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The role of travel conditions in cycling tourism: implications for destination and event management

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of travel conditions on preferred destination, event, and travel characteristics in the context of Active-Sport-Event Travel Carers among cyclists who travel to take part in events. Travel conditions are circumstances surrounding a trip such as travel with family or the length of travel. A sample of cyclists that travel to participate in events ($N = 1452$) was collected via online survey through cycling organizations and websites. Data analysis consisted of a series of repeated measures ANOVAs and paired sample *t*-tests. The results indicated an individual's event, destination, and travel-style preferences are dependent on whether he or she was traveling with a non-cyclist (e.g. family member) and the distance traveled. Prior research has suggested that for active sport tourists event criteria are more important than destination characteristics and travel preferences remain relatively stagnant with career progression. In contrast, the findings here suggest travel preferences vary based on travel conditions and that attractive destinations only become advantageous if event participants are traveling with non-cyclists or on trips involving longer distances. For instance when non-participant travel companions are included, the entertainment, attractions, and activities available in the destination become much more important to active event tourists. Communities seeking to attract sport tourists as a form of sustainable tourism development would be advised to organize events incorporating these preferences and to consider the influence of travel conditions.

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The number of participatory sport events hosted by communities has grown significantly over the past 10–15 years (Physical Activity Council, 2015; Running USA, 2015). In particular, events oriented toward individual endurance sports such as running, cycling, and triathlons have grown in popularity as people seek opportunities to engage in physical activity while socializing amongst a group of likeminded individuals (e.g. Bull, 2006; Lamont, Kennelly, & Wilson, 2012; Shipway & Jones, 2008). With the growth in the number of events, competition among communities seeking to host these events has

intensified as event and destination managers have realized the tourism benefits associated with the out-of-town active sport tourists attracted to these events (Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012). Kaplanidou and Gibson (2010) categorized this form of sport tourism as *event active sport tourism*, which they described as traveling to an event as a sports participant, rather than the a priori conceptualization of event sport tourism as spectator based (Gibson, 1998).

In conjunction with the growing numbers of participatory sports events, academics have focused increasingly on various aspects associated with taking part in these events from identity (Shipway & Jones, 2008), motivations (Gillett & Kelly, 2006), involvement (McGehee, Yoon, & Cardenas, 2003), social world membership (Getz & Patterson, 2013), and benefits sought (Gibson & Chang, 2012), among others. There are also a few studies that have focused on the role of the destination in an event active sport tourist's decisions to take part in participatory sport events, and more importantly to return to an event in the future. In one of the earliest of such studies, Chalip and McGuirly (2004) segmented marathoners by their running style and their preferences for different attractions in the host destination. The authors recommended that destinations offer bundled services based on the different preferences of the different runner segments. In a study of cycle tour participants, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) focused on the concepts of destination and event image and assessed the impact of this relationship of the participants' intentions to return to the destination and to take part in the event in the future. Adopting a similar focus, Kaplanidou and Gibson (2010) investigated senior games' athletes' intentions to return to participate again based not only on their image of the host community, but their satisfaction with the execution of the event. More recently, Kulczycki and Halpenny (2014) examined how a destination and the host venue for an event can influence cyclists' decisions and experiences associated with taking part in an event. Thus, while the focus on understanding the event participant- destination connection is growing, as communities view these participatory sports events as a form of sustainable tourism development (Gibson et al., 2012), there is a need to develop further work on the hosting of these events from a destination management perspective.

In an attempt to conceptualize the entirety of the intricacies involved in event travel and participation Getz (2008) proposed the concept of the *event travel career* (ETC) to help scholars organize their understanding of motives and travel behaviors and the integral relationship between an event active sport tourist's personal characteristics and those of the event and the destination (Getz & Andersson, 2010; Getz & McConnell, 2011). Getz (2008) suggested ETCs are characterized by an evolution in motivations and preferences for event participation and associated patterns of travel. Developing this idea further, Buning and Gibson (2015) established the term *active-sport-event travel careers* (ASET) in the context of cycling events which they described through a six-stage grounded theory model beginning with initiation and concluding with maturity. Through this study the authors discovered individual travel behavior was more dependent on travel conditions rather than career progression. The term *travel conditions* is defined as the circumstances surrounding a particular trip that lead to altered travel behavior such as traveling with family or the travel distance associated with a specific event or the destination characteristics of the community hosting the event.

Historically, attractive destinations are thought to have a comparative advantage in attracting tourists (Gunn, 1972). Research on active sport tourism has generally suggested

the contrary as event criteria have been demonstrated to be paramount while destination criteria are relatively unimportant in influencing event travel and choosing to participate in a specific event (e.g. Buning & Gibson, 2015; Bull, 2006; Chalip & McGurity, 2004; Kulczycki & Haplenny, 2014; Snelgrove & Wood, 2010). However, prior research has tended not to acknowledge that travel behavior may be based on the variability associated with travel conditions that spur individuals to alter their preferences and behavior. The purpose of the current study was to explore the influence of travel conditions on preferred destination, event, and travel characteristics amongst event active sport tourists, particularly cyclists who travel to participate in events (see Figure 1).

