EVALUATING THE ACTIVE SPORTS TOURIST EXPERIENCE

OF

OPEN WATER SWIMMERS

ANDREA MURANOVOVA

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study focuses on the increasingly popular activity of open water swimming, which takes place in a variety of bodies of water such as lakes, rivers and oceans. Participants travel and some of them stay over at a range of destinations to engage in open water swimming and in doing so could be identified as tourists. In the present study, an explanatory research was sought to gain a deeper understanding of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and to explore the key factors that influence it. The research in this study was guided by an interpretative philosophy using an inductive approach and the generated data is the result of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve open water swimmers. In order to provide description and interpretation of the primary research findings, data was analysed utilising framework analysis.

The analysis of primary data demonstrated that the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers is a complex phenomenon shaped by a number of elements and inseparable from the key factors that influence it. The findings illustrated that for open water swimmers, as the active sports tourists, the experience represented a challenge that occurred on both the physical and mental level, because interviewees faced fears and risks of pain and dangers that were linked to the activity and the environment where the activity took place. There was also a sense of novelty and unknown attached to the experience of open water swimmers. Apart from the challenge, which one may perceive as negative, pleasurable states were evoked, because open water swimmers enjoyed being in the natural environment. Through the completion of the swim, open water swimmers experienced a sense of accomplishment, achievement, and fulfilment on both a personal and group level. Subsequently, along with the mental and physical states, a great range of emotions was attached to the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers.

In addition, the destination played a role in the experiences of open water swimmers, particularly the water environment offered privileged views of the landscape and enjoyment of the 'off shore' surroundings. As the open water swimmers encountered other people, social experiences were also evident, but the social experiences of open water swimmers entailed something more than a social

interaction, participants experienced bonding with likeminded people and a sense of camaraderie. By providing these findings, the present study offers a deeper understanding of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers who can be recognised as a valuable subgroup of the active sports tourists.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Leisure, recreation and tourism is seen to play an important part in Western societies (Butler, 1999). This study focuses upon leisure and tourism and concurs with Mieczkowski's (1981 cited in Butler, 1999) representation of this relationship (see figure 1.1) as tourism is viewed as an aspect of recreation, which in turn is a component of leisure. Since the 1970s, an observable shift can be identified in the academic literature, with researchers increasingly interested across disciplines and using such phrases as 'leisure experience' (Lee, Dattilo and Howard, 1994). Parallel to leisure studies, experience has also become a popular and widely used term in the recreation and tourism literature (e.g. Clawson and Knestch, 1966; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010; Ryan, 2011).

Figure 1.1 Relationship between leisure, recreation and tourism
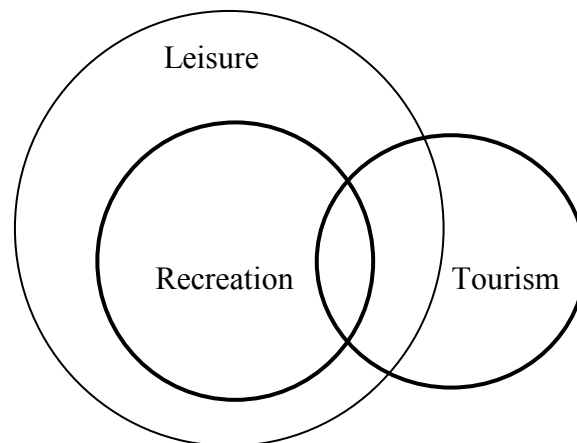
Source: Mieczkowski (1981 cited in Butler, 1999, p.98)

In order to understand the experience of leisure and tourism, a number of theories and concepts have been developed in the academic literature. Although it appears that a conceptual basis of leisure and tourism experiences can be shared, the

literature has developed relatively in isolation prior to the 1980s (Fedler, 1987, Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987). Since the 1980s, the concept of leisure, and tourism experience extended to incorporate a range of disciplines. Further review of the academic literature indicates that although each field provides a number of conceptualisations of experience, there seems to be limited empirical research that focuses upon the meaning of experience from the participants' perspective. Subsequently, there is an opportunity for further research that undertakes an integrated approach to understand the experience of leisure and tourism participants. Consequently, this study will focus upon one aspect of leisure and tourism, to understand the tourist experience, namely that of active sports tourists.

Over the last 20 years, the academic literature has shown a growing consensus that sport tourism is becoming one of the fastest growing tourism niches (Gratton and Taylor, 2000, Funk and Brunn, 2007; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, and Ali, 2003; Priestley, 1995; Gibson, 1998; Kaplanidou and Gibson, 2010). The term 'sport tourism' is usually seen as a combination of sport and tourism (Pitts, 1997; Standeven and DeKnop, 1999; Sheldon and Bushell, 2009). Although the literature seems to support the view about the links and influences between sport and tourism (Hinch and Hingham, 2001, 2004; Robinson and Gammon, 2004; Weed, 2005a, 2005b), much of the previous research has focused on the economic, environmental and social influences of tourists' activities (Weed and Bull, 2004). More recently, academics, such as Weed and Bull (2004, 2009) and Shipway and Fyall (2012) have started to apply the term 'sports tourism'. This study accepts that these terms, sport tourism and sports tourism, are almost used interchangeably in the academic literature. The term sports tourism is applied in this study, except when reporting authors' viewpoints in the literature review as then the use of sports tourism or sport tourism is determined by how individual authors have referred to the concept.

Past studies in the area of sports tourism have been undertaken to provide conceptual foundations to the area of sports tourism and to generate definitional discourses (Gammon and Robinson, 1997; Standeven and DeKnop, 1999; Weed and Bull, 2004, 2009). Most of the literature segregates between active and passive participants (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999; Gibson, 1998a). The active

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sports tourist travels to be actively involved in sports on their holiday (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999), whilst the passive sports tourist travels to spectate sporting activities or venues (e.g. Gibson, 1998a, 1998b). While research has been undertaken to understand the passive sports tourists (Garnham, 1996; Kirkup, 2012; Ottevanger, 2007), in contrast, limited research has sought to understand the active sports tourists' behaviour and experiences (Gibson, 2004). More recent studies have started to explore the experiences of individuals, who travel to participate in different sports whilst on their holiday (e.g. Bull 2006; Miller, 2012; Morgan, 2007; Shipway and Jones, 2007, 2008), yet the aspect of the active sports tourist experience still remains understudied (Gillett, 2011; Sharpley and Stone, 2011; Shipway, 2010; Weed and Bull, 2009).

Accepting there has been some research undertaken in the area of the active sports tourists; this research adopted an explanatory approach to further explore active sports tourist experiences. Past studies in sports tourism have indicated that there is heterogeneity and uniqueness in the different types of active sports tourists (Miller, 2012; Shipway, 2010). The academic literature will show that prior to this study, existing research has not offered any substantial evidence regarding the active sports tourists experiences of open water swimmers, who engage in this increasingly popular activity (Mintel, 2009; Swimming organisation, 2011). The popularity of this sport can be evident from the more than 1400 competitions that are held around the world (Kruger, et al., 2011).

Open water swimming is an activity, which takes place in a variety of bodies of waters, such as rivers, canals, lakes and oceans. As Kruger et al (2011) observes the world governing body of swimming - FINA (Federation Internationale de Natation) officially recognised open water swimming in the late 1980s. Open water swimming, also termed as long-distance swimming can be defined as any swimming competition up to 25km; events over 25km are considered marathon swims (Dean, 1998). Open water swimming appeals to a variety of swimmers, and competitors range from age-group swimmers or developmental, to swimmers on a master-level (Kruger, et al., 2011); thus the sport has grown and participation has risen significantly both nationally and internationally (Vanheest, Mahoney and Herr, 2004). Despite this growth and popularity, the extent of the

identification with the act of participating in open water swimming as leisure, tourism or sports tourism activity is very limited in the academic literature.

Moreover, as Hritz and Ramos (2008) in a study on master swimmers identified, swimming events contribute to the local economy greatly, because participants spend a significant amount of money locally. However, there seems to be a lack of understanding as to the experiences of active sports tourists who are open water swimmers. Consequently, to provide a deeper understanding as to the active sports tourist experience, the present study seeks to evaluate experiences of open water swimmers, who can be classified as a subgroup of the active sports tourists, because the individuals interviewed in this study had stayed and visited a range of destinations to engage in their activity of interest. For this reason, they could be considered as a potentially valuable subgroup of the active sports tourists. By looking upon experiences of open water swimmers as the active sports tourists, the present study aims to provide further exploration and understanding of the active sports tourist experience. In the presenting this study's findings, the intention is to contribute to the existing knowledge about experiences of open water swimmers within the context of active sports tourism, and in a broad aspect within the context of leisure and tourism. To achieve these goals, the present thesis sets to address four aims, presented in the next section and then, the following section outlines the thesis' structure.

1.2 The research aims

1. To critically review theories and concepts related to leisure, tourist and sports tourist experience
2. To analyse the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers
3. To evaluate the key factors that influence the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers
4. To expand the conceptual understanding of the active sports tourist experience

1.3 Thesis structure

The present thesis is structured into seven chapters, commencing with a current chapter that sets the background to this study area. The following two chapters will critically review bodies of academic literature. Chapter 2 critically reviews theories and concepts related to the leisure and tourist experience, whereas the focus of Chapter 3 is upon understanding the active sports tourists. Both of these chapters assist in providing the platform and rationale for the present study. Chapter 4 then goes onto explaining methodological decisions and approaches to facilitate secondary and primary research, specifically data collection and data analysis. Concerning the methodological implications, qualitative methods are explicitly suggested within the sports tourism literature (Bull, 2006; Miller, 2012), and thus considered as the most appropriate approach for the primary research, given the exploratory nature of the research question (aim2). As a strong relationship between experience and factors that influence it is recognised within the academic literature (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010; Ryan, 2011), the research question is to explore the key factors that influence the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers is addressed in this study (aim3).

Research findings that concentrate on the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and the key factors that influence it are in Chapter 5. This is followed by a comprehensive discussion of the key research findings in conjunction with the secondary research that concerned understanding the active sports tourists (Chapter 3), and leisure and tourist experience (Chapter 2) in Chapter 6. Subsequently, the thesis is drawn to conclusions in Chapter 7, where the main research outcomes about the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers are highlighted. In the final chapter, the researcher also evaluates the complete research process of the presented study and draws upon study's limitations, which subsequently assist in providing suggestions and directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW—LEISURE AND TOURIST EXPERIENCE

2.1 Introduction

The focus of the present chapter is on the leisure and tourist experience. In order to provide an understanding of complex phenomena such as leisure and tourism, a multi-disciplinary perspective is required (Neulinger, 1981a; Ryan, 2011). Subsequently, the academic literature has developed within a wide range of disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, geography and economics. The literature has been also scattered across studies in leisure, recreation and tourism, thus variations exist in defining leisure and tourist experiences. As Sheldon and Bushell (2009) suggest, although a single definition might be useful to narrow the fields, it could also be too limiting to capture the richness, diversity, and constant expansion, or just be too broad to be meaningful. As a result, scholars are advised to look behind the tourism literature to explore 'the depth and breadth' of existing knowledge about experience (Sheldon and Bushell, 2009). For this reason, the purpose of the present chapter is to critically review, combine and draw upon a range of conceptualisation of leisure and tourist experience in order to develop understanding through an inter-disciplinary and inter-field approach.

The present chapter is divided into three main parts; while the first two sections provide a review of the leisure and tourist experience bodies of literature, the third section draws attention to review approaches that were developed for understanding key dimensions of both leisure and tourist experience. A number of theoretical and empirically confirmed concepts are reviewed and their academic substance and applicability discussed. For instance, a leisure paradigm (Neulinger, 1974, 1981a, 1981b), a concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990, 2000) and a framework of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007) are reviewed, whereas in the second part of this chapter, a concentration is drawn to approaches to conceptualise tourist experience. Building upon Morgan's (2007) argument

that even though management and marketing activities make it possible for experiences to happen, they do not actually create them, both views of actors: the tourist (as the creator) and the organisation (as the provider) will be taken into consideration in the literature review of this study. As already noted, the chapter then progresses to review approaches that were developed for understanding key dimensions of both leisure and tourist experience. Particularly, approaches to understand leisure and tourist motivation and satisfaction will be considered in the present study.

2.2 Leisure experience

In order to understand the concept of leisure experience, a definition of 'leisure' seems essential. However, a wide range of academics have noticed (Esteves, et al., 1999; Haywood, Kew, Brahman, Spink, Copenerhurst and Henry, 1990; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kelly, 1983; Kraus, 1984; Mobily, 1989), there is no shortage of leisure definitions within the literature, and attempts can go back as far as the time of Plato and Aristotle (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Kraus, 1984; Mobily, 1989; Neulinger, 1981a). Consequently, scholars describe leisure with a complexity; it means different things to different people, even at different times to the same person (Crandall, 1980; Harré, 1990; Haywood, et al., 1990; Kelly, 1983, 1987; Neulinger, 1981b; Shaw, 1984). For instance, Neulinger (1981b, p. 1) states that

> "to one person it may mean something good, to another something bad, to one, something active, to another something passive, still to another something noble and worthwhile, while to another something to be frowned upon, nay, immoral".

Because leisure has so many strands of meaning, Harré (1990) calls leisure 'polysemous'. Correspondingly, a high volume of literature was published to define leisure with attempts made to explore the significance and meaning of this phenomenon. Regrettably, it is not in the scope of the present study to provide a complete list of leisure definitions, because the debate on the meaning of leisure is on-going, complex and wide ranging, and depends on the context and

perspective. Nevertheless, the academic literature indicates that since the 1970s, a shift in defining and conceptualising leisure as an experience − a subjective phenomenon was undertaken (Harper, 1981; Lee, et al., 1994; Mannell, 1980; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997; Neulinger, 1981a; Samdahl, 1992). For instance, an early work of Neulinger (1974) segregates leisure according to two paradigms: subjective and objective, and this distinction is one of the mostly discussed and referred to within the literature (Harper, 1983; Lee, et al., 1994; Mannell, 1980; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997; Samdahl, 1992). In the case of the objective paradigm, leisure is conceptualised as 'free' time (Clawson, 1964). Henderson (1990, p. 231) defines 'free' time as "discretionary periods in one's life that are available to do whatever one wishes. Leisure is the time beyond that excluding to do work or daily maintenance activities". Other scholars, such as Dumazedier (1964), refer to leisure as an activity, which represents the type of recreational "pursuits done during free time" (Henderson, 1990, p. 231).

In contrast, the subjective paradigm views leisure as a state of mind - an experience (de Grazia, 1962, 1964; Harper, 1981; Mannell, 1980; Neulinger, 1974, 1981a, 1981b). One of the most discussed theoretical foundations of leisure as a state of mind is rooted in the discipline of psychology and developed by Neulinger (1974, 1981a, 1981b) - theory of a leisure paradigm. In this theory, Neulinger (1974, 1981a, 1981b) theorises about differences between leisure and non-leisure experiences. Another psychologist who contributes to the discussion about experience is Csikszentmihalyi's (1975, 1990, 2000), who defines the concept of flow that can be seen as an example of a particular type of experience, which can be achieved through both leisure and non-leisure activity. As Neulinger (1981a) observes leisure is a complex phenomenon, which requires a multidisciplinary approach. Among other scholars, such as Kelly (1983) and Iso-Ahola (1980), a sociological and socio-psychological perspective to the studies of leisure experience was undertaken (Kleiber, Walker and Mannell, 2011; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997). For instance, undertaking a sociological view, Stebbins (1981, 2007) develops a framework of serious leisure, which offers a valuable insight into behaviours and experiences of serious leisure participants. A review of the aforementioned theories and concepts is provided in the following sections

to develop understanding of conceptualising leisure experience, and to simultaneously build foundations for the present study.

2.2.1 A paradigm of leisure

As previously highlighted, Neulinger (1974, 1981a, 1981b) is one of the pioneers who explored leisure according to the subjective paradigm. Neulinger's work, builds upon Grazia's (1964) idea of leisure as "a state of being" and the philosophical thinking of Aristotle that considers a freedom of choice. In addition, Neulinger (1981a, p. xiii) is the initiator of using leisure as a verb rather than a noun, as in Neulinger's (1974, p.xi) view, "leisure is not a thing one has (as one might "have" free time), but, an experience, a process, an on-going state of mind". The same author further proposes that subjective leisure refers to engagement in an activity, "which gives one pleasure to the very core of one's being" (Neulinger, 1974, p. xi). The leisure experience is seen as pleasant, enjoyable, intrinsically motivating and rewarding state (Neulinger, 1981a, 1981b). Neulinger's primary contribution to the leisure experience literature is a theoretical model (figure 2.1), which assists to distinguish between leisure and non-leisure experiences or states of minds.

Figure 2.1 A Paradigm of Leisure: A subjective definition

Freedom					
Perceived Freedom			Perceived Constraint		
Motivation			Motivation		
Intrinsic	Intrinsic and extrinsic	Extrinsic	Intrinsic	Intrinsic and extrinsic	Extrinsic
Pure leisure	Leisure-Work	Leisure-Job	Pure work	Work –Job	Pure Job
Leisure			Non leisure		

←——————————— State of Mind ——————————→
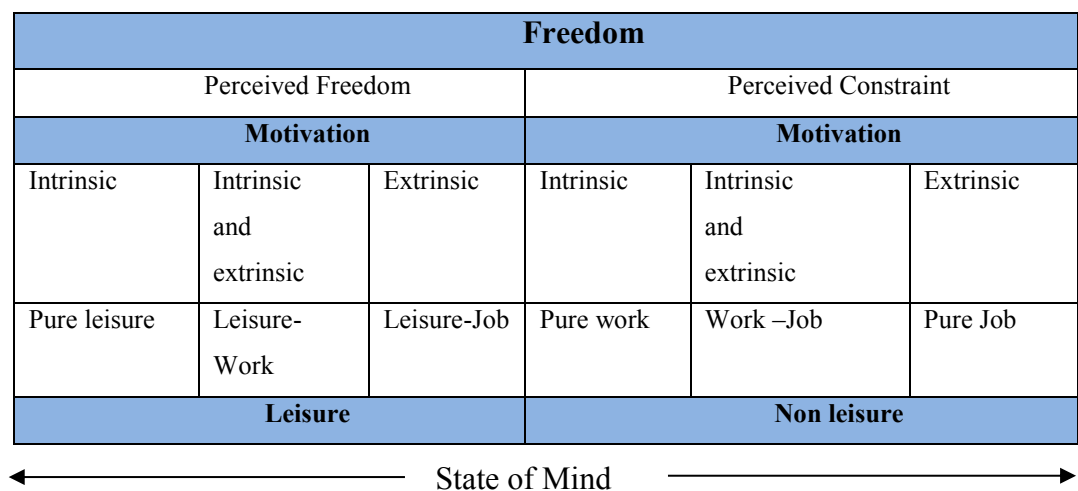
Source: Neulinger (1981a, p. 30)

Firstly, 'perceived freedom' is seen as one of the key dimension of the leisure experience, and is defined as "a state in which [a] person feels that what she or he is doing is done by choice and because one wants to do it" (Neulinger, 1981b, p. 15). As Mannell and Kleiber (1997) observes, Neulinger (1981a) simplifies a definition of freedom to what one chooses and wants to. Consequently, Neulinger purposely uses in his writing the word 'perceived' to avoid philosophical problems of freedom definition, because

> "freedom is a complex phenomenon that includes political, social, and philosophical dimensions; one of its most important components is the subjective experience or perception of acting voluntarily" (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997, p.126).

