious sport tourism and event travel careers. *Journal of Sport Management*.
- Green, B., & Jones, I. (2005). Serious leisure, social identity and sport tourism. *Sport in Society, 8*(2), 164-181.
- Gibson, H. (2002). Sport tourism at a crossroads? Considerations for the future. In S. Gammon and J. Kurtzmann (eds). *Sport Tourism: Principles and Practice* (pp. 111-128). Leisure Studies Association: Eastbourne.
- Henderson, K., & Bialeschki, M. (1993). Negotiating constraints to women's physical recreation. *Society and Leisure, 16*(2), 389-412.
- Hudson, S. (2000). The segmentation of potential tourists: Constraint differences between men and women. *Journal of Travel Research, 38*(4), 363-368.
- Iso-Ahola, S., & Mannell, R. (1985). Social and psychological constraints on leisure. In M. Wade (Ed.). *Constraints on Leisure* (pp. 111-151). Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Jackson, E. L. (1988). Leisure constraints: A survey of past research. *Leisure Sciences, 10*(2), 203-215.
- Jackson, E., Crawford, D., & Godbey, F. (1993). Negotiation of leisure constraints. *Leisure Sciences, 15*(1), 1-11.
- Kay, T., & Jackson, E. (1991). Leisure despite constraints: The impact of leisure constraints on leisure participation. *Journal of Leisure Research, 23*(4), 301-313.
- Lamont, M., & Kennelly, M. (2010). Competing to compete? Exploring competing priorities as constraints in event travel careers amongst non-elite triathletes. In M. Orams, M. Luck, J. Poulston, & S. Race (Eds.), *Proceedings of the New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference 2010* (pp. 186-200). AUT University, Auckland, November 24-26.
- Little, D. (2002). Women and adventure recreation: Reconstructing leisure constraints and adventure experiences to negotiate continuing participation. *Journal of Leisure Research, 34*(2), 157-177.
- Little, D. (2007). Conceptions of leisure constraints negotiation: A response to the Schneider and Wilhelm Stanis coping model. *Leisure Sciences, 29*(4), 403-408.
- McCarville, R., & Smale, B. (1993). Perceived constraints to leisure participation within five activity domains. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 11*(2), 40-59.
- McCarville, R. (2007). From a fall in the mall to a run in the sun: One journey to Ironman triathlon. *Leisure Sciences, 29*(2), 159-173.

- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Neuman, W. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Pearce, P. (2005). *Tourist behaviour: Themes and conceptual schemas*. Clevedon: Channel View.
- Pennington-Gray, L., & Kerstetter, D. (2001). What do university-educated women want from their pleasure travel experiences? *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(1), 49-56.
- Raymore, L. (2002). Facilitators to leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(1), 37-51.
- Robbins, S., Judge, T., Millett, B., & Waters-Marsh, T. (2008). *Organisational behaviour* (5th ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.
- Shaw, S., Bonen, A., & McCabe, J. (1991). Do more constraints mean less leisure? Examining the relationship between constraints and participation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 23(4), 286-300.
- Shogan, D. (2002). Characterizing constraints of leisure: A Foucaultian analysis of leisure constraints. *Leisure Studies*, 21(1), 27-38.
- Shipway, R., & Jones, I. (2007). Running away from home: understanding visitor experiences and behaviour at sport tourism events. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 9(5), 373-383
- Shipway, R., & Jones, I. (2008). The great suburban Everest: An 'insiders' perspective on experiences at the 2007 Flora London Marathon. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 13(1), 61-77.
- Stebbins, R. (1992). *Amateurs, professionals, and serious leisure*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- Stebbins, R. (2001). *New Directions in the Theory and Research of Serious Leisure*, Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston, New York.
- Sparkes, A. (2002). *Telling tales in sport and physical activity: A qualitative journey*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Wilson, E., & Little, D. (2005). A 'relative escape'? The impact of constraints on women who travel solo. *Tourism Review International*, 9(2), 155-175.
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.