Literature review

Event travel careers

The idea behind the ETC (Getz, 2008) was originally derived from an integration of ideas from two existing concepts: *serious leisure* (Stebbins, 1992) and *travel careers* (Pearce, 2005). Serious leisure is the idea that engagement in a leisure activity ranges from casual to serious as individuals adopt a lifestyle of participation. Stebbins divided serious leisure into three types: amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer. He suggested that to be construed as serious leisure an activity must be substantial and interesting and have the ability to develop into a career for the individual directed at the acquisition and expression of the skills and abilities associated with the activity (Stebbins, 1992). Six distinctive qualities delineate serious leisure: perseverance, career potential, significant personal effort, durable benefits, a unique ethos, and identification with the leisure pursuit (Stebbins, 1982). Of the three types of serious leisure the focus of the ETC is on amateurs, who are motivated by seriousness and commitment to the activity through structured practice, schedules, and organization. The complimentary concept of travel careers as

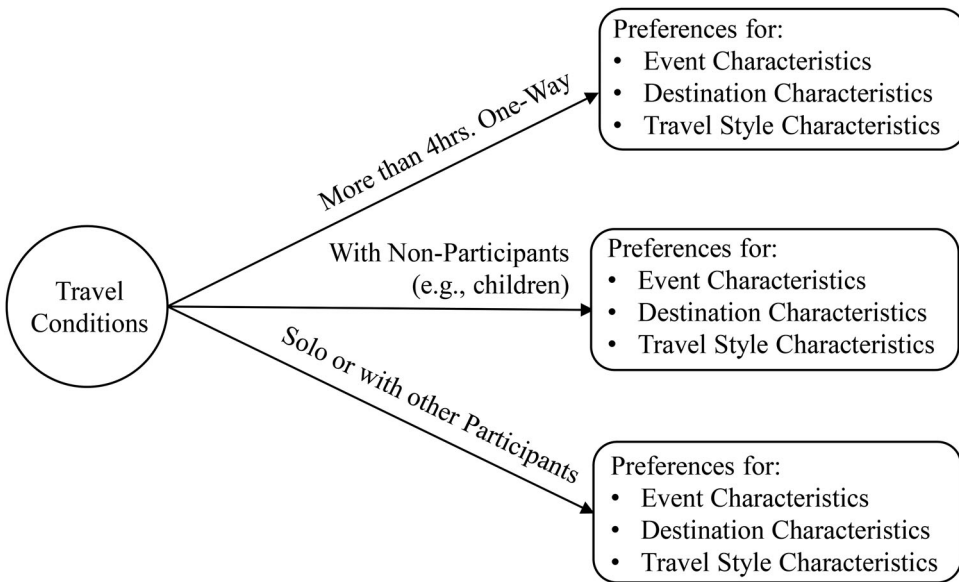


Figure 1. Travel conditions conceptual model: understanding preferences for sport event participants.

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developed by Pearce (1988, 2005) is the view that tourists are motivated differently as they become more experienced travelers. Initially Pearce depicted this progression as the *travel career ladder* then later refined it as the *travel career pattern* (TCP). The TCP is described by Pearce (2005) as a dynamic concept based on identifiable stages that tourists experience throughout their travels that are influenced by their previous travel experiences, life stage, and/or contingency factors. Further, this pattern of motivation and career progress can be operationalized through travel experience, age, and life cycle.

Later, Getz expanded upon his original conception of the ETC through empirical research on cyclists and runners. Getz and Andersson (2010) investigated the tenets of the ETC through a study of runners at a Swedish half-marathon, while Getz and McConnell (2011) studied cyclists participating in a Canadian mountain bike event. Both of these studies focused on investigating six dimensions of the proposed ETC trajectory: motivation, travel style, temporal (i.e. frequency or travel and participation), spatial (i.e. distance traveled), event types, and destination criteria. This work was later followed up by Getz and Patterson's (2013) netnography of runners, mountain bikers, food lovers, and ballroom dancers and Patterson, Getz, and Gubb's (2016) investigation into the ETCs of yoga participants, which both argue the concept of social worlds provides a framework for the investigation of ETCs. Social worlds is a form a social organization based on the idea that individuals develop and maintain subcultures around a primary activity and is defined by Unruh (1980) as '... amorphous and diffuse constellations of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into spheres of interest and involvement for a participant' (p. 277).

Active sport event travel career

In developing the ETC concept further and to demarcate the active sport tourist, Buning and Gibson (2015) defined the ASETC as 'a career like pattern of involvement and commitment to event-related travel and participation in physically active sport events, which leads to progression through time with regard to motivations, preferences, and modified behavior' (p. 555). Through a grounded theory study Buning and Gibson (2015) proposed ASETCs are illustrated through six stages beginning with initiation, which is described as the driving force behind his or her initial involvement in the sport and his/her first event. The second stage, introduction, is portrayed through little to no social connection to other cyclists, minimalistic travel style, and negligible event, travel, and destination knowledge. Next, expansion is the phase when individuals begin to increase their travel frequency, social connection to others, develop opinions on event evaluation, reduce the importance of superfluous event attributes (e.g. t-shirts and giveaways), and become willing to try new cycling disciplines. Buning and Gibson (2015) note that frequency of event participation is largely dependent on location, event availability, and seasonality. The fourth stage, peak threshold, is a pivotal moment for individuals pursuing an ASETC as they reach an upper limit to their involvement and participation in the activity due to constraints. At this point they choose to maintain involvement, reduce involvement, or take a sabbatical.

The fifth stage, maintenance, occurs as individuals maintain their travel frequency, often disconnect from non-career cyclists, and are strongly motivated to maintain a healthy lifestyle and social connections. Maturity, the final stage, corresponds with

advanced life stage and occurs as individuals reduce travel frequency, intensify their evaluation of event and destination characteristics, and increase their willingness to volunteer and mentor new cyclists. A follow-up study aimed at testing many of these suppositions quantitatively was performed by Buning and Gibson (2016) through a broad based international survey of cyclists. The results suggest motivation related to exploring/learning, social connection, mastery competence, giving back and competition against others escalated along with career progression. Further, Buning and Gibson (2016) found preferences for events characteristics also evolved with career progression, but preferences related to destinations and style of travel were mostly constant with career progression.