In Neulinger's (1981a) view, 'perceived freedom' is influenced by 'perceived constraint', which can be both objective and subjective in nature. While, objective refers to a physical barrier, wherein knowledge of a particular reality influences a perception of freedom one has in a certain situation, subjective allies to "a norm, an internalized rule of behaviour by which a person abide" (Neulinger, 1981a, p. 31), but for the purpose of the model, Neulinger (1981a, 1981b) simplifies constraints and treats both as the same.

The second key dimension is a type of motivation that underlies the decision to participate in an activity. In Neulinger's view (1974, p. 17), motivations are linked to rewards. While the intrinsic motivation relates to rewards, which are "coming from engaging in the activity itself-an activity is done for its own sake" (the involvement in an activity is intrinsically rewarding), the extrinsic motivation relates to a situation when the primary engagement in an activity brings rewards external, such as in a form of financial rewards. As Neulinger (1981a, p. 31) writes, "if the satisfaction gained stems from the activity and not from a payoff …, the behaviour is judged to be intrinsically motivated". In contrast, if the satisfaction derives from external rewards whereby the activity only leads to rewards, then the activity is perceived to be extrinsically motivated (Neulinger, 1981a). The model initially also included a variable of a goal orientation, but in

the second publication, this was suspended, because it overlapped to a high extent with the variable of motivations.

In the second edition, Neulinger's (1981a, 1981b) model recognises that most of the real life situations can entail both types of motivations (intrinsic and extrinsic); the model subsequently is split into six cells that represent a relationship to work (Neulinger, 1981a, 1981b). These cells range from pure leisure, leisure-work, leisure-job, pure work, work-job, to pure job. Each owns different characteristics of the state of mind (Neulinger, 1981a, p. 32); the first three cells on the left hand side of the model represent various forms of leisure experience, "they all share the essential condition of leisure: the person perceives himself or herself as the originator of his or her behaviour." For example, 'pure leisure' refers to a state of mind, which is brought about by an activity freely chosen for its own sake; the activity is intrinsically motivating and rewarding. This is an ideal condition of leisure and links to the idea of De Grazia (1962). Secondly, 'leisure-work' refers to a state of mind, wherein both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are brought about and derived from a freely chosen activity; "the activity…is satisfying not only in itself, but also in terms of its consequences or payoffs" (Neulinger, 1981a, p. 31). Finally, 'leisure-job' represents a state of mind in a freely chosen activity, which provides satisfaction only in terms of external rewards.

The right hand side of the model illustrates the non-leisure experiences. As Neulinger (1981a, p. 32) proposed, "all share a sense of constraint, a lack of perceived freedom." For instance, 'pure work' is a state of mind, when participants are engaged in an activity under constraints, and the activity provides intrinsic rewards only. This state comes very close to leisure in terms of felt satisfaction, however lacks the essential ingredient of a sense of freedom (Neulinger, 1981a). Furthermore, 'work-job' refers to a state whereby activity engagement is under constraint but providing both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards; "the degree of satisfaction will vary as a function of the proportion of intrinsic to extrinsic rewards" (Neulinger, 1981a, p. 32). Finally, 'pure job' represents "a state of mind characterized by an activity engaged in under constraint and with no

reward in and of itself, but only through a payoff resulting from it... [and hence]…is the extreme opposite of pure leisure" (Neulinger, 1981a, p. 32).

2.2.2 The concept of flow

In the seminal work, '*Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*', Csikszentmihalyi (1975) identifies that people seek in their lives particular type of experiences, which this author based on participants' views and determines by a term 'flow'. Over the years, Csikszentmihalyi utilised Experience Sampling Method (ESM) and interviews to research 'flow' in various activities, such as in chess, rock climbing and rock dancing. According to Haworth (1997), ESM allows a random collection in situ of self-reports about a respondent's subjective states and daily experience. Respondents answer questions in a diary several times a day in response to signals from a preprogramed device, such as a radio pager or a watch. In Csikszentmihalyi's studies, similar description of experiences were identified within different activities, when they were going especially well; the way a chess player felt during a tournament or a musician felt composing a new quartet or a long-distance swimmer felt crossing the English Channel, all of these experiences seemed similar (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

In his writings, Csikszentmihalyi (1975, p. 56) describes 'flow' as "the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement." In other words, 'flow' is the term to explain a psychological state of optimal experience, which is enjoyable, best and intrinsically rewarding for participants and in which people get involved in an activity to such a level, that they stop thinking about anything else (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990, 2000). To some extent, Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) concept of flow seems to parallel with Neulinger's (1981a, 1981b) theory of a leisure paradigm, because of the emphasis on the voluntary involvement (perception of freedom) and motivation (particularly, intrinsic), because the activity is rewarding in itself. However, the flow experiences were also identified in studies related to work scenarios, such as in surgery (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), thus this type of experience seems to occur during both leisure and non-leisure activities

Initially, Csikszentmihalyi (1975, pp. 38-48) identified and explored four conditions and seven indicators of flow frequency and occurrence (table 2.1). Over the years, eight (Csikszentmihayi, 1990) or nine (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) characteristics of flow experience are discussed in the academic literature: Challenge-skills balance, Action-awareness merging, Clear goals, Unambiguous feedback, Concentration on the task at hand, Sense of control, Loss of self-consciousness, Transformation of time, and Autotelic experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Merging of action and awareness is an important characteristic of flow.

"For action to merge with awareness to such an extent, the activity must be feasible [;] flow seems to occur only when tasks are within one's ability to perform" (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 39).

Table 2.1 Frequency, occurrence and conditions of flow

Frequency and occurrence	Conditions
1. The perception that personal skills and challenges posed by an activity are in balance 2. The centring of attention 3. The loss of self-consciousness 4. An unambiguous feedback to a person's actions 5. Feeling of control over actions and environment 6. A momentary loss of anxiety and constraint 7. Feeling of enjoyment of pleasure	1. Participation is voluntary 2. The benefits of participation in an activity are perceived to derive from factors intrinsic to participation in the activity 3. A facilitate level of arousal is experienced during participation in the activity 4. There is a psychological commitment to the activity in which they are participating

Adapted from Csikszentmihalyi (1975, p. 38-48)

In other words, flow experience tends to occur when challenges and skills are in balance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) opines that skills are a function of natural ability, experience and learning process, which relates to the individual competence and his/hers ability to learn and use new skills in order to handle challenges possessed by external environment. Figure 2.2 illustrates the flow scenario. For example, if skills in a particular activity exceed challenges, the participant is likely to experience boredom. In contrast, if challenges exceed skills (self-defined competence), the participant may feel anxiety (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990). Hence, when the challenges match skills the flow situation is optimal and the activity becomes all absorbing (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Figure 2.2 Model of the Flow State
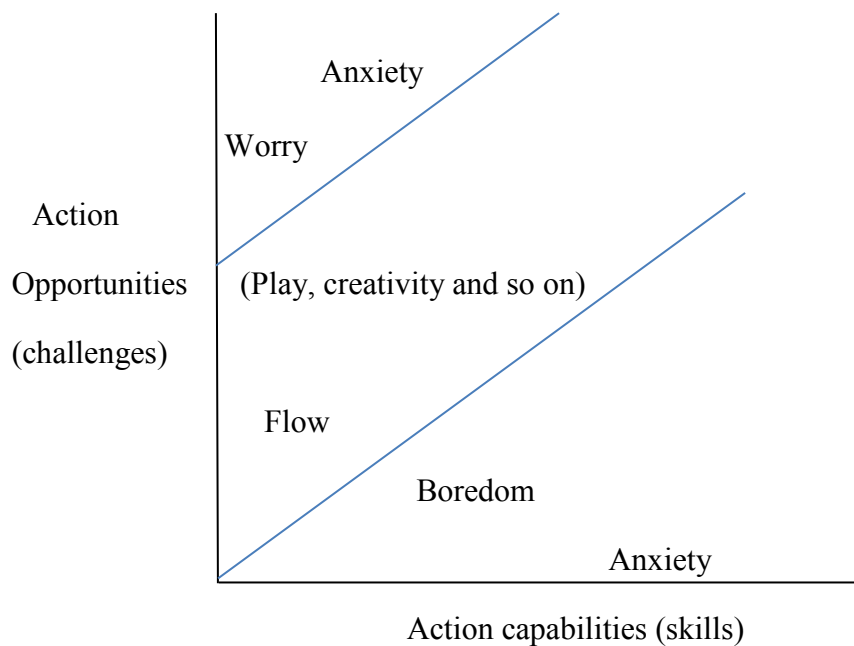
Source: Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 49)

The second characteristic, that of centring the attention on a limited stimulus, makes possible the merging of action and awareness, because in order to ensure that a person will concentrate on his/her action, Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 41) identifies that "potential intruding stimuli must be kept out of attention". Furthermore, if goals are clearly set, and the feedback is immediate one is able to

achieve complete involvement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Therefore, flow experiences tend to occur in activities that have clearly set rules, because of the requirement of developed skills, goals sets and the provision of immediate feedback. The involvement also entails concentration and a sense of control. People experience feelings of control over action and environment, but there is also a 'paradox of control', because one cannot have control over the environment. Therefore, more precisely, there seems to be a lack of the sense of worry about losing control and "what people enjoy is not the sense of being in control, but the sense of exercising control in difficult situations" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 59). In addition, the key element of the optimal experience is the end in itself, the activity in itself becomes intrinsically rewarding, resulting in a high level of satisfaction, enjoyment and extraordinary experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

2.2.3 The framework of serious leisure

Another widely acknowledged concept that can assist to understand the behaviour and experiences of particular type of leisure participants is Stebbins' framework of serious leisure (Kelly, 1983; Kleiber, et al., 2011; Mannell and Iso- Ahola, 1987; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997; Gould, Moore, McGuire and Stebbins, 2008). Stebbins (1979, 1981, 1992, and 2007) has researched the framework for many years throughout a high number of publications in journals and books. In his research, Stebbins directly observed and interviewed participants, who engaged in various types of activities, such as amateur science, magic, barber singing, kayaking, mountain/ice climbing, and snowboarding. Stebbins studies have shown that all of the aforementioned activities may encompass work like characteristics, akin to the leisure-work states as earlier theorised by Neulinger (1981a) in his theory of the leisure paradigm.

In the serious leisure framework, Stebbins extends his perspective to other forms of leisure, such as casual, and project based leisure; these are seen as concepts on their own, yet interrelated in order to provide a 'serious leisure perspective'. In Stebbins' (2007) view, the perspective of serious leisure can provide a

classification and explanation of all forms of leisure activities and experiences. Stebbins (2007) further proposes that each of the three forms of leisure refers to an identifiable kind of experience during non-working time, in which the framework of 'serious leisure' underpins the other concepts of 'casual' and 'project based' leisure. It is evident from the literature, that Stebbins (2007) in his writing usually contrasts 'serious leisure' to the concept of 'casual leisure', whereby 'casual leisure' is defined as "immediately, intrinsically rewarding, a relatively short – lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it" (Stebbins, 1997, p. 18). Consequently, casual leisure encompasses activities such as play (including dabbling and dilettantism), relaxation (sitting, napping and strolling), passive (through TV, books and recorded music) and active entertainment (games of chest, party games), social conversation (gossip, 'idle chatter'), sensory stimulation (sex, eating, drinking sight-seeing), casual volunteering (handling out leaflets, stuffing envelopes) and/or pleasurable aerobic activity.

In contrast, Stebbins (2007, p. 5) defines 'serious leisure' as:

> "A systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity
> that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the
> typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centred on
> acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge,
> and experience".

As evident from the definition above, Stebbins (1981, 1992, and 2007) distinguished three types of participants: amateur, hobbyist, and volunteer. While amateurs are individuals whose standards of performance may be very much the same to professionals, their primary income is earned elsewhere than from involvement in the activity (Stebbins, 1981). The category of volunteers refers to persons who work, but do not receive any financial returns or as Jon Van Til (1988, p. 6 cited in Stebbins, 1997, p. 118) defines and describes volunteering:

> "a helping action of an individual that is valued by him or her, and yet is
> not aimed directly at material gain or mandated or coerced by others. Thus,

in the broadest sense, volunteering is an uncoerced helping activity that is engaged in not primarily for financial gain and not by coercion or mandate. It is thereby different in definition from work, slavery, or conscription. (his emphasis)".

In addition, the category of hobbyists further segregates five categories: collectors; makers and tinkerers; activity participants; players of sports and games; and enthusiast in one of the liberal arts. While activity participants may engage in non-competitive rule based pursuits, such as bird watching (Keller, 1985) or Barbershop singing (Stebbins, 1996a), players of sports and games engage in competitive, rule-based activities with no professional counterparts like long-distance running (Yair, 1990) and competitive swimming (Hasting, et al., 1995).

Moreover, the framework of serious leisure is defined according to six distinguishing characteristics or qualities, which can be found among all three types of participants (Stebbins, 2007). Firstly, there is a need to persevere, which relates to constraints, overcoming difficulties and failure during the activity (Shipway and Jones, 2007). This means that individuals possess characteristics to sacrifice, withstand and preserve challenges brought about the activity. The second characteristic is a likeability of career development within an activity. This usually starts from the first involvement, through progression to a higher level and the mastery of a particular skill, to eventually exiting the particular activity. Individuals are also required to use his/her knowledge, training, experience and skills to achieve a desirable goal, which represents the next characteristic.

The fourth quality refers to durable benefits, or broad outcomes. Stebbins identified eight: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, regeneration or renewal of self, feeling of accomplishment, enhancement of self-image, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products of the activity. A further benefit is self-gratification -"a combination of superficial enjoyment and deep personal fulfilment" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 11). The fifth feature allies to a strong sense of identity, which exemplifies situations when participants are and

feel strongly associated with their chosen pursuits (Stebbins, 2007). The sixth characteristic or quality relates to unique ethos, which represents "the spirit of the community of serious leisure participants, such as shared attitudes, values, beliefs and goals" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 12). In addition, David Unruh (1979, p. 115, cited in Stebbins, 1997, p. 119) defines social world as

> "a unit of social organization which is diffuse and amorphous... Generally larger than groups or organizations, social worlds are not necessarily defined by formal boundaries, membership list, or spatial territory....A social world must be seen as an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into a perceived sphere or interest and involvement for participants. Characteristically, a social world lacks a powerful centralized authority structure and is delimited by...effective communication and not territory nor formal group membership".

Furthermore, in the framework of serious leisure, participants' experiences are linked to thrills, exciting occasions that stand out in people's minds that participants' find so rewarding that they want to repeat them. Thus, Stebbins (2007, p. 13) opines that "the drive to find fulfilment in serious leisure is the drive to experience the rewards, of a given leisure activity". The rewards link to satisfaction of the given activity, which can be seen as a positive outcome in the leisure experience and rewards are discussed further in a related section 2.4.2 Understanding leisure and tourist satisfaction. At this point, to advance understanding about the leisure experience and to define applicability and credibility of the elected concepts, the following section provides an overview of research that took the aforementioned theories into scrutiny and subsequently shaped the academic debate and knowledge about leisure experience further.

2.2.4 An overview of research on leisure experience

While in the early 1980s, a number of scholars observed (Gunter, 1987; Mannell, 1980) a lack of conceptual underpinning and empirical support within the leisure experience literature, the aforementioned authors and their theories have focused

on defining the subjective leisure states, whilst expressing its nature, components and the meaning that the activity has for its participants. In addition, the review of leisure experience literature revealed that the selected concepts such as 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990, 2000) and the framework of 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1992, 2007) utilised qualitative approaches, in which both of these scholars conducted interviews with the research participants.

Since the 1980s, a vast number of studies have emerged in both laboratory and natural settings to enhance understanding of leisure experiences (Mannell and Kleiber, 1997). Social psychologists, such as Iso-Ahola (1979a, 1979b, 1980) and Mannell (1980) have applied and built upon the previously outlined Neulinger's (1974) theory of a leisure paradigm. For instance, Iso-Ahola (1979a, 1979b) undertook two experimental studies, in which he manipulated the developed hypothetical situations by Neulinger (1974); the findings reinforced that perceived freedom is "the critical regulator of what becomes leisure in people's minds and what does not" (Iso-Ahola, 1979a, p. 313). In a similar vein, Neulinger's (1974) theory was verified in another study about '*Basic Dimensions of Definitions of Leisure',* where the results indicated that a perceived freedom, motivation (intrinsic vs. extrinsic), and a work-relation are the factors that had most impact on the perception of experiences of leisure (Iso-Ahola, 1979b). One year later, Iso-Ahola (1980, p. 19) also identified how feelings, cognitions and behaviours of one individual are influenced by the feelings, cognitions and behaviours of others during a period of time that is subjectively designated as unobligated, free or leisure (Iso-Ahola, 1980). In addition, Mannell (1980) undertook research in a laboratory setting, in which the researcher influenced the amount of freedom for participants to choose a leisure activity and this led to the identification of some important variations. These were associated with the participants' level of psychological involvement in the activity. Consequently, Mannell (1980, p. 76) argued that

"the term leisure [only applies] to a subset of the total range of experiences…leisure requires higher levels of psychological involvement - [which] is characterised by narrowing of attention, loss of awareness of time passing, and mood evaluation".

The nature of the leisure experience is considered parallel to the highly involving psychological states such as flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Similarly, a study of Unger and Kernan (1983) that investigated the meaning of leisure supported that the degree of involvement and absorption in the activity plays an important part. The same authors also recognised that intrinsic satisfaction and perceived freedom of action are the key determinants of the subjective nature of leisure experience.

Another author, who has dedicated a number of empirical studies to explore the nature of the leisure experience is Shaw (1984, 1985a, 1985b). Shaw assessed factors that determine leisure and non-leisure experiences in daily lives whilst employing time-budget and diary analysis. For instance, in a study of Metropolitan Halifax, married couples were examined and the results suggested enjoyment and relaxation, freedom to choose and intrinsic motivation as the main distinguishing characteristics of leisure experience. In another article that concerns *'The Meaning of Leisure in Everyday Life',* Shaw (1985) employed time-diary technique combined with in-depth interviews and identified the key differing factors between leisure and non-leisure states as enjoyment, freedom of choice, relaxation and intrinsic motivation. Thus, her findings corroborate and built upon Neulinger's theory (1974, 1981a, 1981b) as well as the concept of flow by recognising intrinsic motivation, freedom of choice and enjoyment as important elements of leisure experience. In a similar vein, Gunter (1987) researched the most common leisure experiences in everyday life in addition to the most meaningful. Gunter's (1987) study utilised a qualitative research technique, in which over one hundred self-reported essays from university students were analysed. Findings illustrated eight properties of leisure experiences; defined as separation, choice, pleasure, spontaneity, timeliness, fantasy, adventure, and self-realisation.

In a different study, Hull, Stewart and Yi (1992) utilised mixed methods in the form of interviews and questionnaires to assess the dynamic nature of a recreational experience among hikers. The study identified seven properties of experience (four moods measure, two satisfaction measures and landscape scenic beauty) and hence suggested that "a recreational experience is dynamic: it

fluctuates over the course of the engagement. Moods change. Scenic beauty varies; the degree of absorption in one's activity fluctuates" (Hull, et al. 1992, p. 249). In addition, Hull, Michael, Walker and Roggenbuck, (1996) in a study about walkers identified eight dimensions of the walking experience, including both positive and negative: anxiety, dullness, excitement, calmness, love, power of concentration, freedom, and self-esteem. In addition, "Ebbs and flows" observed in this study suggest that on-site leisure experiences are multi-dimensional, complex and dynamic (Hull, et al. 1996).

In a different scenario, Lee, et al. (1994) employed a tape-recording method during the immediate recollection of experience and semi-structured interviews in the post hoc/retrospective leisure experience to examine the complex and dynamic nature of leisure experience. Both positive and negative experiences were identified. In the case of positive, fun/enjoyment, relaxation, escaping and communication with nature were important elements of the leisure experience, whereas stressful and unpleasant experiences related to exhaustion, apprehension, nervousness, disappointment, frustration, guilt, and rumination (Lee, et al. 1994). The segregation between positive and negative experiences are parallel with a more recent study by Lee and Shafer's (2002) who applied affect control theory to analyse the dynamic nature of the leisure experience. As Lee and Shafer (2002) suggested, different researchers have investigated leisure experience as a process that includes interactions with the environment and others. Interactions during leisure are known to influence the experience. Thus based on this tradition, the purpose of Lee and Shafer's (2002) study was to investigate how emotions might relate to interactions that an individual has during his/her leisure experience; in the same study, these authors examined the relationships among emotions, episode-specific evaluations, and overall satisfaction. Results from analyses of experiences proposed that linkages existed among confirmation of self-identity (a goal), resulting emotions, episode-specific evaluations, and finally to overall satisfaction with a leisure activity.

Furthermore, Esteve, et al. (1999) in the study 'grasping the meaning of leisure' have focused upon persons' feelings during their involvement in leisure. Among

others, the study builds upon ideas of Neulinger's (1974) and Iso Ahola's (1980). A new instrument encompassing nine scales is developed: goal-orientation, relation to work, active-passive participation, optimal incongruity, social interaction, perceived freedom (perceived competence and discretionary time available). According to Esteve, et al. (1999, p. 88) "perceived freedom is the key variable in defining leisure and brings out the fact that activities are experienced as leisure when they are not related to people's work and duties", which reinforces the previous hypothetical paradigm of Neulinger (1974). In addition, three higher order dimensions were identified: effort level, social interaction and purpose (Esteve, et al. 1999). Effort level dimension reveals a picture of leisure associated with challenges and personal growth. This facet of leisure coincides with the proposals of authors such as Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988), or Argyle (1996). Esteve, et al. (1999) identifies that the social interaction is also an important component of the leisure experience, as they believe that the social interaction is one of the main components of the leisure experience.

Concerning, Stebbins' framework of serious leisure (1992), applicability has been suggested, however as Stebbins (2001a, cited in Stebbins, 2007, p. 35) claims, "most researchers …have shown admirable caution against simply declaring a heretofore unexplored leisure activity as being of the serious variety. Rather they have made an effort to empirically demonstrate the presence of all or a majority of the six qualities". More recently, Dilley and Scraton (2010) respond to this claim by critically exploring the paradigm of serious leisure in relation to women's climbing identities and careers. The results are delivered from an in-depth qualitative study of women climbers. The analysis of data suggests that by understanding the relationship between climbing and the women's wider lives, specifically their work, attitudes to childbearing, sexual relationships, gender identities and motherhood is a key to understand women's commitment to climbing. The study has therefore provided further understanding of serious leisure by situating the individual's motivations, participation, access and experience in relation to their social, cultural and political context (Dilley and Scraton, 2010).

While Dilley and Scraton (2010) explored applicability of serious leisure, Haworth's (1997) earlier publication reviewed research on the concept of flow, for instance a study of Massimini and Carli (1988) is noted to provide more differentiated models based on skill-challenge balance, their study shows variation in states resulting from the skill-challenge equilibrium. Eight channels are recognised: arousal, flow, control, boredom, relaxation, apathy, worry and anxiety. For example, if challenge is high, but skills are average arousal is likely to take place, whereas if the skills are high and skills are high too, flow is likely to occur. While control takes place if there is average challenge, but skills are high, boredom occurs when skills are high but challenge is low. The fifth channel relates to relaxation, whereby there is a low challenge and average skills. The next channel is apathy, which relates to situations when both challenge and skills are low. On the other hand, if the challenge is average and skills are low, worry occurs. The eighth channel relates to anxiety, moments when challenge is high, but the skills are low.

Moreover, a study of Elkington (2011) brings together empirically for the first time the concept of flow and serious leisure in the study of *'What it is to take the flow of leisure seriously',* which undertakes existential-phenomenological psychology research and focuses on amateur actors, hobbyist table tennis players and voluntary sport coaches. Elkington (2011) observes that while there are clear similarities between the concepts, there are also some fundamental differences; on the one hand, the concept of flow is centred on experience and its initial intention was not providing explanatory framework for leisure, on the other, serious leisure is a pragmatic activity centered typology of leisure. Looking at flow through the lenses of serious leisure, Elkington (2011, p. 276) suggests that "flow-based serious leisure experiences stands as meaningful subjective experience that integrates three distinct but interrelated levels: the individual, significant/involved others and the place/settings". Elkinston (2011) proposes further that flow based serious leisure provides opportunities for self-development and self-actualization; so it could be assumed that the flow based serious leisure experience does not have end in itself, it is a 'process of becoming'.

Table 2.2 Summary of leisure experience research

DIMENSIONS OF LEISURE EXPERIENCE	AUTHOR	METHODOLOGY
A leisure paradigm: Perceived freedom; Motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic); Constrains (objective, subjective); Relationship to work	Neulinger (1974, 1981a, 1981b)	Theoretical
Perceived freedom; Motivation (intrinsic, extrinsic); Relationship to work	Iso-Ahola (1979a, 1979b)	Quantitative
Flow experience (high involvement states, intrinsically motivating)	Mannell (1980)	Quantitative
High level of involvement and absorption	Unger and Kernan (1983)	Qualitative
Enjoyment, Freedom of choice; Relaxation; Intrinsic motivations	Shaw (1985a, 1985b)	Mixed methods
Flow experiences - 8 characteristics (see section 2.2.3)	Csikseztmihlayi (1975)	Qualitative
Serious leisure- 6 qualities(see section 2.2.3) Rewards (personal and sociocultural)	Stebbins (2007)	Qualitative
Flow-base serious leisure experiences meaningful subjective experience, integrates three distinct but interrelated levels: the individual, significant/involved others and the place/settings	Elkington (2011)	Qualitative
Four moods measures (mixed emotions); Two satisfaction measures; Landscape and scenic beauty	Hull, et al. (1992)	Mixed methods
Positive emotions (e.g. fun/enjoyment, relaxation, escaping and communication with nature) Negative emotions (e.g. exhaustion, apprehension, nervousness, disappointment, frustration, guilt and rumination)	Lee, et al. (1994)	Qualitative
Positive and negative emotions	Lee and Shafer (2002)	Quantitate
Positive (involvement, fulfilment)and negative emotions (disengagement and resentment)	Hammitt (1980)	Quantitative
Positive and negative emotions (anxiety, dullness, excitement, calmness, love, power of concentration, freedom and self-esteem)	Hull, et al. (1996)	Qualitative
Goal orientation; Relationship to work; Active-passive participation; Optimal incongruity; Social interaction; Perceived freedom	Esteve, et al. (1999)	Quantitative

To summarise, the subject of the leisure experience has been discussed in a considerable number of academic articles since the 1980s, whilst being carried out within a range of disciplines, such as psychology, sociology and social psychology. Consequently, an attempt to provide a complete literature review is beyond the scope of the present chapter and for a review of more recently published studies the reader is referred to other publications, such as Kleiber, et al. (2011), which provides a comprehensive review of seminal works that has let the discussion about the leisure needs, motivation and experience. While the research about the leisure experience discussed in this part of the thesis is summarised in table 2.2 (p. 24), a review of tourist experience literature will take place next.

2.3 Tourist experience

Tourism like leisure is a complex phenomenon and providing a single definition may seem a challenging task (Butler, 1999; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). As with leisure, tourism attracts researchers from a variety of disciplines, ranging from anthropology, psychology, sociology, to marketing and business management studies, economics, geography and political science. Consequently, it could be argued that currently there is no consensus in a general definition of tourism (Butler, 1999) and of the tourist experience (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Therefore, a range of approaches that utilises different concepts and methodologies have been applied in studying the phenomenon of tourism. An earlier study by Butler (1999, p. 99) posits that providing "definition, which is generally acceptable to all researchers in a single discipline is difficult: to find one acceptable to several disciplines is virtually impossible". More recently, Boniface and Cooper (2009, p. 6-7) criticise traditional definitions of tourism for failing to incorporate the idea of tourism as an experience by arguing, "the tourist is as much as a creator of the experience as the tourism industry itself".

Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the introduction of this study, tourism is seen as a type of recreational activity that in turn is component of leisure (Boniface and Cooper, 2009; Mieczkowski, 1981 cited in Butler, 1999). The relation between

leisure and tourism may be also evident in Smith's (1977, p. 2) early definition of the tourist; "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change [change from ordinary, day-to-day life]". The importance of viewing the tourist as a creator of his/her experience is evident within the literature (Boniface and Cooper, 2009), subsequently, the following sections review approaches to define and conceptualise tourist experience.

2.3.1 Defining tourist experience

Parallel to leisure studies, the academic literature has progressed to a discussion about the tourist experience. As Cutler and Carmichael (2010, p. 3) suggest, "the tourist experience is a complicated psychological process [and] providing a sufficient definition is a difficult task". To date a number of publications have concentrated on the tourist experience, such as Ryan (1993, 1997, 2002, 2011), who has written a number of publications concerning this topic. In Ryan's writings, it is demonstrated how the tourism industry sells experiences, and how it is the intensity of such experiences and not their purpose that is the criteria of the tourist (Breejen, 2006). However, as Tung and Ritchie (2011) notice, there is currently no consensus in the academic literature as to the exact definition of tourist experience.

Most recently, Ryan (2011) in his latest publication reviews the prevailing bodies of literature and organises various conceptualisations that examine tourist experience. Categories reflect approaches that various scholars have undertaken and these are summarised in table 2.3 (p. 27). Similarly to Cutler and Carmichael (2010), in Ryan's view (2011, p. 20) the tourist experience is a complex phenomenon, "shaped by many things: motive, past experience, knowledge of place, persons with whom that place is shared, patterns of change at the place, the images induced about place and activities, individual personalities".

Table 2.3 Summary of theories and concepts related to tourist experience

Theories and concepts	Characteristics	Example of researchers
Confirmation-disconfirmation theory	Comparison between expectations and evaluations	Parasuraman et al. (1994)
Importance-evaluation approaches	Reasoned behaviour, multi-attribute approach	Oh (2010)
Involvement theory	The degree to which ones becomes involved and the extent to which this involvement is enduring or situational	Ryan, 2007 Havitz and Dimanche, (1990)
The destination image	Used for knowing how it attracts, holds and establishes the criteria against which the visitor can evaluate their experience	Beerli and Martin, (2004) Ryan and Gu (2008)
Theories of liminality	The tourist is perceived as a person engaged in transitions from the ordinary to the extraordinary, and then back again to reality	Turner (1969, 1974, 1982) Cohen (1982a, 1982b)
Role play approaches	The roles that tourists can adopt, and the degree to which these roles are motivated by a sense of role play	Urry (2002) Yiannakis and Gibson (1992) Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) Pearce (1982)
The theory of the Gaze	The tourist's desire for the visually impressive means that the tourist industry shapes and directs the participants' gaze	Urry (1990, 2002) Ryan and Aicken (2005) Ryan and Wang (2010) Hall (1994)
The search for the back stage and authenticity	Tourist search for authenticity and 'want to penetrate the tourist veil'	MacCannell (1999) Dann (1977) Valene Smith (1989) Cohen (1988a) Boorstin (1964)
The theories of consumerism	The concept of the tourist as a collector of experience, Authenticity & well being	Authenticity- Wang (1999, 2000)
Theories of mindlessness	Relate to memorable experiences and how tourists experience time	Pearce (1988)
Theories of flow and arousal	These theories are based on a construct that flow (satisfactory experiences) exist when participants skills are in balance with challenge.	Yerkes and Dodson (1908) Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1975, 2000)

Adapted from Ryan (2011 in Sharpley and Stone, 2011, p. 11-15)

Similarly, Pearce (2011), who has also focused a number of his publications on tourist behaviour and experiences, supports the complexity further by metaphorically expressing that the nature of experience can be compared to the music produced by an orchestra. Pearce (2011, p. 3) suggests that within a broad spectrum, "in the tourists' experiential world the contributing components are the sensory inputs, the affective reactions, the cognitive abilities to react to and understand the setting, the actions undertaken and the relevant relationships which define the participants' world." Subsequently, the area of the tourist experience is complex, and is not within the scope of the present part of the chapter to review all theories and concepts that concern tourist experience. For this reason, the following section reviews theories and concepts that seemed to have received the most attention in the tourism literature and will be considered sufficient to provide an understanding of tourist experience for the purpose of this study.

2.3.2 Conceptualising the tourist experience

The academic literature indicates that a number of conceptualisations of tourist experience have been developed (e.g. Boorstin, 1962, 1964; MacCannell, 1973, 1976; Urry, 1990; 2002). The following paragraphs provide reviews of theories that have been widely discussed within the academic literature. The focus is on authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), typologies (Cohen, 1972; Plog, 1974) and the theory of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002). Firstly, a debate concerning authenticity of the tourist experience goes back to Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973, 1976). For example, in Boorstin's view (1964) tourist experience allies with a notion of Pseudo-event, a "staged experience". Boorstin (1964) claims that as mass tourism has grown, the nature of the tourist experience has been influenced or manipulated to a high degree 'staged' by the industry. Conversely, in MacCannell's (1973, 1976) view tourists search for authenticity as a contrast to 'ordinary lives'.

Subsequently, a number of academics have followed the discussion about the role of authenticity in the tourist experience (Hayllar and Griffin, 2005; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Pearce, 2005; Ryan, 2003; Wang, 1999). The literature suggests

that authenticity in the tourist experience is complex (Shaw and Williams, 2007; Wang, 1999). For instance, a study of Wang (1999) for instance illustrates three types of authenticity can be identified in the context of tourist experience: objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity. The first two focus on authenticity of 'toured objects' and 'toured others', while the third type of authenticity is not based upon toured objects (Cohen, 2010). Instead, existential authenticity focuses upon 'authentic self', "subjective state of being in which one believes one has experienced one's 'true self'" (Berger, 1973 and Wang, 1999 cited in Cohen, 2010, p. 32).

In contrast to both opinions, Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973), Cohen (1972, 1979) is one of the first to identify that different types of tourists exist. In a study *'Phenomenology of Tourist Experience'*, Cohen (1979, p. 183) criticises contemporary studies for viewing "tourist experience as either something essentially spurious and superficial, an extension of an alienated world [Boorstin, 1964], or as a serious search for authenticity [MacCannell, 1973, 1976], an effort to escape from an alienated world". Cohen (1979) further suggests that although each theory has contributed to provide valuable insights into the motives, behaviour and experiences of some tourists, neither of these opposing conceptualizations is valid, because different people may desire different modes of tourist experiences, "hence, 'the tourists' does not exist as a type" (Cohen, 1979, p. 180). Subsequently, Cohen (1979) observationally developed a theoretical framework - a phenomenological typology of tourist experience, in which he distinguishes between five main modes of tourist experience: recreational mode, diversionary mode, experiential, experimental and existential mode. These modes span from the search for pure pleasure on the one hand and on the other hand to search for meaning. In both Uriely's (2005) and Rhoden's (2010) views, Cohen's typology (1979) could fit between viewpoints of Boorstin (1974) and MacCannell (1973).

Other scholars aimed to understand tourist behaviour and experience by developing various tourists' typologies (Cohen, 1979; Gray, 1970; Plog, 1974; Smith, 1988; Wickens, 2002). For example, Gray (1970) has developed one of the

first classifications that is based on motivations of tourists; it segregates between 'wonderlust' and 'sunlust'. The tourists of the former group seek curiosity to experience the unfamiliar and strange. They seek to see, at first hand, different, cultures, peoples and places, whereas sunlust desire for a better climate and sun, in fact, it is much broader than this as sunlust search for a better set of amenities than are available at home (Boniface and Cooper, 2003). Furthermore, Cohen (1972) develops a more complex typology, which he based on the theory that tourists seek out new experiences with the need for familiar and security reminders. A four-fold classification is subsequently developed and based on tourist behaviour (roles) that further segregates between organised mass tourist and independent mass tourist, drifter and explorer, who are distinguished according to their degree of novelty and familiarity (Cohen, 1972). The academic literature recognises other authors' works that could be considered to bridge the stances between Boorstin (1961, 1964) and MacCannell (1973, 1976), such as Plog's (1974) typology, which identifies two main groups that parallel Cohen's classification (1972), because Plog's typology is also based on tourists' degree of novelty and familiarity. Plog's typology of 'psychocentric' and 'allocentric' could fit at the far points of novelty and familiarity. On the one hand, 'psychocentric' tourists are viewed as seeking the more familiar; on the other hand, 'allocentric' tourists seek novelty and adventure (Plog, 1974). Moreover, a Wickens' (2002) study is based on package tourists to Greece and five type of tourists are identified: the Cultural Heritage, the Raver, the Shirley Valentine, the Heliolatrous and the Lord Byron, each reflecting the purpose to visit the destination.

An alternative approach to conceptualising tourist experience is undertaken by Urry (1990, 2002). In Hinch and Higham's (2004) view, Urry's (1990) theory of tourist gaze relates and supports the idea of authenticity as initially proposed by MacCannell (1976). Urry (1990; 2002) has based his conceptualisation of tourist experience upon gazing. The concept is originally applied in the context of clinical surgery and its essence lies upon people's gazing, staring at objects, such as sightseeing landscape, buildings, and other people, thus relating to the sensual input in the tourist experience, particularly to the visual input. In line with MacCannell (1976), Urry (2002, p. 12) distinguishes tourist experience between

the extraordinary and ordinary and notes that "tourist experiences involve some aspect or element that induces pleasurable experiences, which by comparison with the everyday, are out of the ordinary". Consequently, potential objects of tourist gaze ought to be distinctive from everyday life and differences exist in the way the division between the ordinary and the extraordinary has been made. Urry (2002) further claims that central to tourism is the character of gaze, which can take various forms, as people seek to gaze upon unique objects, such as the Eiffel Tower and The Empire State Building. There is also "the seeing of particular signs, unfamiliar aspects or seeing ordinary aspects of social life being undertaken by people in unusual context., …carrying out of familiar task or activities with an unusual visual environment…[and] finally, there is the seeing of particular signs that indicate that a certain other object is indeed extraordinary" (Urry, 2002, p. 13).