Destination, event, and travel characteristics

A growing body of literature has focused on understanding the preferred travel behavior of both event and non-event active sport tourists using a range of techniques and often in the context of cycling. For instance, Ritchie, Tkaczynski, and Faulks (2010) investigated the motivation and travel behavior of Australian cycling club members through involvement profiles. The results demonstrated that using involvement as a clustering variable creates segments of cycle tourists that differ based on gender, age, skill, experience, cycle frequency, and regularity of travel. Gibson and Chang (2012) also found that benefits sought from taking part in an organized cycle tour varied by involvement level, gender, and life stage with middle-aged participants emphasizing the relaxation associated with participating, whereas later life participants focused on the opportunities to experience new things and socializing. An earlier study by Ritchie (1998), which is often considered one of the first academic papers on cycling tourism, investigated touring cyclists in New Zealand. Of relevance to the current study, Ritchie found campgrounds and hostels were the most desirable accommodations; respondents were highly motivated to use alternate routes to avoid traffic and experience the environment; and road safety, weather, scenery, quality of driving, traffic, and signage were the most important factors to touring cyclists. Kaplanidou and Vogt's (2007) study of touring cyclists revealed destination image did not significantly influence sport event image. Further, satisfaction with the event did not influence revisit intentions, whereas destination satisfaction and past experience with the destination did indeed influence revisit intentions.

Moving to a different segment of the cycling tourism market Bull (2006) investigated the travel behavior of road racing cyclists in the UK. He found the majority of the racing cyclists took part in events requiring a day trip and trips requiring an overnight stay, only a fifth of the sample indicated they incorporate vacations into cycling trips and about half reported the destination was not important factor for cycling trips. Still, about half of the racing cyclists indicated they prefer an attractive environment/surroundings for cycling events. Another study into road racing cyclists by Kulczycki and Halpenny (2014) revealed cycling competition and event infrastructure (e.g. parking and bathrooms) were more important than destination elements such as scenery and tourism infrastructure (e.g. shopping and accommodations). Using conjoint analysis Larson and Won (2012) found road racing cyclists' preferred event characteristics differed based on level of recreational specialization. Specifically, the highly specialized ranked as prize purse the second most important characteristic whereas the least specialized group ranked point series as second. Regardless of specialization level travel distance was ranked as

the most important event factor. Investigating mountain bike racers, Getz and McConnell (2011), discovered the highest rated event preferences were organization, a challenging course, scenery, and an informative easy to use website, while cost, prizes, size, and exclusivity were not important. Regarding destination importance, Getz and McConnell state the following:

These factors were of lesser importance. It is quite possible that the TransRockies Challenge is so unique, even iconic in the mountain-biking world that the location and destination area is not particularly relevant. Or it might be that cross-country mountain biking is so dependent on rugged terrain that the traditional concept of a destination does not apply, only the site and route features matter. (p. 334)

Another segment of cycling tourism, charity events, was the focus of Snelgrove and Wood's (2010) study into the identity and motives of first time and repeat participants and confirms this same idea. The authors discovered learning about the destination was relatively unimportant compared to the physical, social, and cycling identity aspects of the event. A subsequent study on charity cycling events found the unique theme of overcoming the fear and anxiety related to cycling with traffic were powerful push factors to participate in an event (Coghlan, 2012).

Focusing specifically on cycling routes Downward and Lumsdon (2001) investigated the factors important to recreational cycle tourists in the UK. The findings revealed the cyclists strongly preferred quality scenery, a good network of cycling routes, quiet roads, and signed traffic-free routes. A similar study by Chen and Chen (2013) using a non-tourist sample of Taiwanese recreational cyclists found that individuals with higher levels of recreational specialization preferred more challenging routes and varied experiences compared to those reporting low recreational specialization. In general, the cyclists preferred cycling routes that had nearby attractions, cycling facilities (i.e. toilets and bike repair equipment), information centers, and bike-specific paths. Lamont and Jenkins (2013) used recreational specialization to segment participants of an Australian cycling event into intermediate and expert groups which revealed they preferred different course lengths and had varying opinions on event timing. Another study from Taiwan conducted by Lee and Huang (2014) using a Delphi study of experienced cycle tourists investigated the factors that attract cycle tourists revealing weather, bike facilities separated from vehicles, and road surface quality were the most important determinants of destination attractiveness. Lee, Chen, and Huang (2014) reported similar findings from a small sample of experienced Taiwanese touring and racing cyclists with the addition of grocery/convenience stores and lodging as important attributes of destination attractiveness.

Additionally, a wide range of facilitators to bicycle tourism have been revealed through the gray literature including: alternative routes, clean/smooth roads, low traffic, driver education, route safety, restaurants/stores nearby, maps/signage, lodging/camping, diverse scenery, bike-friendly businesses, length of ride, attractions, route variety, public transport, tour operators, and storage facilities (Cumberland County, 2000; Faulks, Ritchie, & Fluker, 2007; Nickerson et al., 2013; Parks & Trails New York, 2010). Conversely, Lamont and Buultjens (2011) explored the impediments to cycling tourism with an Australian sample and found perceptions of road safety, poor infrastructure (e.g. road quality, amenities, and services), and complications with the transportation of bicycles on public transport (i.e. air,

train, and bus). However, researchers have yet to examine the role of travel conditions on preferred event, destination, and travel characteristics. Thus, three research questions were posed to guide the study:

- RQ1: Do *event-related* preferences differ based upon the travel conditions of traveling solo/with other cyclists, traveling with non-cyclists, and non-regional travel?
- RQ2: Do *destination* preferences differ based upon the travel conditions of traveling solo/with other cyclists, traveling with non-cyclists, and non-regional travel?
- RQ3: Do *travel-style* preferences differ based upon the travel conditions of traveling solo/with other cyclists and traveling with non-cyclists?

Method

Data collection

A quantitative approach was used to investigate the role of travel conditions in destination, event, and travel preferences. Amateur cyclists who were actively engaged, beginning, or have culminated active sport event travel served as the context of the study. Typically, data collection on this topic has focused on a single event; however, this approach is limited as the unit of analysis should be the individual and not limited to a specific event (Buning & Gibson, 2015; Getz & McConnell, 2011). However, data collection outside of an actual event eliminates the ability to use a sampling frame such as a registration database. Thus, the participant sample was recruited via partnerships created with cycling organizations (i.e. local cycling clubs), social networks, and industry groups (i.e. event promoters and cycling websites), an approach advanced by previous work on travel careers (i.e. Buning & Gibson, 2015; Getz & McConnell, 2011). In order to qualify for the study, potential respondents were asked two screening questions based on Lamont's (2009) definition of cycling tourism. If potential respondents had not traveled to participate in a cycling event that met the following criteria and/or were under the age of 18 they were excluded from the study. As adapted from Lamont (2009) the purpose of the travel must have been to actively participate in a cycling event that required a 50-mile, one-way trip or an overnight stay, defined as being away from home for a 24-hour period. Relying on Dillman, Smyth, and Christian's (2009) recommendations, a three-contact survey strategy (initial invitation and two follow-up invitations) was utilized to encourage responses.