In addition, Urry (1990, 2002) primarily distinguishes between two forms of gaze: a romantic and a collective gaze. On the one hand, 'a romantic gaze' where the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze, such as the landscape of mountains. An example of the object of the romantic gaze can be the tourist site of the Lake District in England (Urry, 1995; Urry, 2002). In this respect, Urry (2002, p. 13) claims that activities such as "swimming and other sports, shopping, eating and drinking all have particular significance if they take place against a distinctive visual backcloth. The visual gaze renders extraordinary, activities that otherwise would be mundane and everyday". The romantic gaze concentrates whether tourists are alone or in a group, and while in groups, to what degree they are sharing the experience (Pearce, 2011). Subsequently, in contrast to 'a romantic gaze', the 'collective gaze' is viewed as "a shared, even crowded, public celebration of a setting informed by a dominant sense of seeking good times" (Pearce, 2011, p. 90). Thus, in Urry's (1990) view, the positive value of the collective gaze, emphasises the value of other people being present at the site and contributing to the atmosphere. The collective gaze allies to location and to other people that may become co-creators of the experience (Pearce, 2011).

2.4 Understanding leisure and tourist experience

Viewing leisure as a subjective phenomenon, Neulinger (1981a) focuses upon understanding the meaning of the activity from the individual's perspective. Neulinger (1981a) emphasises that the meaning of leisure is not the meaning of the concept of leisure per se, but rather, the meaning that the activity individuals call leisure has to the person by looking upon his/hers feelings, reasons for engagement (motives, needs and desires), and the satisfaction that derives from meeting those needs, which lead to rewards. Neulinger (1981a) argues that these are subjective phenomena. The focus is on the function or implication that the activity has for the person. Studies of this type are more akin to what can be called the subjective definition of leisure. In line with leisure studies, a vast number of academics have identified tourist motivation to be an important element for understanding the tourist experience (Gibson, 2005, Cutler and Carmichael, 2010) and tourist behaviour (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall and Wanhill, 1998; Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996). In addition, the concept of satisfaction/dissatisfaction coincides with the concept of motivation; it could be seen as the outcome from the meeting or the lack of meeting needs of participants (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). As motivations and rewards are seen as an important dimension of leisure and tourist experience, the present part of this chapter reviews approaches for understanding both: leisure and tourist motivation, as well as, leisure and tourist satisfaction.

2.4.1 Leisure and tourist motivation

Section 2.2 has acknowledged how human psychologists such as Neulinger (1974, 1981a, 1981b) and Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990, 2000) have recognised freedom and motivation as the key dimensions of the leisure experience. Similarly, a number of scholars in the area of tourism studies have viewed motivation as a key to understand human/consumer/tourist behaviour and experience (Cooper, et al. 1998; Horner and Swarbrooke, 1996; Pearce, 2011). Consequently, substantial attention was given in the academic literature to understand the concept of motivation (Cooper, et al. 1998; Crompton, 1979;

Dann, 1981; Gnoth, 1997; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Holloway, 2004; Holloway and Robinson, 1995; Mansfield, 1992; McCane, 2000; Pearce, 1989; Page, Brunt, Busby and Connell, 2001; Robie, et al., 1992; Robinson, et al. 2000) and a number of motivational theories have been established within both, leisure and tourism literature (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1980, 1982; Maslow, 1967, 1970; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983).

Maslow (1967, 1968, 1970, 1987) originally discussed the exploration of human motivation within the field of psychology. Other areas such as sociology have also concentrated on motivation, thus the definition of motivation can be seen as wide-ranging. Despite this complexity, Murray (1964, p. 7 cited in Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 257) identified that "psychologists/social psychologists generally agree that "motive is an internal factor [need] that arouses, directs and integrates a person's behaviour." Although Neulinger's paradigm has not been applied to a high extent in recent years, due to a more complex picture of motivation evolving, it does provide a preliminary understanding of leisure needs (Kleiber, et al. 2011). Similarly, in the context of tourist motivation researchers suggest that a person is pushed by invisible factors that arise from his/her psychological or physical needs and then pulled by visible factors that are shaped by either natural environments or destination attraction (Kim, et al., 2006). In order to measure leisure and tourist experience a number of approaches/theories have been developed, such as Beard and Ragheb's (1983) leisure motivation scale, Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs (1967, 1970) or Pearce's travel career ladder (1993), and these will be reviewed and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Maslow's (1970) Hierarchy of Needs is one of the most cited motivational theories (figure 2.3, p. 34) in both the leisure and tourism literature (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Page, et al., 2001; Holloway, 2004; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983). The literature suggests that Maslow's (1954) theory offers a systematic approach to describe the motivational structure, which is centred around needs (Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983). The original theory is presented in the form of a hierarchy that consists of five levels of needs; it begins with psychological at the lowest level,

goes through, safety, belongingness and love needs to self-esteem and finally self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968, 1970, 1987). The term self-actualization was firstly coined by Goldstein (1939);

"it [self-actualization] refers to people's desire for self fulfilment, namely, the tendency for them to become actualized in what they are potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (Maslow 1987, p. 22).

Figure 2.3 Extended version of Maslow hierarchy of needs

Transcendence

Self-actualization

Aesthetic

Cognitive

Esteem

Social

Safety

Biological and Physiological
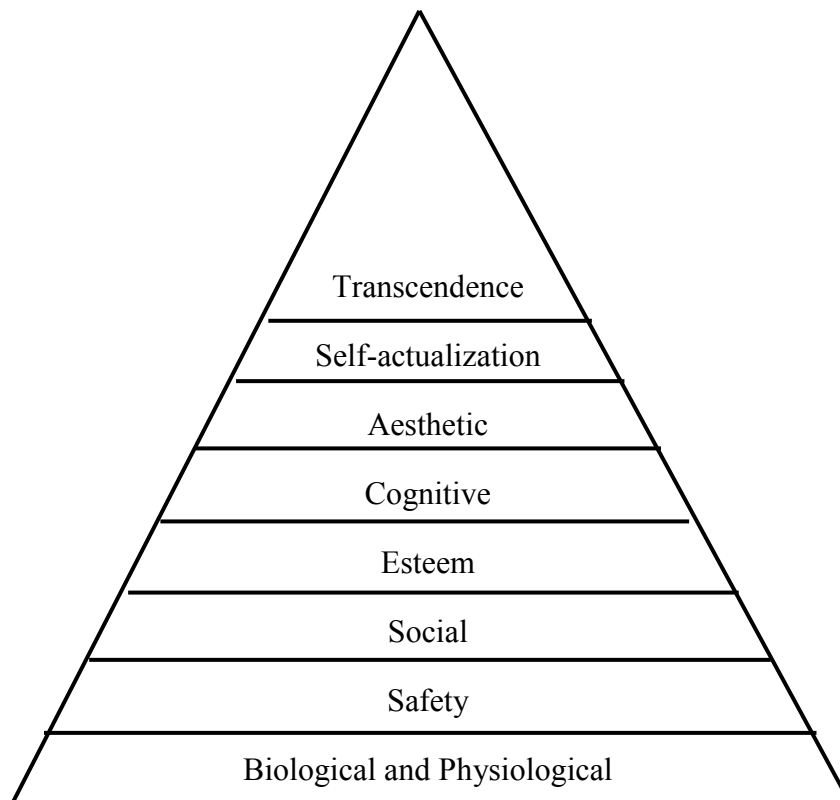
Adapted from Maslow (1967, 1968 and 1970)

A few stages were added to the original five-stage model during the 1960's and 1970s. This include cognitive needs that ally to knowledge and meaning, aesthetic needs that relate to an appreciation and search for beauty and balance, form and transcendence needs that are associate with helping others to achieve

self-actualization (Maslow, 1968, 1970). While Maslow's theory has been rooted in the field of psychology, its applications are wide ranging. Within the tourism literature, Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (1970) has been employed as a basis for Pearce and Caltabiano's (1983) theory of the travel career ladder (figure 2.4, p. 36), which is commonly accepted for measuring tourists motivations (Filep and Greenacre, 2007; McCabe, 1997; Pearce and Lee, 2005; Ryan, 1998; Fodness, 1994; Ryan, 1998; Ross, 1998).

In the study *'Inferring Travel Motivation from Travellers' Experiences'*, Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) criticise the initial idea of Maslow (1970) in that the lower needs must be satisfied before the higher needs can. Consequently, Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) argue that Maslow's theory is lacking recognising that an individual may have more than one motive and it does not allow for changes within a person's needs (desires) according to the stages of the life cycle where individuals could be (Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983). This resonates that in contrast to Maslow's theory, Pearce (1993 cited in McCabe, 1997, p. 213) recognises that individuals motivations change over their life; "individuals were motivated by different factors that would influence their travel choices and decisions, and extended this analysis to claim that motivations can change within the one holiday experience". In addition, Pearce (1993 cited in Richards and Wilson, 2003, p. 26) also recognised that "as travel experience increases, so people tend to travel further afield … [, which] gives someone indirect support for the idea of a travel career". This is supported by Richards and Wilson's study (2003, p.26) in the sense that the more people travel the more they have "a thirst for more travel." More recently, Brown and Lehto (2005, p. 481) have noticed that "Pearce's model offers flexibility as it allows individuals to descent and ascend the ladder; the model distinguishes between motivations that can be self or other directed and recognises that people do not always seek the same type of fulfilment from travel". However, to what degree tourists do so from one holiday or a trip to another, or if this only occurs over a longer time is not quite as clear (Brown and Lehto, 2005).

Figure 2.4 The Ladder Model

Inner Directed   Outer Directed

Fulfilment

Fulfil a Dream

Understand Myself More

Experience Inner Peace, Harmony

Self-Esteem and Development

(Self Directed)   (Other Directed)

Development of Skills   External Rewards, Prestige

Special Interests   Glamour of Traveling

Competence, Mastery   Connoisseur Self-Esteem

Relationship

(Self Directed)   (Other Directed)

Giving love, Affection   Receiving Affection

Maintaining Relationships   To be with group

Membership

Initiating Relationship

Stimulation

(Self Directed)   (Other Directed)

Concern for Own Safety   Concern for Others Safety

Relaxation

(Self Directed)   (Other Directed)

Need for Bodily Reconstitution, Relaxation

Source: Pearce (1996 in Ryan, 1998, p. 938)

Other approaches to understand tourist motivations have also been developed (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Kim and Lee, 2002). For instance, Crompton (1979) recognises that most discussion of tourist motivation tends to concentrate

on the concepts of "push" and "pull" factors. While the push factors for a vacation are socio-psychological motives, the pull factors are arousing from the destinations themselves (Crompton, 1979). In Crompton's study (1979, p. 416), "the data suggested seven socio-psychological motives [push] which served to direct pleasure vacation behaviour". These were identified: "escape from a perceived from mundane environment; exploration and evaluation of self; relaxation; prestige; regression; enhancement of kinship relationships; and facilitation of social interaction" (Crompton, 1979, p.416). However, Crompton (1979) acknowledges another two motivational factors; cultural (pull), namely "novelty" and "educational" (Crompton, 1979).

In more recent publications, other academics (e.g. Kim and Lee, 2002; Kim, Jogaratnam and Noh, 2006; Locker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995) have supported Crompton's (1979) proposition when carrying out further examination of push and pull factors. For example, a study of Kim and Lee (2002) assessed the motivations of visitors to six national parks in South Korea and their findings closely paralleled Crompton (1979), as two broad categories were identified; push and pull factors. In fact, Kim and Lee's (2002) findings identified overall twelve push and twelve pull factors relating to the settings of the national parks. The push factors were for example 'family togetherness and study', 'appreciating natural resources and health', 'escaping from everyday routine', 'adventure and building friendship.' On the other hand, the pull factors related to the destination and the supply side, they included cultural resources, natural attractions, recreational activities, special events or festivals and other entertainment. While some destinations represent one distinctive resource and target for a specific market segment, others feature a mixture of these various resources to meet a variety of motives (Kim and Lee, 2002).

An alternative way to understand motivation is using Beard and Ragheb's (1983) Leisure Motivation Scale (table 2.4, p. 38) which is "one of the most widely accepted theoretical framework for understanding leisure motivation" (Yusof and Shah, 2008, p. 105). The framework builds upon Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of

needs and aims to measure four motivational needs: intellectual, social, competence - mastery and stimulation avoidance. Table 2.4 provides an overview of the four needs in relation to tasks. Similarities in motives exist with the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990, 2000), in particular, the desire for competence and mastery of skills, usually though physically challenging activities. In addition, as Ryan (1997) and Ryan and Glendon (1998) recognise the four motivations have been replicated by other researchers within the tourism literature (Sefton and Burton, 1990).

Table 2.4 Components of leisure motivation scale in relation to task

Component of leisure motivation scale	Task
Intellectual	'assesses the extent to which individuals are motivated to engage in leisure activities which involve…mental activities such as learning, exploring, discovering, though or imagining'
Social	'assesses the extent to which individuals engage in leisure activities for social reasons. This component includes two basic needs…the need for friendship and interpersonal relationships, while the second is the need for the esteem of others'
Competence-mastery	'assesses the extent to which 'individuals engage in leisure activities in order to achieve, master, challenge, and compete. The activities are usually physical in nature'
Stimulus-avoidance	'assesses the drive to escape and get away from over-stimulating life situations. It is the need for some individuals to avoid social contacts, to seek solitude and calm conditions' and for others it is to seek to rest and to unwind themselves'

Source: Beard and Ragheb (1983, p. 224)

In both, Ryan (1997) and Ryan and Glendon (1998) studies the 'Leisure Motivation Scale' was applied in the context of tourism. Ryan (1997) has identified the motivational scale as a relatively useful tool for assessing tourist experiences, as well as, Ryan and Glendon's (1998) study demonstrated how the

components of the leisure motivation scale closely reflect the tourism literature that relates to tourist motivation, such as Iso-Ahola's (1982) 'seeking and escaping'. Iso-Ahola (1980, 1982) recognises a need "seeking" that is associated with learning and self-actualisation. In Iso Ahola's (1980, 1982) view, "a human is born with innate (psychological) needs that are the … energizers of human growth and potential" (cited in Cooper, 1999, p. 35). Iso-Ahola also identifies a need of "escaping" to leave the everyday environment behind one-self, which paralleled an earlier work of Grinstein (1955) that had drawn upon many of the basic psychological factors that underlie tourist motivation and behaviour. In Grinstein's (1955 cited in Pearce, 1989, p. 113) pioneering paper it is referred to as "a need to 'get away from it all', a need to escape from the demands of everyday life which can best be achieved by a change of place".

Initially Neulinger's leisure paradigm suggest that intrinsic motivation relates to an activity that is enjoyable, interesting and rewarding in itself, whereas extrinsic motivation is where activity brings external rewards only, such as receiving awards, gaining recognition or getting paid. While originally it was thought that two types of motivation exist, more recently, Kleiber, et al. (2011) observes complexity between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. As Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991; Ryan and Deci, 2000) recognised four approaches to characterise intrinsic motivation can be found in the academic literature. The first approach concerns the importance of freedom of choice (e.g. Neulinger, 1981a, 1981b), where it is presumed that if participant chooses activity voluntary, the behaviour is intrinsically motivated, hence there is no need for other external reward. Secondly, interest and enjoyment are seen as the driving force behind the intrinsically motivated behaviour; while interest pushes the participant to engage in an activity, enjoyment keeps participant involved in the activity. The third approach relates to high level of absorbing experiences from optimally challenging activities, which can result what Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) refers to as 'flow' and theories of optimal arousal (Haworth, 1997; Kleiber, et al. 2011).

Finally, the fourth approach recognises that three psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness foster intrinsically motivated behaviour. Autonomy

involves freedom of choice and control. The need for competence involves effective functioning and desire to tackle higher challenges and relatedness is a feeling of being loved by others, who understand the individual and are meaningfully involved in a his/her wider social circuit. Autonomy, competence and relatedness are basis of what Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000) determine as 'basic needs theory', where all three needs are seen inborn in each human being. Around the same time of Neulinger's leisure paradigm, Deci was conducting research about the factors that influence intrinsic motivation and with his colleague Ryan he began formulating a behavioural framework they called self-determination theory (figure 2.5). The basis of this theory incorporate a number of mini-theories, such as already alluded 'basic need theory', which includes autonomy, competence and relatedness, 'organismic integration theory' that addresses how variation in motivation are organised and 'cognitive evaluation theory', which concerns how intrinsically motivated person can become extrinsically motivated, and vice versa (Kleiber, et al. 2011).

Figure 2.5 Self Determination Model
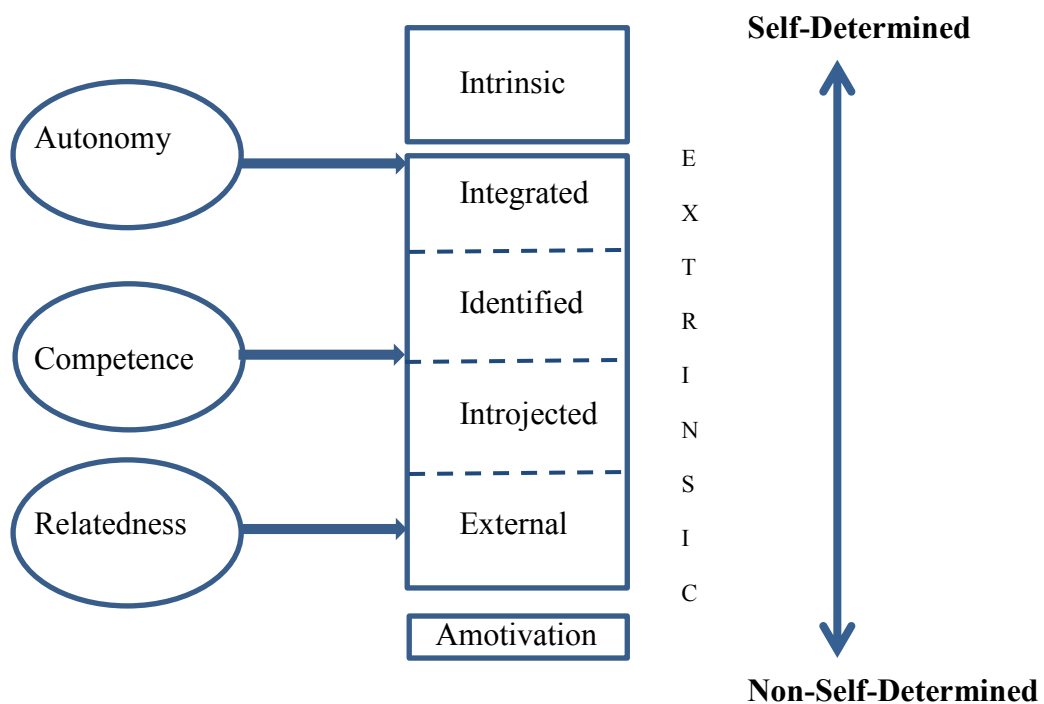
Source: Kleiber, et al. (2011, p. 162)

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation can take a number of forms too: external, introjected, identified and integrated (Deci and Ryan, 1991; Ryan and Deci, 2000). For example, identified motivation concerns activities that are done neither for rewards like money or trophies (i.e. external motivation), nor out of real and genuine interest (i.e. intrinsic motivation), but because the person believes they are important and worthwhile, whereas integrated motivation results from internalizing an activity or behaviour so completely that it becomes a major part of 'who we are' as an individual. Furthermore, external motivation concerns activities that are clearly controlled by external factors, such as threat of punishment or the promise of reward. Introjected motivation concerns activities that are driven internally, but because "one feels one ought to do rather than in response to the need for autonomy, competence, or relatedness" (Kleiber, et al., 2011, p. 159). Finally, Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest that there may be also situations when both motivations are absent, it is referred to this state as 'amotivation'; "a state in which people lack the intension to behave…[likely because] they lack either a sense of efficacy or a sense of control with respect to a desired outcome" (Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 237 cited in Kleiber, et al., 2011, p. 160). The complex nature of leisure and tourist motivation is evident in the literature and as Kleiber, et al. (2011, p. 176) concluded:

> "leisure frequently involves intrinsic and integrated extrinsic motivation, both of which are evoked by conditions that enhance a person's sense of autonomy, competence, and interpersonal relatedness. Leisure can also be viewed as an autonomy-, competence-, and relatedness-supportive environment in and of itself. This is essence of leisure's power and attraction".

2.4.2 Leisure and tourist satisfaction

The concept of motivation coincides with rewards, which relates to satisfaction of a given activity. Beard and Ragheb (1980) comprehensively explore the concept of satisfaction by drawing its relationship with other elements such as attitude, and happiness. Beard and Ragheb (1979, cited in 1980, p. 330) defined satisfaction as

"positive perceptions or feelings which an individual forms, elicits, or gains as a result of engaging in leisure activities and choices. It is the degree to which one is presently content or pleased with his/her general leisure experiences and situations. This positive feeling of pleasure results from the satisfaction of felt or unfelt needs [motives] of the individual".

Figure 2.6 Leisure Satisfaction

■ Psychological rewards

■ Educational rewards

■ Social rewards

■ Relaxation

□ Physiological rewards

□ Aesthetic rewards
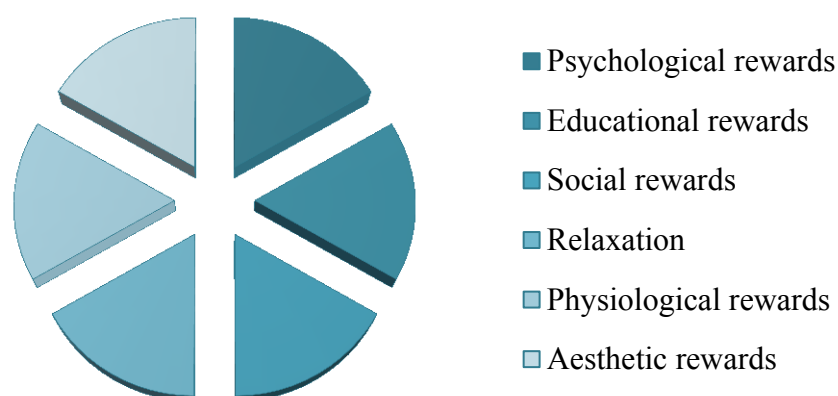
Adapted from Beard and Ragheb (1980)

Beard and Ragheb (1980, p. 267) build on an earlier view of Homan's (1961), which emphasises how "satisfaction is a matter of reward". Consequently, Beard and Ragheb (1980, p.330) corroborated Homan's (1961) statement, because they recognised that people see leisure activities satisfying when they "gain or elicit rewards such as enjoyment, achievement, or improved health." In order to understand satisfaction, Beard and Ragheb (1979 cited in Beard and Ragheb, 1980) develop a six-dimensional scale (see figure 2.6). It needs to be borne in a reader's mind that although the stages are illustrated in figure 2.6 as equal, variations are likely to be found across individuals and the activities they engage in. The basic dimensions of the scale entail psychological rewards such as a sense of freedom, enjoyment, involvement and intellectual challenge. While educational rewards relate to intellectual challenge and gained knowledge, social rewards link to building relationships with other people. In addition, relaxation is a relief from strain and stress, physiological rewards link to fitness, health, weight

control and well-being, and aesthetic rewards are gained through response to a pleasing design and beauty of an environment.

In a similar vein, an already discussed work by Stebbins (2007, see section 2.2.3) recognises that rewards relate to satisfaction of a given activity, in contrast to Beard and Ragheb (1980), Stebbins (2007) has based his rewards from interviewing and analysing participants' views. The analysis suggests that rewards may be personal and/or social in nature and can vary among activities as well as individual participants (table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Rewards of serious leisure participants

Rewards	
Personal	**Social**
- Personal enrichment (cherished experiences) - Self-actualization (developing skills, abilities, knowledge) - Self-expression (expressing skills, abilities, knowledge already developed) - Self-image (known to others as a particular kind of serious leisure participant) - Self-gratification (combination of superficial enjoyment and deep fulfilment) - Re-creation (regeneration) of oneself through serious leisure after a day's work - Financial return (from a serious leisure activity)	- Social attraction (associating with other serious leisure participants, with clients as a volunteer, participating in the social world of the activity) - Group accomplishment (group effort in accomplishing a serious leisure project; senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic) - Contribution to the maintenance and development of the group(Including senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic in making the contribution)

Adapted from Stebbins (2007)

In addition, within the tourism marketing oriented literature, models of confirmation/disconfirmation theories, such as SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) and HOLSAT (Tribe and Snaith, 1998) were developed to measure service quality and holiday satisfaction. As Ryan (2002) acknowledges confirmation/disconfirmation models illustrate how expectations are a factor for determining customers/tourists satisfaction with the quality of the services provided. For instance, the heart of the SERVQUAL model, lays in the perception and experience of a place and the interactions that happen at the place; these interactions entail other tourists, host population and tourist industry representatives whom tourists came into contact (Ryan (1997). Tribe and Snaith (1998) build upon the SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, et al., 1985) developing HOLSAT, which is in contrast to SERVQUAL as it measures service quality and is designed to measure holiday satisfaction. This instrument incorporates number of elements such as the physical resort and facilities; ambiance; restaurants, bars, shops and nightlife; transfers; accommodation; heritage and culture.

More recently, Rhoden (2010) casts doubt on the impartiality of this model to view it as a confirmation/disconfirmation model, as it measures effectiveness of the product that is created by tourism providers rather than by the tourist. Subsequently, Rhoden (2010, p. 72) notes that " it can be viewed cynically as a means of evaluating pseudo-events (Boorstin, 1971), staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1976) or the hermeneutic circle of the tourist gaze (Urry, 2002b): the greater the satisfaction score, the more complete the illusion". Alternatively, the model serves as a measuring tool for aspects that tourists are told to experience by tourism providers, rather than assessing a meaningful insight of the creator of his/hers experience, the tourist (Rhoden, 2010). Parallel with this, it is maintained that the approach to study tourist experience needs to be interpretive, qualitative and one that concerns and represents participants' viewpoints.

2.5 Summary

In the present chapter, a literature review of leisure and tourist experience was presented. The review considered the different point of views on the topic and

some concluding remarks about this chapter can be drawn; it has been evident from both the leisure and tourism literature that each are a complex phenomenon, which requires a multidisciplinary approach to gain a better understanding of their experiential nature (Neulinger, 1981; Ryan, 2012). For this reason, a combination of theories and concepts from a variety of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, economics, management and business-oriented literature were utilised. In addition, motivations were identified as one of the key dimension of both leisure and tourist experience. Moreover, there seems to be a strong interrelationship between motivations (what a person needs) and rewards or outcomes (what a person receives and/or gains) from the leisure and tourism engagement. Rewards ally with participants' satisfactions whereby satisfaction or dissatisfaction is viewed as an outcome of the leisure and tourism engagement (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). Subsequently, the review of approaches to understand leisure and tourist motivation as well as satisfaction was provided.

Nevertheless, it needs to be borne in a reader's mind that there are many other theories and empirical studies that have focused upon leisure and tourist experiences and have been undertaken over the last ten years and therefore could have been mentioned in the present chapter (see Kleiber, et al. 2011; Ryan, 2011; Sharpey and Stone, 2011). However, due to the complexity it was not in the scope of the present study to discuss all aspects of leisure and tourist experience. As a result, the aforementioned conceptual underpinning in the present chapter seems sufficient to provide the foundation for the present thesis. In the following chapter, the literature review focuses on understanding one of the fastest growing niches of tourism, 'sports tourism' (Bull and Weed, 1999; Funk and Brunn, 2007; Gratton and Taylor, 2000) and on understanding the active sports tourists.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW – UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCES OF ACTIVE SPORTS TOURISTS

3.1 Introduction

There has been a growing consensus that sports tourism is becoming one of the fastest growing tourism niches (Bull and Weed, 1999; Funk and Brunn, 2007; Gibson, 1998a; Gratton and Taylor, 2000; Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, and Ali, 2003; Kaplanidou and Gibson, 2010; Priesley, 1995; Weed and Bull, 2004), but many scholars suggest that sports tourism as a separate area of academic enquiry is still in its early stage (Gibson, 2005; Hinch and Higham, 2001; Hinch, Jackson, Hudson and Walker, 2005; Weed and Bull, 2004). Currently, the academic literature has been progressing quickly as a number of publications have emerged more recently (e.g. Miller's, 2012; Kirkup's, 2012; Shipway's, 2012). The purpose of the present chapter is firstly, to define sports tourism; to review its established conceptualisations within the academic literature (Gammon and Robinson, 1997; Gibson, 1998a; Standeven and DeKnop, 1999; Weed and Bull, 2004). Secondly, the chapter provides a review of literature that concerns sports tourists, their behaviour and the approaches that have been used to conceptualise the experiences of active sports tourists.

3. 2 Defining and conceptualising sports tourism

As evident in Chapter 2, considerable attention has been given in the academic literature to conceptualisation of leisure (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Neulinger, 1981a; Stebbins, 2007) and tourism (Cohen, 1979; Ryan, 2002, 2011; Urry, 2002). The complexity of each concept became evident without a single definition being available (Bull, 2006; Weed and Bull, 2009). Similarly, defining the concept of sport tourism seems complex, because of mixing the two aspects 'sport' and 'tourism'. Sheldon and Bushell (2009, p. 5) attempt to simplify the complexity by stating that "sport tourism is derived from the conjunction of 'sport' and 'tourism'", but difficulties exist as similarly to leisure and tourism,

various definitions of sport can be found in the literature (Hinch and Higham, 2001; Weed and Bull, 2009). While in McPherson, Curtis and Loy's (1989, p. 15) view, sport is "a structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic physical activity", a more inclusive definition is delivered by the Council of Europe (1992 cited in Sports Council, 1994, p. 4), where sport is defined

"as all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organized participation, aims at improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels".

The concept of sports tourism appears to be problematic, because of the blending of two separate terms: sport and tourism, both of which are complex phenomena without a single definition of each former (Hinch and Higham, 2001, 2004; Weed and Bull, 2004, 2009). Similarly to leisure and tourism literature, Ritchie and Adair (2002) recognised that literature regarding sport and tourism have developed independently. Weed and Bull (2009) further advocated a term 'sports tourism', which differs to 'sport tourism', because the concept in this sense is concerned with a collection of activities that are called sport, rather than referring to the social institution of sport. The term 'sport tourism' is usually seen as a combination of sport and tourism (Pitts, 1997; Standeven and DeKnop, 1999; Sheldon and Bushell, 2009). Although the literature seems to support the view about the links and influences between sport and tourism (Gammon and Robinson, 1997; Hinch and Hingham, 2001, 2004; Robinson and Gammon, 2004; Weed, 2005), much of the previous research has focused on the economic, environmental and social influences of tourists' activities (Weed and Bull, 2004). More recently, academics, such as Weed and Bull (2004, 2009) and Shipway and Fyall (2012) have started to apply the term 'sports tourism'. This study accepts that these terms, sport tourism and sports tourism, are almost used interchangeably in the academic literature. The term sports tourism and sports tourist is applied in this study, except when reporting authors' viewpoints in the literature review as then the use of sports tourism or sport tourism is determined by how individual authors have referred to the concept.

Adding to the complexity, the concept of sports tourism appears to overlap and share similarities within other areas of study such as adventure tourism and health tourism (Hall, 1992), wellness tourism (Sheldon and Bushell, 2009), event tourism and sports event tourism (Getz, 1997, 2008). Sports tourism also seems to fall under a broad umbrella of special interest tourism (Weiler and Hall, 1992) and outdoor adventure tourism (Weiber, 2001). In a similar vein, Hinch, et al. (2005), identified commonalities between leisure, sport and tourism. Thus, complexities in defining sports tourism exist, but some attempts can be identified within the academic literature (Gammon and Robinson, 1997; Gibson, 1998a; Hall, 1992; Pitts, 1997; Standeven and De Knop, 1999; Weed and Bull, 2004, 2009).

Providing a marketing perspective Pitts (1997) refers to sport tourism as a combination of sports activities and travel, he segragetes between two broad categories of sport tourism products: sport participation travel and sport spectorial travel. The former relates to travel for the purpose of participating in sports, recreation, leisure or fitness activity, whilst the latter is associated with travel for the purpose of spectating sports, recreation, leisure or fitness activities or events (Pitts, 1997). The distinction between active and passive participation parallels with another definition, i.e. that of Gibson (1998a, p. 49), that builds upon Redmond's (1991) idea of travel for nostalgia, and proposes that sports tourism can be defined as:

> "Leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside their homes communities to participate in physical activities [active sport tourism], to watch physical activities [event sport tourism], or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities [nostalgia sport tourism]".

In a similar vein, Standeven and DeKnop (1999, p. 12) consider the active and passive engagement and view sport tourism as:

> "All forms of active and passive involvement in sporting activity, participated in casually or in an organised way for non-commercial or

business/commercial reasons that necessitate travel away from home and work locality".

This definition builds upon the early work of Glyptis' (1982) that originally identified two key concepts of sport tourism: active and passive. This definition appears attractive to academics from both fields, as it incorporates both sport and tourism definitions (Weed, 2005). Related to Standeven and DeKnop (1999) is an earlier definitional attempt of Gammon and Robinson (1997), who based their definition on travel and sport motivations. A distinction is primarily made between two key areas: 'sport tourism' and 'tourism sport' (Gammon and Robinson, 1997). On the one hand, 'sport tourism' comprises individuals, who actively or passively participate in competitive or recreational sports while travelling; the sport is seen as the primary motivation or reason to travel. On the other hand, 'tourism sport' refers to active or passive participation, wherein individuals engage in competitive or recreational sport activities; the holiday or visit is the primary travel motivation rather than the sport one (Gammon and Robinson, 1997).

Gammon and Robinson (1997) further identify two types of participants: 'hard' and 'soft'. While 'soft' sports tourists engage in more recreational rather than competitive activity, 'hard' participants are sports tourists who travel to engage actively or passively in competitive sports such as events. However, Weed (1999) notices that in some cases, the active tourists could become passive participants of sports tourism by perhaps also visiting other sport related attractions or observing other participants, while not being engaged themselves. Correspondingly, Weed (1999) criticises the sports tourism definitions that distinguish sports participants as active and passive (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999), or 'hard' and 'soft' (Gammon and Robinson, 1997) and demonstrates a strong relationship between both roles as an active as well as passive participant (McCarthy, 2011).

In addition, the earlier work of Glyptis (1982) focuses on types of sports tourism that individuals engage in and distinguishes between five types of sports tourism demand: 'sports training', 'upmarket' sports holidays, sport opportunities on

general holiday, sport spectating and 'activity holidays'. Although this work is empirically focusing on the demand side of the sports tourism, it provides valuable knowledge for the providers (Weed and Bull, 2009). Weed and Bull (2009) have updated and built upon Glyptis'(1982) typology by looking upon the supply side; Weed and Bull (2009) concentrate on the product that providers offer and five sports tourism products that closely parallel with the Glyptis' (1982) original classification are distinguished. Subsequently, these five categories of sports tourism products are supplementary sports tourism, sports participation tourism, sports training tourism, event sports tourism and luxury sports tourism (Weed and Bull, 2009). For instance, 'supplementary sports tourism product' is similar to Glyptis' (1982) demand group that seek 'sport opportunities on general holiday'. Sports training tourism serves for individuals on both elite and non-elite level, who engage in training camps while away from their home environment. The term 'upmarket' is replaced with the term 'luxury', wherein importance is on the supporting facilities, such as accommodation, rather than aspects that relate to activity engagement. The two remaining types, sports participation tourism and event sports tourism may overlap to some degree and each considers both types of sports tourists, active and passive participants, in contrast to Glyptis' (1982) categorisation, which segregates between 'active holidays' and 'sport spectating'.

In order to establish the relationship and develop synergies between sport and tourism, Shipway and Stevenson (2011, p. 177) suggest that both "provide consumers with experiences; and as such, one approach towards understanding the interaction between sport and tourism is to consider sport tourism as an experience". Similarities exist further with the concept leisure, recreation, sport, event, adventure and tourism as each phenomenon could be conceptualised as an experience. This is evident in already discussed work of Standeven and DeKnop (1999, p. 58 cited in Gammon 2011, p. 116), which suggests that the nature of sport tourism is an "experience of physical activity tied to an experience of place". Weed and Bull (2004, p. 37) has taken the idea of the experience of activity and place further by recognising the importance of the social dimension; it is proposed that sports tourism is 'a social, economic and cultural phenomenon arising from the unique intersection of activity, people and place'.

In a similar vein, a study of Walker, et al. (2010) focused on the roles of mode of experience and achievement orientation in the case of World Master Game's participants. Walker, Hinch and Higham (2010) advocated that Williams' (1988) concept of mode of experience has its origins in outdoor recreation research and holds that the environment is experienced in one (or more) of three ways: in terms of activity, the social group or the place. The same authors argued that although there has not been much attention paid to this concept in the sports tourism research, the core is closely parallel with the theoretical conceptualization of sports tourism experience by Weed and Bull (2004). Variations in importance of each dimension exist. While Green and Chalip (1998) in their study of women's football tournaments concluded that social interaction was more important for the football participants than the activity and place, Bull's (2006, p. 271) study of racing cyclist identified that "while on one level the destination and setting were unimportant, the actual quality of the race environment was regarded as significant". Despite differences in importance of activity, people and place, in the second editions of Weed and Bull's publication (2009, p. 76), it is maintained that "the unique interaction of activity, people and place is a significant factor in understanding and conceptualising the sports tourist". Bearing this in mind, the following subsections turn attention to understanding behaviours and experiences of sports tourists.