Instrumentation

As part of a larger national study on active event travel, the questionnaire for the current study consisted of items identified in earlier research about active sport event travel (i.e. Buning & Gibson, 2015; Getz & McConnell, 2011) measuring preferences for event characteristics (22-items), destination characteristics (10-items), and travel-style characteristics (12-items). The 22 items measuring event preferences assessed characteristics such as size, safety, website quality, scenery, entry fees, sponsors, prestige, support, and course difficulty. The 10 items measuring destination preferences assessed characteristics including weather, local entertainment, scenery, terrain, and family activities. Lastly, the 12 travel-style items assessed characteristics related to costs, accommodations, mode of

transportation, trip duration, and the opportunity to visit with friends/family or combine with a vacation. All preference items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*).

Based on previous research on travel careers (Buning & Gibson, 2015), the event and destination preference items were replicated on the questionnaire within the context of three travel conditions: traveling to an event solo or with other cyclists (TS/OC), event travel with non-cycling travel companions (Tw/NC), and non-regional travel defined as travel to events that required more than 4 h of travel one-way ($T > 4$ h). The travel-style items were measured across two travel conditions: TS/OC and Tw/NC. Qualifying questions paired with skip logic were utilized to prevent respondents from answering questions that did not apply to their travel patterns. Participants were also asked about the number of events they had completed within the past year and average time spent cycling in a week in hours. Lastly, demographic items were included consisting of: gender, age, employment status, ethnicity, education, marital status, household income, and location. The questionnaire was then pretested through cognitive interviews with five prospective participants to reduce measurement error (Willis, 2005). The cognitive interviewing procedure improved questionnaire design through a think-aloud process that identified problematic questions and misunderstandings (Drennan, 2003). After the cognitive interview process, final revisions to the questionnaire were completed and it was distributed online for data collection through the aforementioned partnerships.

Sample characteristics

The online data collection procedure procured $N = 1452$ total usable responses. The sample was predominantly male (74.7%), married (35.8%), college educated (88.8%), not a first-generation immigrant (95.8%), and white/Caucasian (91.1%). The majority of the sample reported annual household income between US \$30,000 and \$129,000 (62.7%) with a median between US \$90,000 and \$109,000 (14.3%). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 85 years old ($M = 52.03$, $SD = 13.45$). Regarding cycling characteristics, the sample reported having 1 month to 60 years of active cycling event travel experience ($M = 12.42$, $SD = 9.97$), a mean of 9.17 hrs. spent cycling during an average week ($SD = 5.71$ hrs.), and attended 0 to 55 ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 5.85$) events in the previous year. The overall highest rated event, destination, and travel-style preference items respectively were 'event is well organized' ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .75$), 'destination is a safe place to stay and visit' ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .99$), and 'I can drive there' ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.12$). The overall lowest rated event, destination, and travel-style items were 'prize money is awarded' ($M = 1.34$, $SD = .825$), 'event is in a world-class destination' ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 1.10$), and 'expensive/luxury accommodations' ($M = 1.43$, $SD = .79$). To ensure sampling error was not a significant threat to the generalizability of the study the characteristics of the sample were compared to the data from the United States national governing body for cycling (i.e. USA Cycling, Larson, 2013) and other studies on cycling tourism (e.g. Bull, 2006; Getz & McConnell, 2011; Lamont & Jenkins, 2013) revealing similarities between samples.

Data analysis

Data analysis consisted of four steps and was conducted via SPSS 22.00 statistics software. First, descriptive statistics were calculated to gain an overall understanding of the sample

and investigate coding errors, skewness, and kurtosis concerns. Second, to answer RQ1 a series of repeated measures one-way ANOVAs were conducted to compare the preferred event characteristics (22-items) across the three travel conditions (i.e. TS/OC, Tw/NC, and $T > 4$ h). Third, to address RQ2 a series of repeated measures one-way ANOVAs were conducted to compare the preferred destination characteristics (10-items) across the three travel conditions (i.e. TS/OC, Tw/NC, and $T > 4$ h). Post hoc tests were performed at the $p < .05$ level of significance in conjunction with the ANOVAs using Bonferroni correction, a technique used with multiple comparisons to ensure the overall confidence level is sufficiently high (Agresti & Finlay, 2009). Lastly to answer RQ3, a paired samples t-test was conducted to assess the differences in preferred travel-style characteristics across the TS/OC and Tw/NC travel conditions. Initially, an exploratory factor analysis for the event, destination, and travel-style characteristics was conducted, but no factor structure emerged that was statistically or conceptually adequate; thus the items were analyzed individually which provides more actionable implications.

Results

Event preferences

In response to RQ1, the results indicated preferred event characteristics are dependent on three travel conditions: TS/OC, Tw/NC, and $T > 4$ h. The series of ANOVAs revealed statistically significant differences between the three travel conditions for 21 of the 22 event items (Table 1). The item 'small and intimate (few participants)' was the only non-significant event-related characteristic ($F(1, 648) = 1.78, p > .05$). The complete results for the repeated measures ANOVAs and the pairwise comparisons of the main effects are provided in Table 1. Of the 22 items, 18 event preferences were significantly rated less important when traveling with non-cyclists compared to travel solo or with other cyclists ($M_{TS/OC} = 1.61_{\min}$ to 4.38_{\max} ; $M_{Tw/NC} = 1.39_{\min}$ – 4.05_{\max}). Only the item 'a recommendation to attend the event from someone I trust' was higher when traveling with non-cyclists ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.57$; $M_{Tw/NC} = 2.93$). Further, this item was rated as the most important with travel of more than 4 h ($M_{T > 4h} = 3.28$).

Indeed, five items were significantly greater with the $T > 4$ h condition compared to the TS/OC condition: 'recommendation to attend from someone I trust' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.57$; $M_{T > 4h} = 3.28$), 'event website is use friendly' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.65$; $M_{T > 4h} = 3.93$), 'everything I need is on the website/social media' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.70$; $M_{T > 4h} = 3.92$), 'neutral support, SAG stops, aid stations' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.53$; $M_{T > 4h} = 3.76$), 'event and course safety' ($M_{TS/OC} = 4.03$; $M_{T > 4h} = 4.19$). Three items were significantly more important when traveling more than 4 h one-way and the least important in travel with non-cyclists: 'everything I need to know is on the website/social media' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.70$; $M_{Tw/NC} = 3.54$; $M_{T > 4h} = 3.92$), 'event has neutral support' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.53$; $M_{Tw/NC} = 3.36$; $M_{T > 4h} = 3.76$), and 'event and course safety' ($M_{TS/OC} = 4.03$; $M_{Tw/NC} = 3.90$; $M_{T > 4h} = 4.19$). Three items were significantly higher when traveling solo or with other cyclists than with non-cyclists and or on trips more than 4 h one-way: 'I want a new experience every time' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.17$; $M_{Tw/NC} = 2.29$; $M_{T > 4h} = 2.70$), 'a scenic and interesting course' ($M_{TS/OC} = 4.12$; $M_{Tw/NC} = 3.62$; $M_{T > 4h} = 3.97$), and 'I prefer to go back to the same event(s)' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.87$; $M_{Tw/NC} = 2.51$; $M_{T > 4h} = 2.60$).

Table 1. Event preferences repeated measures ANOVA results.

Event item	Travel condition						<i>F</i> (1, 648)	Post hoc
	Solo or w/cyclists		w/Non- cyclists		More than 4 h			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>		
Prize money is awarded	1.37	.03	1.33	.03	1.41	.04	12.38**	2 < 3**
A low entry fee	3.07	.04	2.88	.04	2.98	.05	16.75**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3*
It is a challenging course	3.23	.05	2.82	.05	3.21	.05	73.26**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
The larger the better (many participants)	2.29	.05	2.07	.05	2.32	.05	53.03**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
The event is well organized	4.38	.03	4.05	.04	4.37	.04	73.73**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
Participants receive gifts (shirts and medals)	2.12	.04	1.95	.05	2.13	.05	45.83**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
A course that makes it easy to get a good result	1.91	.04	1.76	.04	1.91	.05	22.81**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
Event is exclusive	1.61	.04	1.39	.03	1.64	.04	79.29**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
Involvement of a major corporate sponsor	1.63	.04	1.46	.33	1.59	.04	41.23**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
I want a new event experience every time	3.17	.04	2.29	.05	2.70	.05	257.00**	1 > 2**, 1 > 3**, 2 < 3**
Recommendation to attend from someone I trust	2.57	.05	2.93	.05	3.28	.05	133.25**	1 < 2**, 1 < 3**, 2 < 3**
The event gets media coverage	1.63	.04	1.53	.04	1.66	.04	17.815**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
A scenic and interesting course	4.12	.04	3.62	.05	3.97	.04	114.61**	1 > 2**, 1 > 3**, 2 < 3**
Small and intimate (few participants)	1.83	.04	1.78	.04	1.80	.04	1.78	–
A party atmosphere surrounding the event	2.62	.05	2.55	.05	2.64	.05	5.27*	2 < 3*
I prefer to go back to the same event(s)	2.87	.04	2.51	.04	2.60	.04	56.68**	1 > 2**, 1 > 3**, 2 < 3*
Event website is user-friendly	3.65	.04	3.59	.05	3.93	.04	70.06**	1 < 3**, 2 < 3**
Everything I need is on the website/social media	3.70	.05	3.54	.05	3.92	.05	53.15**	1 > 2**, 1 < 3**, 2 < 3**
Reputation and prestige of the event	2.64	.05	2.34	.05	2.72	.05	82.07**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
Neutral support, SAG stops, aid stations, etc.	3.53	.05	3.36	.05	3.76	.05	53.90**	1 > 2*, 1 < 3**, 2 < 3**
Event has a professional cycling component	1.71	.04	1.60	.04	1.70	.04	13.63**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3*
Event and course safety	4.03	.04	3.90	.05	4.19	.04	35.17**	1 > 2*, 1 < 3**, 2 < 3**

Note: All items measured from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). Pairwise comparisons performed using Bonferroni correction. 1 = solo or with cyclists, 2 = traveling with non-cyclists, and 3 = traveling more than 4 h one-way.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .001$.

Destination preferences

In response to RQ2, a series of repeated measures ANOVAs revealed statistically significant differences in preferred destination characteristics based on the three travel conditions for 9 of the 10 items. Only the single item 'the destination is scenic' was non-significant ($F(1, 622) = 2.79, p > .05$). The complete results for the repeated measures ANOVAs for destination characteristics are located in Table 2. The pairwise comparisons revealed four items were significantly more important when traveling with non-cyclists than the other travel conditions: 'entertainment is available in the area' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.47; M_{Tw/NC} = 3.07; M_{T > 4h} = 2.86$), 'there are things to do in the area besides the event' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.98; M_{Tw/NC} = 3.46; M_{T > 4h} = 3.21$), 'area has activities for families' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.20; M_{Tw/NC} = 2.92; M_{T > 4h} = 2.53$) and 'destination is of historical significance' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.30; M_{Tw/NC} = 2.58; M_{T > 4h} = 2.46$). Five items were rated as significantly more important with the $T > 4h$ condition than the TS/OC condition: 'expected weather conditions are favorable' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.62; M_{T > 4h} = 3.84$), 'event is a world-class destination' ($M_{TS/OC} = 1.91; M_{T > 4h} = 2.19$), 'destination is iconic' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.56; M_{T > 4h} = 2.68$), 'destination is of historical significance' ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.30; M_{T > 4h} = 2.46$) and 'destination is a safe place to stay and visit' ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.98; M_{T > 4h} = 4.10$). Only one item the 'destination has attractive terrain' was more important with the $T > 4h$ condition and the least important with the Tw/NC condition ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.76; M_{Tw/NC} = 3.59; M_{T > 4h} = 3.82$). This was also the only item where the TS/OC condition was significantly greater than the Tw/NC condition ($p < .001$).