3.2.1 Behaviour of sports tourists

A number of scholars have aimed for a better understanding of sports tourist behaviour (Bull, 2006; Gibson, 1998b; Reeves, 2000; Shipway and Jones, 2007). In order to group and differentiate sports tourists behaviour, a number of typologies have been developed (Glyptis, 1989; Hall, 1992; Reeves, 2000). Glyptis (1989) introduces terms 'general dabbler' and 'specialist' to distinguish participants according to their levels of engagement in both active and passive sports tourism. While Glyptis (1989) primarily distinguishes two groups, another classification that of Maier and Weber's (1993), which is similarly based on the degree of intensity that individuals engage in sports activities at the destination, is also acknowledged in the literature (Hinch and Hingham, 2004; Ottevanger, 2007). Maier and Weber (1993) segregate between four groups of sports tourists

that range from the top performance athletes (elite), mass sports, to occasional sports (wo)men and passive sports tourists.

Furthermore, Hall (1992) develops a more complex conceptual model, which is based on motivations and activities that participants engage in adventure, health and sport tourism. Hall's (1992) model allows for more flexibility as it distinguishes the participants on the continuum; they range between less active to more active participants. While the first group appears to parallel with Glyptis' (1989) 'general dabbler', as it refers to recreational rather than a competitive participation, the second group represents individuals who travel to a destination for competition and often possess a high level of commitment in their chosen sport (Hall, 1992), perhaps, as Glyptis' (1989) views 'specialist'. In a similar vein to Hall's (1992) conceptual framework within adventure tourism, the more recent work of Reeves (2000) considers aspects such as motivations, but also takes into consideration decision making, lifestyle and spending patterns of sports tourists; three groups are identified: casual participants, athletic spectators and elite athletes (Hinch and Hingham, 2004; Bull, 2006; Weed and Bull, 2009). In addition, Jackson and Weed (2003) build upon the work of Reeves and other authors, such as Collins and Jackson (2001) by presenting a 'Sports Tourism Demand Continuum', which recognises participants as incidental, sporadic, occasional, regular, committed and driven. Similarly, Weed and Bull (2004) 'Sports Tourism Participation Model' builds upon these previous conceptualisations and considers the degree of commitment individuals engage in. However, in the updated model of sports tourism participation (Weed and Bull, 2009), the model does not incorporate participants types to simplify the model.

Moreover, as originally proposed by Hall (1992) in adventure tourism and by Gibson (1998) in sports tourism literature, an alternative way to further understanding of sports tourists' behaviours and experiences is the possible applicability of Stebbins' (1982) framework of 'serious leisure'. Thus, an additional viewpoint to sports tourist typologies is provided by Green and Jones (2005), who identify the relevance of Stebbins' (1992) framework of 'serious leisure', where three types of serious leisure participants: amateur, hobbyist and

volunteers. For example, amateurs are individuals whose standards of performance may be very much the same to the professionals, but their primary income is earned elsewhere than from the activity itself. Volunteers refer to persons who work, but do not receive any financial rewards in return. Moreover, the category of hobbyist is further subdivided into five categories (Stebbins, 1992). As Green and Jones (2005) suggest, particularly the category of hobbyist, 'activity participants' and 'sport and game players' (Stebbins, 1992) are relevant to the concept of sport tourism. Therefore, complexity and heterogeneity of the sports tourists are recognised within the literature (Weed and Bull, 2009); participants engage in sports at a destination with varying degree of commitment, competitiveness and active/passive engagement (Hinch and Higham, 2004).

Although various typologies have been developed and can be seen as an important starting point for identifying the variety of sports tourists, who can range in their motivation, level of involvement or commitment, there is a number of limitations regarding typologies, such as the evidence that some sports tourists may fit in more than one category (Jones and Green, 2006). Moreover, Gibson (2004, 2005) suggests that the research has been very descriptive, with primary focus on 'what' rather than the 'why' of sports tourists, and that there is a need to move beyond profiling sports tourist, to understanding and explaining these profiles. In a similar vein, Weed (2005b) criticised sports tourism research as being too descriptive, with a limited exploration of why people find such a type of experience so enjoyable that they would like to repeat them. Correspondingly, a number of publications have been published to expand understanding of the sports tourist behaviours and experiences (Bull, 2006; Gillett, 2011; Green and Jones, 2005; Jones and Green, 2006; Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2010; Kirkup, 2012; Miller, 2012; Shipway and Jones, 2007; Shipway and Kirkup, 2011). Consequently, the focus of the following section is to review the academic literature that concerns conceptualising the experiences of active sports tourists.

3.2.2 Conceptualising the active sports tourist experience

A number of approaches have been undertaken to conceptualise the experience of the sports tourist. Parallel to leisure and tourism bodies of literature that concerns experience, the concept of motivations, particularly intrinsic has been identified as one way to conceptualise sports tourist experience as it can begin to answer the 'why' questions (Gibson, 1998b), without which it is difficult to predict tourists' behaviour and experiences (Gibson, 2004, 2005; Gillett, 2011; Mullin, Hardy and Sutton, 2007). A number of aforementioned typologies have already considered the concept of motivation as one approach to understand different tourists' behaviours and experiences (Reeves, 2000). Scholars have primarily distinguished between motives of tourism and sport (Gammon and Robinson, 1997, Robinson and Gammon, 2004), segregated whether the individual is participant or spectator (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999), and the level of competitiveness and intensity of both groups engaged in sports tourism (Hinch and Higham, 2004). In addition, a relatively dated work of Schreiber (1976 cited in Gibson, 1998b) examines the motivation of sports travellers and recognises that participants are identified as seeking opportunities to refine skills, demonstrate prowess in their selected sport and being motivated by a sense of accomplishment.

In another framework, Robinson and Gammon (2004, p. 231) recognised that "in sport tourism no single motive can account for the variety of multiple and shared motives prevalent at any time. These authors argue that

> "it may be over ambitious and indeed obfuscatory to detail the almost innumerable combinations that these primary and secondary motives generate. However, it may be safer to argue that there exists a motivational and indeed experiential synergy, which denotes, at a basic level, the beginning of a sport tourist typology."

As Robinson and Gammon (2004) stressed the framework represents only a starting point to building a better understanding of the motives and experiences of sport tourist. There is still a lack of understanding in what ways sport and tourism

motives combine and interact and how this might affect consumer's expectations and satisfaction.

> "Nevertheless, the proposed framework aids in our understanding and knowledge of the sport-tourism relationship by outlining four clearly defined and applicable motivational categories. Research now needs to focus more on these categorises to examine further the motives of the sport tourist and to assess in more general terms the utility of the framework" (Robinson and Gammon, 2004, p. 231).

The framework further helps to develop a better understanding of the consumer through further research into the individual segments of the sport tourism categories. It also provides a starting point for profiling tourism destinations, places, cities, sports, and potentially private companies for sport tourism and tourism sport opportunities (Robinson and Gammon, 2004). Robinson and Gammon (2004) refer to Neulinger's (1981) comments when confronted by the definitional inconsistency and diverse research approaches found in the field of leisure (i.e. whether it should be defined as free time, an activity, or state of mind etc.) 'The primary task is not to discover what leisure is, but rather to make a decision as to which of the phenomena labelled by this tem, one intends to address oneself to' (Neulinger, 1981, p. 26). Segregation between active and passive participants is a starting point to understand why people are involved in sport related travel.

Building upon this is Gammon and Robinson's (1997) initial idea of primary and secondary motives that expands the understanding of four different categories of sport related travel. In the second publication, Robinson and Gammon (2004) contextualise their framework in the context of the Netherlands and suggest its usefulness in identifying the array of existing sport tourism opportunities in major urban areas as well as its applicability in identifying future developments in smaller cities. In addition, Robinson and Gammon (2004, p. 230) argue that

"the application of the framework provides countless opportunities to examine aspects of sport tourism at many levels. These include local, regional, national and international destinations. However, in addition, different sports organisations, private companies, tour operators and local government can all utilise the flexibility of the framework to increase their understanding of the sport tourism phenomenon".

The initially proposed idea of Gammon and Robinson (1997) was that the sport tourists could be grouped into different typologies depending on their primary and secondary motives. Furthermore, Robinson and Gammon (2004) refer to the wider literature concerning intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, where it was suggested that secondary motives had an enriching affect upon the primary ones:

"Secondary reinforcement refers to a process by which an originally neutral stimulus acquires reinforcing properties through its association with a primary reinforce. In these terms, an intrinsically motivated activity is simply one in which the reinforcement value of the goal has associatively rubbed off on the behaviour itself" (Calder and Staw, 1973, p. 599 cited in Robinson and Gammon, 2004, p. 224).

Consequently, Robinson and Gammon (2004) suggest that secondary motives reinforce the primary one and thus should not be perceived as inferior or second rate. An example can be an individual, whose primary motive maybe golf, but his/hers experience can be reinforced by a number of contextual indicators of the visited environment. These may include climate, scenery, social elements, the quality of the route or the host community, which all add to the overall experience of golf that differs to an experience back home (Robinson and Gammon, 2004). "This example illustrates that for some individuals (in this case active sport tourists) sport tourism offers them the opportunity to experience both worlds" (Robinson and Gammon, 2004, p. 225).

In a study of the active sports tourists, Gibson (1998b) observes that while for some sports tourists it may be a sense of novelty and change associated with developing new skills, others may emphasise self-development or competence-

mastery as the intrinsic motive or prime push factors in selecting a particular type of holiday. As in the leisure and tourist experience literature, Iso-Ahola's (1982) two key motivational forces 'seeking and escaping' are also relevant to sports tourism (Green and Chalip, 1998). Tourists seeking social interaction appear to be a reoccurring theme in the sport tourism literature (Morgan, 2007). Similarly, in Yusof and Mahn-Shah's (2008) study of active and passive sport tourists at mountain-biking and motor-cross events in Malaysia, the motivations are parallel to Beard and Ragheb (1983) Leisure Motivation Scale. In addition, Kirkup (2012) notices in a study on Olympic spectators, a social interaction and a sense of belonging are seen as a major driver for sport consumption. As in Gillett's study (2011) that focuses on the psychological motives of local and non-local Master game participants, people seek more than a social interaction; they seek a sense of camaraderie. The sense of camaraderie has been explored to a lesser extent within the sports tourism literature (Gillett, 2011), with an exception of Green and Jones (2005), who explored the concept of social identity using Stebbins work (1992).

The relevance of Stebbins' (1992) 'serious leisure' in the context of sports tourism has been already suggested (e.g. Hall, 1992 and Gibson, 1998). In Green and Jones' (2005) view, by understanding the relationship between serious leisure, social identity and subculture, it is possible to describe and explain participation in what they term as 'serious sport tourism'. The term 'serious sport tourism' refers to experiences of serious leisure activity, while travelling away from one's home environment (Green and Jones, 2005), thus providing an additional perspective to the conceptualization of sports tourism and sports tourist experience. Other studies have also considered the application of Stebbins' framework, while the earlier work of Hasting, et al. (1995) assesses the six qualities of serious leisure in a study of master swimming event participants, Bull (2006) considers serious leisure in a study of cyclists. Moreover, Shipway and Jones (2007, 2008) assess the running careers of amateur marathon runners and Miller (2012) examines the behaviour and experiences of triathletes. While Shipway's work (2010) undertakes an ethnographic approach to explore lived experiences of runners, a study by Miller (2012) undertakes a qualitative study to understand sports event tourist experience of long distance triathletes.

In addition, the academic literature that concerns the behaviour and experiences of adventure tourists (Ewart, 1987, 1989; Hall, 1992) suggests risk as an important motive, and there has been a consensus that challenge and associated risk links to individual competence and the concept of flow (Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Pomfret, 2006). Horna (1994) demonstrates that many sports tourists also participate in various events that are closely paralleled with a number of dimensions that compose another construct of leisure involvement such as the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). In a similar vein, Ryan (1997, p. 140) suggests that engagement in sports and hobbies can result in flow, because taking part in events, will for most part, be a leisure experience, that is chosen voluntary for its intrinsic rewards. Although the concept of flow has not been widely applied in tourism research, it can be considered in relation to sport tourism (Ryan, 1997; Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). More recently, its relevance is also supported by Miller's (2012) study on triathletes who encourages consideration of the concept of flow in future research.

An alternative approach to understanding sports tourist experience is undertaken by Kaplanidou and Vogt (2010); who undertook a phenomenological study to explore the meaning of the experience in the post trip phase among participants in small scale cycling events. In this study, five aspects relating to the meaning of sports event experience were identified: environmental, emotional, organisational, physical activity and social aspect. While, the environmental aspects related to the scenery, country side and new places, emotional aspects linked to relaxing, exciting, enjoyment, pride, happy, friendly, self - fulfilment feelings, organizational related to safety of the routes, entry fees and registration deadlines. Health, endurance, perseverance, good physical condition, and training represented meanings attached to the physical activity, whereas social aspect referred to social interaction, meeting other people, and holiday with family and friends.

Table 3.1 Summary of the research focus and methodological approaches to assessing the active sports tourist experience

SPORT TOURISTS' BEHAVIOUR, EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITIES		
STUDY FOCUS	**AUTHOR**	**METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH & DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE**
Event experience of cycling tourists	Bull (2006)	Quantitative: Survey
Differences between male and female sport event tourists	Chen (2010)	Qualitative: Interviews
Identification and analysis of psychological motives among local and non-local Master games participant	Gillett (2011)	Mixed methods: Survey Focus groups
Sailing events and the participants experience	Henderson (2012)	Quantitative: Survey
Event experience of long distance triathletes	Miller (2012)	Qualitative: Interviews
Adventure tourism; Women traveller' walking experiences in New Zealand	Myers and Hannam (2012)	Qualitative: Interviews
Golf tourists' satisfaction: Hard-core versus recreational	Moital and Dias (2012)	Quantitative: Survey
Meaning of experience of small scale event participant	Kaplanidou and Vogt (2010)	Qualitative: Focus groups
Encouraging active identities and lifestyles	King (2012)	Qualitative: Interviews
Running event participants	Shipway and Jones (2007)	Qualitative: Observation and interviews
Distance running events and the 'third place'	Shipway (2012)	Qualitative: Observation and interviews

While a number of articles have emerged in recent years (table 3.1) in order to further the understanding of the active sports tourists, their behaviour and experiences, their research focus has been primarily on the active sports event

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participants. Subsequently, the focus of the present study is upon the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers. Open water swimmers are selected as an interesting, exemplary sub group of the active sport tourists, because the activity is generally popular in UK (Mintel, 2009). There is also a growing consensus of increasing numbers of participants in open water swimming (Swimming organisation, 2011), thus providing evidence that people travel to various destinations to engage in this type of sporting activity. In addition, although open water swimming could be tracked back through centuries, only since 2008, the activity has been recognised as one of the Olympic disciplines. Moreover, limited research has been undertaken on active sports tourist, with the exceptions of studies that have emerged within the last few years and were discussed in the present chapter. Scholars have focused upon various activities, such as cycling (Bull, 2006), running (Shipway and Jones, 2007), walking (Myers and Hannam, 2012), and triathlon (McCranville, 2007; Miller, 2012), yet open water swimming as a potential serious sports tourists activity seems to be of less academic interest.

In the context of adventure tourism, a similar situation exists; Hall (1992) for example recognises that a wide range of tourism activities fall under the area of adventure tourism, and list twenty-three activities, yet open-water swimming is not included. Even within literature that focuses on water-based tourism, sport, leisure, and recreation experiences (Jennings, 2006), open water swimming appears to be largely ignored, exceptions are a more recent study of Kruger, Saayman and Ellis (2011) that focused on a motivation based typology of open-water swimmers in the Midmar Mile event in South Africa and an early study by Hastings, et al. (1995) about Master swimmers events. Subsequently, in order to expand understanding about the experience of active sports tourists, the present study focuses on open water swimmers, as a potentially valuable subgroup of the active sports tourist.

3.3 Summary

It seems difficult to understand the concept of sports tourist's behaviour and experience by a single theory; a relevant collection of aspects has been addressed

in the present chapter by reviewing several theoretical concepts. The present chapter has provided an extensive literature review on sports tourism, sports tourist behaviour and experience, wherein the researcher has tried to set out different points of view on the topic. Overall, the debate in sports tourism is on-going and definitional discourses appear to be still taking place (Miller, 2012; Getz and McConnell, 2011), but a number of paradigms to conceptualise experience of sports tourism are identified within the academic literature (Standeven and DeKnop, 1997; Green and Jones, 2007; Weed and Bull, 2004). For instance, researchers of sports tourism have considered leisure theories such as Stebbins' (1992) framework of serious leisure (Bull, 2006; Gibson, 1998a; Miller, 2012; Shipway and Jones, 2007) and Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of flow (Bull, 2006; Miller, 2012).

Moreover, the literature demonstrates that there has been a desire for undertaking qualitative research that concerns why sports tourist do what they do (Gibson, 2004, 2005) and while a greater number of studies have focused upon spectators (e.g. Kirkup, 2012), limited research has been undertaken on the active sports tourists. The exceptions are the most recent studies that were reviewed in the present chapter as these studies look upon participants in running events (Shipway and Jones, 2007, Shipway, 2010), cycling (Bull, 2006) and triathlon events (McCarville, 2007; Miller, 2012) and therefore have addressed to a certain extent why individuals engage in sports events on their holiday. On the other hand, scholars comment that a scarcity of publications on this topic remains (Getz, 2008; Miller, 2012; Sharpley and Stone, 2011, Weed, 2006, 2012). While, Getz (2008) has called for more understanding of sports events tourists' experience, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2010) observe that a small numbers of studies have been undertaken in relation to small-scale sports event. Sharpley and Stone (2011) also notice that relatively little attention is given as to how sports tourism is experienced. In addition, Weed (2012, p. 2) collaborates the lack of research and suggests that, "while the provision of sports tourism products to generate impacts is a well-established model, the extent to which an understanding of demand informs such supply-side activities is less clear".