Table 2. Destination preferences repeated measures ANOVA results.

Destination item	Travel condition						F (1, 622)	Post hoc
	Solo or w/ cyclists		w/Non- cyclists		More than 4 h			
	M	SE	M	SE	M	SE		
Expected weather conditions are favorable	3.62	.04	3.80	.05	3.84	.04	48.55**	1 < 2**, 1 < 3**
The event is in a world-class destination	1.91	.04	2.10	.05	2.19	.05	46.96**	1 < 2**, 1 < 3**
Entertainment is available in the area	2.47	.04	3.07	.04	2.86	.05	110.53**	1 < 2**, 1 < 3**, 2 > 3**
Things to do in the area besides the event	2.98	.05	3.46	.05	3.21	.05	67.07**	1 < 2**, 1 < 3**, 2 > 3**
Area has activities for families	2.20	.05	2.92	.06	2.53	.05	177.16**	1 < 2**, 1 < 3**, 2 > 3**
Destination is iconic/unique/famous	2.56	.04	2.68	.05	2.68	.05	7.29*	1 < 2*, 1 < 3*
Destination is of historical significance	2.30	.05	2.58	.05	2.46	.05	29.72*	1 < 2**, 1 < 3**, 2 > 3*
Destination is scenic	3.74	.04	3.72	.05	3.79	.04	2.79	–
Destination has attractive terrain	3.76	.04	3.59	.04	3.82	.04	35.00**	1 > 2**, 2 < 3**
Destination is a safe place to stay and visit	3.98	.04	4.02	.05	4.10	.04	15.44**	1 < 3**

Note: All items measured from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). Estimated marginal means and standard errors reported. Pairwise comparisons performed using Bonferroni correction. 1 = solo or with cyclists, 2 = traveling with non-cyclists, and 3 = traveling more than 4 h one-way.

**p* < .05.

***p* < .001.

Travel-style preferences

Lastly to answer RQ3, a paired samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two travel conditions for 10 of the 12 travel-style items. The two non-significant items were ‘keeping my overall costs low’ ($t = 1.36, p > .05$) and ‘the ability to travel to the cycling event and return home without staying overnight’ ($t = -1.66, p > .05$). The complete paired samples t-test results are located in Table 3. Six items were rated as more important when traveling with non-cyclists compared to traveling solo or with other cyclists: ‘my spouse or family wants to go there’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.80; M_{TW/NC} = 3.46$), ‘special travel accommodation packages are available’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.39; M_{TW/NC} = 2.56$), ‘availability of staying with friends or family instead of a hotel’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.09; M_{TW/NC} = 2.32$), ‘expensive/luxury accommodations’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 1.44; M_{TW/NC} = 3.63$), and ‘I can visit family or friends in the area’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.18; M_{TW/NC} = 3.16$). Conversely, four items were significantly greater when traveling solo or with other cyclists compared to traveling with non-cyclists: ‘my friends are also going’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.00; M_{TW/NC} = 2.79$), ‘economical/budget accommodations’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.24; M_{TW/NC} = 3.14$), ‘I can drive there’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 3.81; M_{TW/NC} = 2.52$), and ‘opportunity of combining the trip with a vacation’ ($M_{TS/OC} = 2.90; M_{TW/NC} = 1.61$).

Discussion

Previously, research indicated that travel behavior evolved as a result of progression through an ASETC, that attractive destinations have a comparative advantage (Getz, 2008; Getz & McConnell, 2011), and destination characteristics were relatively unimportant compared to event characteristics (Buning & Gibson, 2015; Bull, 2006; Chalip & Kulczycki & Haplenny, 2014; McGurty, 2004; Snelgrove & Wood, 2010). However, the current study found travel preferences are more so an outcome related to the travel conditions surrounding a trip. The results indicated an individual’s event, destination, and travel-style preferences are dependent on whether he or she was traveling solo or with other cyclists, with a non-cyclist (e.g. family member), and/or the distance traveled (i.e. local vs regional).

Table 3. Travel-style preferences paired samples *t*-test results.

Travel-style item	Travel condition				df	<i>t</i>
	Solo or w/ cyclists		w/Non- cyclists			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Keeping my overall costs low	3.34	1.09	3.30	1.22	745	1.36
My friends are also going	3.00	1.17	2.79	1.22	747	5.39**
My spouse or family wants to go there	2.80	1.32	3.46	1.29	745	-14.10**
Special travel and accommodation packages are provided	2.39	1.18	2.56	1.27	750	-4.55**
Reducing my total travel time, from leaving home to returning	2.77	1.11	2.85	1.20	751	-1.97*
Availability of staying with friends or family instead of a hotel	2.09	1.19	2.32	1.25	751	-6.18**
Economical/budget accommodations	3.24	1.10	3.14	1.23	740	2.62*
Expensive/luxury accommodations	1.44	0.79	3.63	1.17	752	-41.97**
I can drive there	3.81	1.09	2.52	1.24	753	22.00**
I can visit family or friends in the area	2.18	1.12	3.16	1.26	746	-18.84**
Opportunity of combining the trip with a vacation	2.90	1.19	1.61	.93	626	23.66*
Ability to travel to the cycling event and return home without staying overnight	2.25	1.18	2.31	1.22	637	-1.66

Note: All items measured from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*).

**p* < .05.

***p* < .001.

Regarding the first research question, most event-related preferences were less important when traveling with non-cyclists and conversely more important when traveling to an event solo or with other cyclists. The one exception to this was the item incorporating a word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendation about the event from a trusted source. This was also important when traveling to an event more than 4 h from home with other family members. In the world of tourism generally, WOM recommendations are known to be powerful determinants of decision-making behavior (Chen & Tasi, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008). In the context of a sport event, this also makes sense as a sport tourist making a decision about whether to bring his or her family to the event is likely to seek out more information about the suitability of the event for family members and similar to other tourism-related decisions would put trust in the opinions of others who have attended the event previously, more so than a website or other information source. This is consistent with Kaplanidou and Gibson's (2010) investigation of Senior Games participants' intentions to participate in an event again in the future. They postulated that the power of the athlete social world (Unruh, 1980) to evaluate the 'worth' of an event should be considered by event managers and future research should examine WOM among sport tourists. The results of this study seem to suggest that especially when traveling with non-competitors and trips of more than 4 h from home that WOM is more influential than official event-related sources such as websites.

Conversely, when participants were traveling solo or with other cyclists, event-related preferences such as low entry fees, a challenging/scenic course, and taking part in the same event again were rated as more important. These findings are also consistent with what we know about 'pure' sport tourists, that is where sport is the main purpose of the trip (Robinson & Gammon, 2004). For example, existing studies on event active sport tourists show that sport-related criteria are important for the satisfaction of the athletes (Ryan & Lockyer, 2002) and is linked to their intentions to take part in an event again (Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010). If active sport tourists are investing their time and money in an event, especially one that is further away from home then event attributes and new

experiences and challenging courses are likely to act as motives alongside sport-specific motives to participate in a particular event (Buning & Gibson, 2015; Bull, 2006; Robinson & Gammon, 2004). Certainly, these findings extend Buning and Gibson (2015) suppositions, as individuals tend to diminish the importance of several event attributes when traveling with non-cyclists, but they become more critical of these event attributes when traveling further away from home.

In answer to the second research question about destination characteristics, when traveling with non-cycling companions, destination attributes such as the availability of entertainment in the area, things to do besides the event, availability of activities for children, and historical attractions were more important. These findings support our suppositions above about the need to put more consideration on non-cycling travel companions and family when considering a particular event, but this time in the context of the destination. Moreover, when traveling more than 4 h away from home, several destination preferences were rated as more important including favorable weather, image of the destination as 'world-class' and iconic, has historic qualities, and has a reputation for being safe. These results are consistent with preferences noted in other forms of tourism as it is well-known in tourism for example that the presence and the age of children are very influential on travel choices in terms of accommodation, style of trip, and mode of transportation (e.g. Lawson, 1991; Ryan & Glendon, 1998; Schanzel & Yeoman, 2014).

Crompton (1979) in his classic study on tourist motivation noted that when traveling with children, parents are often more conscious about the educational nature of a trip, which might link here to the finding about the importance of history in the destination preferences. The issue of safety is also becoming more important in tourism as the issue of perceived risk has been linked to choice of destination and whether individuals will travel or not (Lepp & Gibson, 2008). Thus, again when traveling with non-cycling companions, especially events that are further from home, the evaluation of a destination as safe, which can include risk of crime, food, health, or the bigger risk factors such as terrorism or natural disasters, becomes more important to travel decision-making (Lepp & Gibson, 2003). Not surprisingly, perception of risk has been a growing consideration for the planners of mega sporting events (Qi, Gibson, & Zhang, 2009) and is beginning to filter down to the participatory events especially after the incidents at the Boston Marathon in 2013 (Seelye, 2014).

Similar to the results about event preferences, attractive terrain was the only destination item that was reported to be less important when traveling with non-cyclists and more important with travel more than 4 h. Scenery was the solitary destination preference that seems to be more universally important regardless of travel party composition when traveling further from home. Indeed, traveling longer distances leads to increased expenditure in the destination in total and per day (e.g. Cobb & Olberding, 2010; Tang & Turco, 2001; Weed et al., 2014). Conceivably, when active sport tourists choose to invest financially and temporally in a trip and include non-event participants the more emphasis they put on enjoying and experiencing the destination (Buning & Gibson, 2015). However, active sport tourists traveling less than 4 h by themselves or with other event participants perceive the destination to be relatively unimportant.

Travel style was also largely dependent on travel conditions as participants altered their preferred travel style to accommodate the interests of non-event participant(s). If participants were traveling solo/with other cyclists, they preferred traveling with friends, keeping

costs low, budget lodging, driving, and combining the trip with a vacation. However, once a non-cyclist companion was introduced, the participants shifted their travel style toward luxury/special accommodations, spouse/family desires, travel packages, reduced travel time, and staying with and or visiting with friends or family in the area. However, the desire to decrease travel costs and accommodation costs was important regardless of travel condition, but differed in the way it was manifested. For the solo or cyclists traveling with other cyclists budget accommodations were sought. However, for trips with non-cyclists, comfortable and may be even luxurious accommodations were sought, but with the availability of special accommodation packages to allay the costs. Surprisingly, the opportunity of combining a cycling event trip with a vacation was more important when traveling solo or with other cyclists. In some ways this finding conflicts with our other results about the importance of family-friendly activities and more comfortable accommodations when traveling with non-cyclists.