Table 3.2 Leisure, tourist and active sports tourist experience

CHAPTER 2 LEISURE AND TOURIST EXPERIENCE		
Theories and concepts of Leisure Experience	Theories and concepts of Tourist Experience	Understanding Leisure & Tourist experience
• Leisure paradigm (Neulinger, 1981) • Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) • Serious Leisure (Stebbins, 2007)	• Authenticity (Boostrin, 1964; McCannell, 1973, 1976) • Phenomenology of tourist experience (Cohen, 1979) • Typologies (Cohen, 1972; Plog, 1974; Wickens, 2002) • The tourist gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002)	• Leisure and tourist motivation (e.g. Maslow, 1967; Beard and Ragheb, 1983) • Leisure and tourist satisfaction (e.g. confirmation/ disconfirmation theory SERVQUAL-Parasuraman, et al. 1985 or HOLSAT - Tribe and Snaith, 1998)
CHAPTER 3 UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCES OF ACTIVE SPORTS TOURISTS		
Theories and concepts of Sports Tourist Experience		
• Sport tourism - hard and soft (Gammon and Robinson, 1997) • Activity and place (Standeven and De Knopp, 1999) • Activity, people and place (Weed and Bull, 2004) • Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 2000) • Serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007)		

While the present chapter provides the focus of this study, the next chapter explains methodological steps and approaches to be adopted in the present study. Before the methodological steps are presented, for the purposed of this study the following paragraphs and table 3.2 summarises the conceptual approaches that have been reviewed in both chapters of the literature review (Chapter 2 and

Chapter 3). Firstly, in the case of the leisure experience literature (Chapter 2, Section, 2.2), Neulinger's leisure paradigm (1981), Csikszentmihalyi's the concept of 'flow' (1975, 1990, 2000), Stebbins' 'serious leisure' (1992, 2007). A further review of the academic literature has indicated the applicability and credibility of these authors' works (see section 2.2.4). Thus, the researcher has considered and drawn upon conclusions of these studies that have taken the selected conceptual foundation and ideas into scrutiny. In addition to clarifying the theoretical and conceptual context of the present study, the literature review also provided evaluation of methodological approaches and steps of the previous research. For example, the review of leisure experience literature revealed that the selected concepts such as 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990, 2000) and the framework of 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1992, 2007) utilised qualitative approaches, in which both of these scholars conducted interviews with the research participants.

Secondly, a wide range of conceptualisations of the experience has been established within the tourism literature (for details see Chapter 2, Section 2.3). For instance, theories housed in the field of psychology and sociology have been reviewed. The reviewed theories have focused on the nature and construction of the tourist experience. A range of factors that can shape the tourist experience has been also identified in the academic literature, such as tourist's personality or cultural traits (Kleiber, et al. 2011), past experiences (Breejen, 2006), the tourism industry (Boorstin, 1964), host culture and of destinations (MaCannell, 1976), as well as other tourists. Subsequently, Chapter 2 progressed to review approaches to understand leisure and tourist experience (Section 2.4); particularly, approaches to understand motivation and satisfaction were reviewed. What became apparent from the literature review in Chapter 2 was that more analysis of the tourist's experience is required.

Furthermore, the review of academic literature has progressed in Chapter 3, in order to seek understanding of a relatively new study area named sports tourism. Despite its academic infancy, a number of scholars have made some definitional and conceptual efforts (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999; Gibson, 1998a, 1998b; Pitts, 1997, Gammon and Robinson, 1997; Weed and Bull, 2004). In addition, the

researcher has reviewed literature on sports tourists' behaviour and conceptualisations of the active sports tourist experience. An overview of the most recent studies conducted in the area of the active sports tourist experience has been provided. Past studies that concern tourist experience and sports tourist experience encourage use of qualitative approaches (Pizam and Mansfeld, 1994; Ryan, 2011; Gibson, 1998: Weed, 2005a, 2005b). It has been acknowledged, there is also a desire for more qualitative research that concerns why sports tourist do what they do (Gibson, 2004, 2005). Sharpley and Stone (2011) also claim the lack of knowledge as to how sport tourism is experienced. While Shipway thesis (2010) undertakes an ethnographic approach to explore lived experiences of runners, Miller (2012) takes on an inductive approach to her study about the event experiences of long distance triathletes. Subsequently, the reviewed literature not only influenced the knowledge creation and the researcher's presumption about the research area, but also has to provide of sufficient justification for the use of qualitative research methods for the primary data collection. Consequently, the critical review of the theoretical and conceptual underpinning raised above and summarised in the table 3.2 (p. 62) has assisted in providing the foundation of the present research. At this point, the following chapter turns to methodological approaches of the present study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have critically reviewed and discussed a range of literature published in the area of leisure and tourist experiences. Chapter 2 focused on general theoretical and empirical foundation of leisure and tourist experience, whereas Chapter 3 reviewed literature in a newer study area of sports tourism. The present chapter outlines the methodological implication for the research process of the present study. Firstly, the research philosophies and approaches are outlined and the extent to which they guide the present study is acknowledged. The purpose of the literature review and the secondary research is highlighted and the rationale for the primary research methods is identified. Moreover, the present chapter explains and justifies the research strategy and further methodological steps that are utilised for the primary data collection. This includes the design of the primary research instrument and sampling methods. Ethical applications are also addressed. Further to this, the quality in the research is evaluated and reflections on a pilot study are presented. The chapter concludes by providing an approach for the primary data analysis that was adopted in the present study.

4.2 Review of research philosophies

The role of philosophies in research is that they inform researchers about the complexities of the enquiry by raising their awareness about influences of research paradigms on knowledge construction (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In other words, the research philosophy underlines the way, in which the development of knowledge is created (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). It is evident from the academic literature that different researchers, implicitly and explicitly approach their disciplines via various assumptions; typically distinguishing between two philosophies: positivist and interpretivist (Willig, 2008a). Positivist and interpretivist philosophies possess contrasting views about the world. While supporters of positivist thinking argue for advantages of

providing higher reliability of data that could be replicable by other researchers, a risk exists to overlook the contextual basis, because the same condition (e.g. laboratory settings), would need to occur. This, however, brings difficulties for social scientists due to the relevance of the real world settings, where social life is constantly changing (Denzin, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Therefore, in contrast to the researchers undertaking positivist paradigms who view the world through objective lenses, where only one reality exists, interpretivists think about reality as multi-faced and socially constructed (Bryman, 2012); an important aspect for interpretivist researchers is to understand the way persons view an object or event and the meaning they attach to it (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Thus, interpretivist researchers aim to provide subjective meaning to the social action (Bryman, 2012). As a result, positivist and interpretivist researchers adopt alternative approaches of methods and tools in a research.

While positivists tend to adopt quantitate approaches, which focus on 'objectivity', tangible and single reality that is associated with a phenomenon in order to make generalizations and potential prediction (Saunders, et al., 2009). On the other hand, interpretivist researchers adopt approaches that take an alternative way to research the human behaviour; they have a tendency of adopting qualitative approaches that seek more depth and breadth of information (Cassell and Symon, 1994). In addition, Guba and Lincoln (1994) advocate that interpretivist, qualitative research is generally better suited for social science research as it allows data to be better contextualised.

In the context of tourism research, Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) describe that in the broader sense, interpretive research utilises qualitative methods and tools that concentrate on interpreting, such as analysing the meaning and constructions of various texts, which can include participant narratives, or political and socio-historical discourses. The same authors propose that classifying qualitative research approaches is rather a challenging task, because tourism research is confronted by inter- and multi-disciplinary influences (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001), which are underlined by different epistemological assumptions. In addition, there is a consensus that tourism research has been dominated by

positivist thinking for decades (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001; Penecky and Jamal, 2010; Szarycz, 2009) and subsequent use of interpretivist, qualitative approaches still appears limited in the tourism literature. Moreover, the sports tourism literature advocates, that there is a need for more qualitative research that seeks to further understand the active sports tourist's experience and so participants' views. Therefore, an interpretivist philosophy and the subsequent choice of qualitative research is undertaken in the present study as this type of research allows collection of depth information and participants' voices to be heard.

4.3 Research approach

The previous paragraphs have raised the distinction between two key, yet complex research philosophies: positivism and interpretivism. These tend to determine further directions of the research. A deductive research approach inclines to a positivist perspective, which tends to utilise quantitative research. This type of research usually begins that the researcher develops his or her knowledge from an existing theory and then the findings of the primary data collection either support or reject the theory (Saunders, et al. 2009; White, 2000). On the other hand, an inductive approach inclines to interpretivist research and represents situations, wherein researchers have a minor knowledge and resources available (Blaikie, 2000). Nevertheless, Saunders, et al. (2009) claims that it may sound rather simplistic to state that all interpretivist research is undertaken inductively and all positivist is conducted in a deductive way, because in many instances, a combination of both may apply. Therefore, a precise division is difficult, as some prior knowledge is usually required or as Blaikie (2000, p. 103) puts it:

> "…presuppositionless data collection is impossible. Concepts, and the theoretical baggage that goes with them, are required before any observations can be made. The choice of concepts, and the way they are defined, will predetermine what data are collected. Therefore, the researcher will begin with some preconception and choices about what will be observed".

In the present study, the initial theoretical and conceptual foundation developed from the literature review has assisted in the knowledge creation of the researcher, and thus influences the rationalisation of the research direction. However, this initial step does not preclude induction from the data. In other words, the researcher does not deduct from previous data, and therefore the present research inclines to an inductive approach. Accordingly, the first step of the research process was to provide a critical review of concepts and theories of leisure and tourist experience in Chapter 2 and understanding of active sports tourists in Chapter 3.

4.4 Secondary research

According to Saunders, et al. (2003, 2009) the purpose of the literature review is to gain and clarify research ideas in order to understand the current knowledge within the area that researcher aims to study. The purpose of the literature review was to generate secondary sources, wherein publications such as books and journals were accessed from SCOPUS, COPAC, Google Scholar, and databases of Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester and the British Library. Additional sources included Mintel Research, and a further Internet search assisted in providing more comprehend overview to disclose the complexity of the research area. Subsequently, leisure, tourist and sport tourist experience literature was critically reviewed, wherein researcher has drawn from disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and the marketing and business management oriented literature in order to encourage inter-field and multi-disciplinary approach and to provide a foundation for this study.

4.5 Primary research

The focus of this section is to detail the research strategy that frames the collection and analysis of primary data in the present study. Further methodological steps and procedures for the primary data investigation are outlined, which includes data collection methods, schedule design of data

collection instrument and sampling techniques. In addition, quality assurance is an important aspect in undertaking research; concepts, such as reliability and validity are explained, with consideration of research ethics and undertaking a pilot study.

4.5.1 The research strategy

Saunders, et al. (2009) suggests that the research question tends to determine the research strategy that is undertaken by the researcher. As discussed in the previous section reviewing research philosophies, the field of tourism has been dominated by positivist thinking that typically involves a quantitative approach to primary data collection and analysis (Pizam and Mansfeld, 2000). However, the need for a qualitative research was recognised within the literature, as a mean of providing more in-depth information about the active sports tourist experiences that is articulated from the participants' view.

Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) '*Handbook of Qualitative Research*' recognises a number of strategies that are established within the academic literature to assist researchers in different fields. Especially, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) provide a useful overview of the variety of strategies that can be utilised in qualitative research (see Appendix 1, p. 192). It needs to be noted that there seems to be no single, accepted way of undertaking qualitative study. Historically, a shift in ontological and epistemological thinking of 20th century is evident within the academic literature and appears influenced by philosophers, such as Husserl, who challenged the foundations of scientific truth, validity and objectivity (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001; Pernecky and Jamal, 2010).

Husserl initiated a phenomenological movement and phenomenology can be viewed as a research strategy, which inclines with interpretivist thinking and aims to elicit an essence of experience through a description and/or interpretation of the meaning that is shared by a number of individuals, who experience a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Thus, phenomenology focuses upon

what all research participants have in common, while they experience a phenomenon, or as Smith (2008, p.11) puts it:

"Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience. There are many different emphases and interests amongst phenomenologists, but they have all tended to share a particular interest in thinking about what the experience of being human is like, in all of its various aspects, but especially in terms of the things which matter to us, which constitute our lived world".

Smith (2008) recognises that phenomenologist differ in their emphases and interests. Creswell (2007) in his writings outlines two broad phenomenogical approaches that are mostly referred to in the research method literature: hermeneutic phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990) and empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). On the one hand, Moustakas' (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology builds upon Husserl's philosophical thinking and, in particular, on his concept of 'epoche' or also known as 'bracketing', which refers to situation, where researchers set aside their preconceptions as much as possible in order to take a fresh view towards the phenomenon that is under the examination. Thus, 'transcendental' referrers to taking a fresh look at a phenomenon, as the researcher would perceive the phenomenon for his or her first time (Moustakas, 1994). The focus is less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants.

In contrast, Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology is oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the "text" of life (hermeneutics). The principle is not only to describe, but also to include an interpretive process in which researcher makes an interpretation and "mediates" between different meanings' (Van Manen, 1990, p. 26 cited in Creswell, 2007). This approach is referred by Willig (2008, p. 56) as 'interpretative phenomenology', where the purpose is to gain a deeper knowledge of the nature and quality of phenomena as they present themselves through the eyes of participants. In this type of phenomenology a description and interpretation is

treated as mutually inclusive, because Van Mannen (1990) argues that any description contains a form of interpretation. "The study of 'lived experience' (Van Manen, 1990) is not an assessment of an objective reality but rather, it is a description of reality as it is articulated by the respondents" (Rossman and Rallis, 1998 cited in Szarycz, 2009, p. 49). Similarly, Heidegger (1996), who studied Husserl transcendental phenomenology, comes to a different way of exploring the lived experience. Opposing to Husserl, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology does not claim to produce accurate description, but instead focuses on the situated, dialogic and interpretive qualities of being. In Heidegger's view, the understanding of lived experience comes through our culturally and historically mediated interpretations and relationships with objects and things, and through the social meanings contained in language (Pernecky and Jamal, 2010).

The academic literature indicates that phenomenology has increasingly proved to be a valuable methodology in tourism research (Szarycz, 2009). However, authors, such as Pernecky and Jamal (2010) criticise the earlier phenomenological studies in the tourism literature, and write how researchers have inadequately addressed the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that influence their approach and interpretations. Pernecky and Jamal (2010) argue that previous studies have built upon positivist thinking that is underlined by different philosophical assumption (e.g. objectivity) and there are studies that seem to lack providing sufficient philosophical underpinning. The same authors also suggest that phenomenological research is underpinned by ontological and epistemological assumptions that vary depending on the theorist being followed (Pernecky and Jamal, 2010). Earlier discussed Husserl's phenomenology inclines more to a positivistic approach as it provides step-by-step methodical process and mediates between objectivity and subjectivity, whereas Heidegger's phenomenology corresponds to more interpretivist (subjective) orientations.

It needs to be kept in a reader's mind that in reality, studies do not seem to fall neatly between positivist or phenomenology paradigms. Given the present study's aims, this study is developed in the spirit of a phenomenological philosophy, whereby the researcher seeks to understand meaning of 'the active sports tourist's experience' from the participants' view. The investigation is undertaken by

assuming that the evidence and theory are interwoven to some degree and rooted in the context, hence the use of qualitative approach. Nevertheless, there are a number of limitations, which are to some degree inevitable in a qualitative study and these are addressed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis, where conclusions of this study are drawn. Next, the attention is given to the primary data collection.

4.5.2 Primary data collection

Two types of data are distinguished within the research methods literature: quantitative and qualitative (Saunders, et al., 2009). Quantitative refers to data that is applied by researchers who tend to take a positivist view, and this type of data is usually collected in a numerical form (Veal, 1997; Saunders, et al., 2009). In contrast, as mentioned at the beginning of the present chapter, interpretivist researchers tend to employ qualitative approaches to seek more in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon. Both categories of data possess strengths and weaknesses. Miles and Huberman (1994) draw upon strength of qualitative data and suggest that this type of data can offer richness and holism with a strong potential for revealing complexity, because qualitative data could provide 'thick descriptions'. Qualitative data reach far beyond questions of 'what' or 'how many', as it tends to address questions of 'how' and 'why' and even 'assess causality' as the process usually occurs in particular settings (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In addition, qualitative data is identified as the most suitable strategy for discovering and exploring a new area of study, which could lead to a development of hypotheses (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994) also suggest that another benefit of collecting qualitative data with emphasis on people's 'lived experience' are that it is fundamentally well suited for searching for meanings that people attach to the events, processes, and structures of their lives, and incorporating these meanings to the social world that surrounds them. The collection of qualitative data in qualitative research is described by Veal (1997, p. 129) as "an approach which tends to collect a great deal of information about relatively few people rather than more limited

information about a large number of people". From this point of view, it seems appropriate to apply a qualitative research approach to fulfil the aims of the present study, as it aims to understand the active sports tourist experience and the key factors that influence. The study is designed with a focus on the tourist thoughts and emotions about being engaged in open water swimming while away from one's home and work environment. A number of scholars suggests (Aaker, Kumar and Day, 2000; Chen, 2006) that the qualitative data collection methods can provide rich data that include the in-depth customers thoughts, feelings, intentions, and behaviours.

Furthermore, as drawn in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the area of leisure, tourist and sports tourist experience could be identified with complexity and thus it seems virtually impossible to formulate a narrow structure to understand the meaning of the leisure, tourist and active sports tourist experience holistically. Nardi (2003, p.15) recommends that "if the goal is to understand human behaviour in its natural setting and from the viewpoint of those involved, then the appropriate method is a qualitative one. Qualitative research explores new topics by getting into the setting where people carry out their lives". A further rationale for undertaking qualitative research and the collection of qualitative data builds upon the argument that existing work about sports tourism experience is generally descriptive, with utilising quantitative methodologies and fails to address questions of 'why'. In contrast to quantitative studies, there is a need to critically examine much of the existing body of sports tourism literature and set out a challenge to many of the underlying assumptions, through a more detailed qualitative methodology. For these reasons, collecting qualitative data is elected in this study.

4.5.3 Interviews

Since qualitative research is undertaken in the present study, data in a qualitative form is sought. A range of methods or tools for collection of qualitative data is identified within the research methods literature; the methods can vary from participant observation, to document analysis such as essays, diaries and letters, and to interviews (Veal, 1997; Willig, 2008a). Each of these tools can be further

subdivided into more specific areas, which depends on a number of factors such as the research aims, the direction of the study and the research questions that aimed to be answered (Saunders, et al., 2009). Broadly speaking, interviews are recognised as the most commonly employed method in qualitative research for their deceptive simplicity and suitability for different methodological strategies such as ethnography, phenomenology or grounded theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). It should be noted that in social science research, both the interviewer and the interviewee are viewed as human beings, not recording machines, who form a relationship during the interview process and require ethical consideration by the researchers (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

Furthermore, the structure of interviews may vary, from completely structured, semi-structured to in-depth (Bryman, 2012; Fontana and Frey, 1994; Sauders, et al., 2009). Fontana and Frey (1994, p. 373) suggest that

> "Clearly, different types of interviewing are suited to different situations, if we wish to find out how many people oppose a nuclear repository, survey research is our best tool, and we can quantify and code the responses and use mathematical models to explain our findings (Frey, 1993). If we are interested in opinions about a given product, a focus group interview will provide us with the most efficient results: if we wish to know and understand about the lives of Palestinian women in the resistance (Gluck, 1991), we need to interview them at length and in depth in an unstructured way".