Perhaps the participants' conceptions as to what constitutes a family vacation are important in explaining these preferences. Schanzel and Yeoman (2014) suggest there is a need to consider all family members' preferences when looking at family vacations including those of the children, the desire for relief from parental expectations especially for mothers, and even the inclusion of grandparents in such trips. Thus, travel to a cycling event is likely not to be considered as a family vacation, but may be perceived a short break. Certainly this finding seems to suggest that cyclists may prefer to distinguish traditional family style vacations from cycling-related vacations possibly as part of a tradeoff between competing life priorities that amateur athletes make in an attempt to negotiate constraints (Lamont & Kennelly, 2011; Lamont et al., 2012). At face value, this finding appears to contradict the proposition advanced by Getz and McConnell (2011) that there should be an increase in the combination of event-specific and mixed motive trips with career progression. Perhaps career progression needs to be put into the context of family dynamics as suggested by the results of this study and Lamont and Kennelly's (2011) work on competing priorities. Certainly, our results seem to suggest that travel style is more likely dependent on the presence of non-participant travel companions and not necessarily based on an inherent desire to not travel with other cyclists as suggested by Bull (2006) who found only a small proportion of the racing cyclists he studied traveled with other cycling club members.

Conclusion

Prior research into active sport tourism has tended to overlook the concept of travel conditions and has adopted the position that event active tourists primarily focus on event criteria as they make travel decisions (e.g. Getz & McConnell, 2011). In contrast, the results of this study seem to suggest that event, destination, and travel preferences vary based on travel conditions, particularly the presence of non-event participants or events that require longer travel distances. As a result, communities that have identified events as part of their economic development plan would be advised to strategically address not only the planning and execution of the event, but also attractions and facilities for travel companions. This is where community partnerships involving both sporting bodies such as events rights holder and sports commissions and destination management organizations (i.e. convention and visitor bureaus) should be working in unison as each

stakeholder has knowledge in management, marketing, and logistics to create participatory sports events that attract and satisfy the active sport tourist and their companions. Weed (2003) called for cross-sectoral leveraging of events to bridge the divide between sporting and tourism agencies. Almost 15 years later, as communities around the world have embraced sports events, particularly the smaller-scale participatory variety, there are many examples of successful community partnerships where the hosting of smaller-scale events has become a sustainable form of tourism development (Gibson et al., 2012).

However, some challenges still exist such as the need to focus on not only the event participants, but their travel companions as suggested by the current study. Still, few scholars have examined the concept of flow-on tourism associated with hosting these events (Taks, Chalip, Green, Kesenne, & Martyn, 2009). Taks et al. defined flow-on tourism as 'tourism activities beyond the event but around the time of the event' (p. 121) and identified four segments of event attendees of whom first timers were more likely to take part in other tourism activities, as were those who engaged in searching for additional information about the destination before their trip. Yet, still the results of our current study seem to confirm those of Ritchie, Mosedale, and King (2002) and Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak (2003) that the avid or pure sport tourists are less likely to take part in flow-on activities, whereas the more casual participant, or in the case of the current study, those active sport tourists who are accompanied by non-participants and especially those on trips further from home appear to be the visitors who can be encouraged to take part in the wider tourism offerings of a destination. Furthermore, as Chalip and McGuiry (2004) suggested these event active sport tourists with non-sport traveling companions may also be the ideal markets for the bundling of event experiences within wider offerings of a destination.

Destination and event managers seeking to expand the travel distance of their potential participants are advised to focus on destination characteristics such as scenery and historical qualities that promote this behavior. Certainly, we are not suggesting that event organizers ignore the fine details of event planning, a sentiment supported by Kaplanidou, Kerwin, and Karadakis (2013) who found both event participants and providers perceive the effective management of event characteristics as an important factor for success. However, as Bull (2006) found, the majority of the racing cyclists he studied preferred to race locally, considered traveling far as not important, and when they decided to travel it was because racing events were not available locally. Considering most cyclists prefer to stay overnight in a destination only if the travel is more than 2 h one-way (Buning & Gibson, 2015) destinations and events need to entice individuals into traveling further and staying overnight by matching event offerings to the travel preferences of their target markets. Many small-scale participant sport events have problems with longevity as success that is sustainable over several years can be quite difficult especially if the event is not organized in an optimal manner and/or properly bundled with the destination (Chalip & McGuiry, 2004). If events and destinations are organized toward their current and past participants only and not the overall market then they are likely discouraging many individuals from attending and as a result event sustainability will become a serious problem (Taks et al., 2009). Freeman and Thomlinson (2014) argue a similar point, claiming that sustainable community-based mountain bike tourism is contingent on community partnerships, physical geography (i.e. trails access and design), legislation (i.e. land access and liability insurance), and funding sources.

For instance, if an event/destination is not offering activities for non-participants (e.g. family members and significant others), but the overall market prefers to travel with non-participants a large group of potential participants will not attend regardless of whether event or destination has desirable characteristics. Further, destination and event managers seeking to increase the economic impact of an event should organize and market to individuals traveling with non-participants (e.g. family members) as they are more likely to spend more in the host community and seek a more luxurious experience as reported by the participants in this study. Indeed, the research findings of Downward, Lumsdon, and Weston (2009) along with Sato, Jordan, Kaplanidou, and Funk (2014) confirm that group size is a determinant of visitor expenditure for active sport tourists as larger groups tend to spend more. For individuals traveling with non-cyclists, attractive destination criteria are often more important than event characteristics so events should be not only organized around the participants, but also their travel companions.

While this study has opened the discussion to focus on the travel companions and the distance traveled by event active sport tourists, there are more avenues to investigate. For example, our results hinted at concepts from the wider body of literature on tourism about WOM, information search behavior, and family travel decision-making that might be directions for future research on the travel associated with these participatory sports events. While the sample for the current study was tested for representativeness among the competitive US cycling population, to what extent do US sport travel behaviors generalize to other countries where concepts of travel distance, event offerings or tourism infrastructure might be different? Moreover, this study was focused on the cycling community. How similar or different are other sporting social worlds in running or triathlons or indeed team sports such as rugby or hockey?

In reflecting more broadly on the participatory event world, what appears to be apparent is the growing popularity of these participatory sports events, the diversity of sport offerings (marathons to obstacle races), the growth in travel to participate in these events, and the number of communities who have busy event portfolios to cater to this demand. For destinations going forward the challenges appear to be maintaining their competitive edge and off-setting both participant and host community fatigue in a sea of ever-increasing event offerings.

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