The present study utilises in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a suitable technique for primary data collection to allow flexibility during the interviewing such as asking additional questions and gathering rich data (Saunders, et al., 2003, 2009). Interviews can also be adopted in various forms, either using face-to-face or using information communication technologies such as phones, Skype or emails and they can take place individually or within a group settings. For example, face-to-face interviews are identified to be the most powerful data collection method, because understanding the society depends on human interaction, which is experienced during the interviewing process (Fontana and

Frey, 1994). Further to this, Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) suggest that some interviewees might be more reluctant in the face-to-face scenarios and hence the openness to the researcher's questions may vary. However, less reticence and a higher rate of response seems to occur if the interviews take form via alternative tools such as telephones (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996) or via alternative communication technologies such as internet. As the researcher could be perceived as a stranger to the participants in this study, and to reduce potential reluctance, the researcher provided participants with a personal choice of the way they preferred to be interviewed; the researcher offered the interviews in various forms: as face-to-face, on phone or through Skype scenario. In this study, the interviewees preferred telephone interviews. This appears to occur for two reasons. Firstly, the majority of interviewees were located far away from the researcher's base and secondly, it gave interviewees a flexibility of time and comfort of their home settings.

4.5.4 Interviews schedule design

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were elected as the primary research instrument. As mentioned earlier, the interview schedule design has been influenced to some degree by the conceptual foundation discussed in the Chapter 2 (Leisure and tourist experience) and the academic literature reviewed in the Chapter 3 (Active sports tourists). As in the study of Shipway (2012), Stebbins (2006) 6Ws, were incorporated in the interview schedule design. However, academic jargon was stripped to allow more fluent and fluid discussion about the experience of active sports tourists, yet was left in notes for the researcher until a pilot study took place (see Appendix 3, p. 195).

Concerning the interview questions, academics such as Willig (2008a) recommends keeping questions open-ended and non-directive, because their primary purpose is to give participants the opportunity to share their personal experience of the phenomenon under the investigation of the researcher. The emphasis on the specific questions takes place only to encourage participants to clarify or elaborate their points instead of seeking whether they agree or disagree

with particular statements or claims (Willig, 2008). Therefore, the interview schedule design of the present study was structured into a number of open-ended questions to evaluate the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers (Aim2) and the key factors that influence it (Aim3). The questions were designed with a focus on individuals' thoughts and emotions about engaging in the open water swimming while away from his/her work and home environment. The researcher utilised 'why' questions in the interview schedule as a form of 'soft laddering technique' to probe responses (Kirkup, 2012) and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In order to gain information about the profile of the participants, a separate section was created to allow collection of socio-demographical details. Within the same section, question to determine the level of involvement in open water swimming was included.

4.5.5 Sampling

Within the sports tourism literature, Hingham and Hinch (2009, p. 4) argue that "the focus of much research serving the field remains largely concentrated on high profile, mainstream and often professional or semi-professional sports". In contrast, the present study attempt to focus on non-elite athletes, who could be classified as amateur or hobbyist (Stebbins, 1997) or as Weed and Bull (2004) described, primary sports tourists. A similar criterion could be also identified in the most recent publications within the sports tourism literature, such as Gillett's (2011) study on sports tourist motivations, or Miller's (2012) study on the event experiences of triathletes.   The researcher did not stipulate any gender specification and aimed for individuals who possess a range of open-water swimming skills, knowledge and experiences. The sample, therefore, was carefully selected by utilising a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is "a form of non-probability sample in which the research aims to sample participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed" (Bryman, 2012, p. 716).

In this study, the strategy for selecting the sample and recruiting participants was development of a poster (see Appendix 2, p. 193). The poster included research

aims, criteria for suitable candidates and researcher's contact details, wherein a new mobile number and email address was obtained to separate research from the personal contact details of the researcher. Following the poster development, a personal contact with potential gatekeepers was initiated in May 2012. A few posters were placed with the permission of gatekeepers at a number of swimming venues that included Manchester Aquatic Centre, Salford Quays Water Centre and Blackpool Wake Park. The researcher also attended and approached open-water swimmers personally at a number of training sessions and events over the year of 2012, where one member of the subculture kindly offered to post the advertising for recruitment on the social website of open water swimmers, where a word of mouth communication was encouraged. Once a couple of volunteers raised interest in taking part in this study and contacted the researcher via phone or email, purposive sampling took place and suitable candidates were subsequently selected for interviews. In order to expand the sample size and to allow data saturation to take place, additional recruitment was stimulated through a snowball technique from the previous participants.

Varying opinions exist about the sample size in the academic research. For instance, Creswell (1998) acknowledges that the sample size in qualitative research is typically about ten interviews in a phenomenological study and around twenty to thirty in grounded theory. More recently, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggest twelve interviews could be the sufficient number for data saturation. In addition, Morse (1994) recommends that in studies that aim to understand the 'essence' of experience, researchers should use at least six participants. Moreover, according to Spartz and Shaw (2011), previous research suggests that when homogenous samples are researched in a qualitative study six to eight data sources are seen as often sufficient. Academics in the sports tourism literature, such as Miller (2012) acknowledges to have reached data saturation with twelve interviewees and the same sample size of participants was achieved in the present study. The stage when no new themes were emerging from the data analysis and the research topic was explored fully was the main indicator for ending the primary data collection and recruitment. Other aspects to assure quality of the present study have been taken into consideration and these are

discussed in the following section that focuses on assuring quality in qualitative research.

4.5.6 Quality assurance in qualitative research

In contrast to quantitative research, assuring quality in qualitative study is more problematic, due to its subjective stance and difficulty to apply traditional test that determine reliability and validity in objective research. Thus, the reliability and validity is challenged continuously in the academic literature that concerns qualitative research. Related subsections of this part of the chapter discuss the methodological implications, such as considerations and applications of pilot study, to assure credibility and validity in the context of this qualitative research.

4.5.6.1 Assessing quality in qualitative research

As opposed to qualitative research, in quantitative research, quality is assured by reliability and validity tests. Whilst "validity can be defined as the extent to which our research describes, measures or explains what it aims to describe, measure or explain" (Willig, 2008, p. 16), the reliability refers to the extent, to which yield data is consistent and same on different occasions (Bryman, 2012; Saunders, et al., 2009; Willig, 2008). Thus, to assess value or quality in qualitative research appears to be more complex and challenging. For instance, Pizam and Mansfeld (2000) acknowledge that the main critique raised against qualitative approaches is their lack of scientific rigor and the opportunity of generalisation, because both reliability and validity are questionable since the Cronbach's alpha, a probabilistic analysis, is not employed in a qualitative study. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, qualitative research possesses advantages in gaining the richness of data and there are writers, such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), who provide alternative criteria to assure credibility and reliability in qualitative research.

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue, since the research questions in qualitative research usually deal with meanings rather than numbers, a more suitable terminology needs be adopted first, hence these authors rephrased the terminology by setting four criteria that parallel with the quantitative approach. While the term credibility (internal validity) relates to how truthful particular findings are, transferability (external validity) assesses consistency and ease of reproduction of results. Similarly, dependability (reliability) assesses the consistency and the ease of reproduction in future research, whereas confirmability (objectivity) looks how neutral the findings are, in terms of whether they reflect informant's points of view and not being the researcher's biases and prejudices (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Consequently, to assure quality in the present study, a number of aforementioned steps were taken into consideration during the research process. For instance, to avoid researcher's bias and prejudice as much as possible, prior to any primary research took place, the researcher wrote down a standpoint, which is stated next:

Researcher's standpoint (relationship with the object of the study)

I have never purposely travelled to stay within a destination to participate in open water swimming or any competitive events in this type of sporting activity, hence never experienced the phenomenon in the same way as participants of this study may perceive. However, I have swum in open waters such as rivers, lakes and ponds since my childhood. In addition, on a number of occasions, I could be classified as a sports tourist as I have participated both actively and passively in sports and event sports tourism that took place on both domestic and international level. Consequently, I have experienced sports tourism in a number of ways and have a positive attitude towards sports tourism, and as such, I am not aware of any particular prejudices I may carry about this topic, but I would like to encourage conversation about both positive and negative experiences.

Other steps were taken into consideration to assure quality of this study; ethics and a pilot study are primarily discussed in the following sub-sections. Furthermore, Polkinghorne (1989, cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 215) developed five criteria for the assessment of validity in qualitative research. As these criteria seem to consider the evaluation of the complete research process, at this point, they are stated only, but they will be restated and addressed in more details in the final chapter, where conclusions and evaluations of the research process are provided.

1. *Did the interviewer influence the contents of the participants'
    description in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect
    the participants' actual experience?*

2. *Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the
    oral presentation in the interview?*

3. *In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other
    than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived?
    Has the researcher identified these alternatives?*

4. *Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the
    transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and
    connections in the original examples of the experience?*

5. *Is the structural descriptions situation specific, or does it hold in
    general for the experience in other situations?*

4.5.6.2 Research ethics

Willig (2008) suggests that when research deals with human beings, similar foundations form the ethical considerations in both quantitative and qualitative research. Particularly, in social sciences, ethical issues relate to the way the research treats humans or subjects and the data that are collected (Saunders, el al. 2003, 2009). Willig (2008) further outlines five basic considerations to be taken

into account: informal consent, no deception, right to withdraw, debriefing, and confidentiality. It is worth noting that data management and ethical concerns were considered during a number of stages in the present research. Firstly, the ethics conformed to the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) ethics framework, which was completed and submitted to the relevant Faculty Research Degrees Committee, before any actions for the primary research commenced. In addition, prior to each interview, a brief to the study was provided and ethical consideration presented to each interviewee (see Appendix 5, p. 203). The interviewees were also asked for permission to audio record, wherein a verbal or written consent was obtained from every participant before the start of the interview. During the transcriptions and data inclusion in the present thesis, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Accordingly, any interview notes and obtained data were stored in a confidential manner. Consequently, the present study incorporated ethical considerations into the initial recruitment of the interviewees, during actual contact with the interviewees as well as after the interviewing process took place.

4.5.6.3 Pilot study

Typically, a pilot study is employed in research for testing, refining and developing research instruments; it is used to assess the degree of researcher's bias, frame questions, collect background information and to adapt research procedures (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Yin, 2003). Consequently, a pilot study of two interviews was conducted in the present study. Firstly, a member of the research population, who was suggested by a number of coaches (gatekeepers), was approached via phone to pilot the interview schedule design in a face to face scenario. Time and location of the interview was arranged at a convenient time for the participant. Before commencing the interview, a semi-formal conversation took place, which led to providing a brief to the study, highlighting ethical considerations and obtaining a consent for audio recording. After the pilot study, the transcribed interview was send via email to check for accuracy of meaning, so the voice of the participant was represented as much as possible and a credibility of data was assured in this study. During and after the first pilot study, reflections

were made and their focus was on three areas; the researcher reflected on her role as the instrument for the primary data collection. The interview settings were evaluated as well as questions in the interview schedule design were reflected upon.

The focus of the interview was on the last experience of open water swimmers, who engaged in this activity while away from their home and stayed within a destination at least overnight. During the pilot study, the first participant compared his last experience to previous and there always appeared a reason in practicing and refining skills for the next one. This resulted in an occasional difficulty to separate previous and future experiences. Subsequently, a mixture of experiences was collected, and perhaps, even richer data about his last active sport tourist experience could have been gained, if the researcher had led and controlled the interview more sufficiently. As the interview took place in a natural setting of the participant, an outdoor environment lacked suitability for recording, because there was too much background noise and a strong wind condition led to a loss and reduction of the collected data.

In addition, while the interview was semi-formal, it proved to be challenging to recall personal feelings of participant. Consequently, questions were reworded, prompts reduced or combined to allow participants more space to describe the experience on them own and then 'why' question was utilised as a form of a soft laddering technique to gain more in depth data. For the questions related to the emotional states of experience, researcher considered to approach these more informally in the next interview. The second question that related to the planning stage of the last experience was dropped as it felt difficult to recall it in retrospective. Some prompts were modified and combined or dropped, therefore changing the order of the rest. This was done to leave questions more open-ended to collect the rich data, and to allow for more flexibility during the interviewing. In addition, section 2 regarding the personal details and the involvement audit was taken away, because during the interview, some of these details were already collected or additionally obtained via email.

As soon as the researcher reflected upon the first interview process, a second interview of the pilot study was arranged on phone with a participant who approached the researcher via email and live further distance. The same interviewing process was followed, with keeping in mind the previous pitfalls. A brief to the study and ethical consideration were presented to the interviewee and consent was obtained. After the second interview, the researcher felt no further differences in gaining the primary data for the present study. The interview flow seemed to be similar to the face to face type of interview.

Subsequently, the evaluation of the interview schedule design demonstrated that the original interview schedule was reasonably suitable; only minor restructuring and alteration of questions were required (for the main study's interview schedule see Appendix 4, p. 201). Moreover, as already alluded, the researcher adopted in-depth, semi-structured interviews for its flexibility of omitting some questions, or adding others, which can be adjust depending on the circumstances during the interview process (Saunders, et al., 2003, 2009). Initially, face-to-face interviews were aimed, but due to travel and time management, phone interview appeared to be as suitable. It is also worth noting, that as the two initial interviewees were successful in the provision of rich data about experience of open water swimmers and the factors that influence it, both pilot interviewees were considered as suitable for the inclusion in the main study data analysis. Subsequently, the following section goes on to the methods that can be used for analysing primary data in a qualitative study.

4.6 Data analysis

Willig (2008) suggests that to gain and provide a deeper understanding of processes and procedures of a particular phenomenon, researchers analysing qualitative data deal with rich information about the phenomenon (e.g. experiences, opinions, feelings and emotions). In this study, the primary data analysis focused on the active sports tourist experiences of open water swimmers and the factors that influence, which were obtained from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve open water swimmers. Following the

interviewing process, the researcher transcribed the interviews fully in verbatim and that provided rich data about the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers (for an example of the transcript see Appendix 6). To ensure accuracy of meaning, completed transcripts were re-listened to and re-read carefully. Furthermore, in order to re-ensure interviewees' points of views and meanings they attached to their active sports tourist experience were represented, all transcriptions were also offered to participants for checking if they wished. If this scenario occurred, participants made minor amendments by adding further information.

Ritchie and Spencer (1994, p. 176) suggest that "qualitative data analysis is essentially about detection, and the tasks of defining, categorizing, theorizing, explaining, exploring and mapping." To analyse qualitative data, various approaches are suggested within the academic literature; researchers can utilise template analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis, framework analysis, discourse analysis, narrative analysis or interpretative phenomenological analysis and these typically link to the research strategy and data collection that is adopted in a study (Saunders, et al., 2009). Framework analysis (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) was selected as the most suitable for analysing the primary data in the present study. Although Ritchie and Spencer (1994) initially developed framework analysis to applied social policy research, since then this approach has been utilised by other scholars in the context of nursing (Furber, 2010) as well as in the context of the active sports event tourist experience of triathletes (Miller, 2012).

Framework analysis entails five main and interlink stages (figure 4.1, p. 85): familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, chartering, which progresses to mapping and interpretation. Firstly, Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest that the researcher needs to become familiar with all the materials that were utilised for collection of the primary data. The materials can range from interview transcripts to research notes. During familiarization stage, the researcher listens to audio recordings and reads transcripts to identify key ideas and recurrent themes. During this stage, the purpose is to gain an overview of the depth, richness, and diversity of the data. The second stage entails identifying a

thematic framework in which the key concepts and themes that were expressed by participants will form a basic thematic framework (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). During the indexing stage, initially, data was indexed manually by identifying themes and assigning them in comments boxes along the text in a Microsoft word document. Later in the process, the computer program NVivo version 9 was adopted to index the data and assigning nodes (codes), because NVivo provides benefits of inserting the whole transcripts, from which data are obtained and can be quickly accessed by clicking a button.

Figure 4.1 Stages of framework analysis
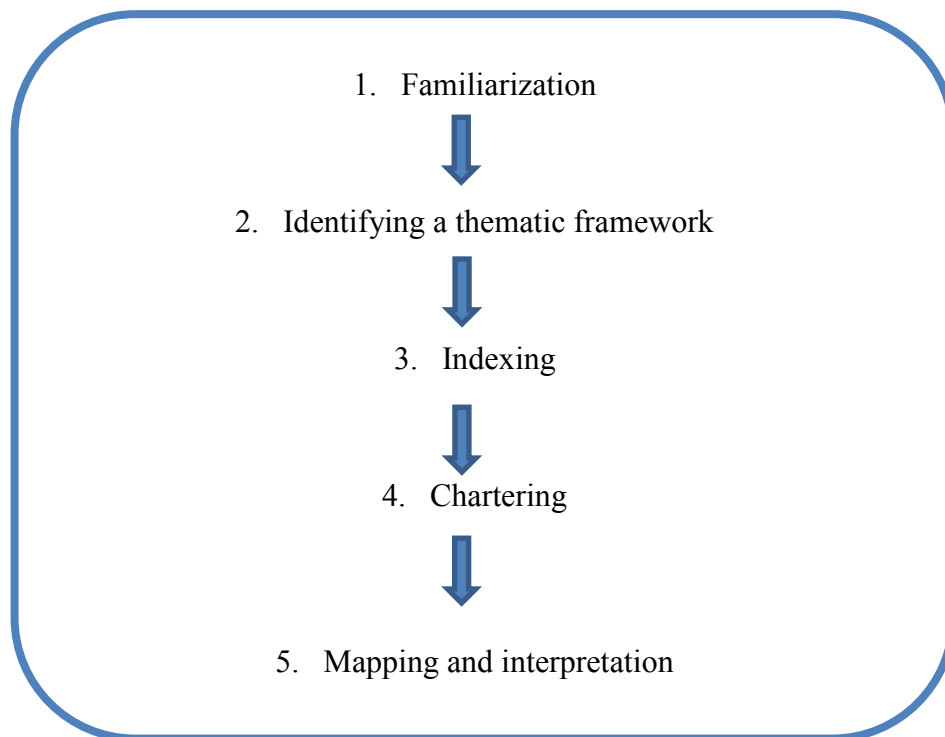
Adapted from Ritchie and Spencer (1994)

However, it is crucial that the researcher refers back to the whole transcript during this phase to ensure that the context of the data is retained. Mangabeira et al. (2004) provides an account of some of the dilemmas of using computer software programs and advocates that it is important to remember that computer qualitative data analysis software programs will not analyse the data for the

researcher as in quantitative statistical analysis software programs. Instead, the researcher needs to learn how to use the facilities of the qualitative data analysis program in order to interpret and analyse the data. Thus, during the indexing phase, it is important to keep referring back to the entire transcript as well as to the notes that were developed during interviews and the familiarization phase, in order to maintain the fit of the data to the themes (Furber, 2010). The indexing process enables the researcher to become immersed in the data, wherein it is possible for the researcher to find that the draft of theoretical framework needs purifying. In addition, is not unusual to realise that groups can be merged, or new groups emerge (Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor, 2003). In the present study, the initial draft of the theoretical framework was revised several times during this phase because of the data richness. While the following stage of chartering refers to the process of inputting data in tables or charts according to the themes (codes), in order to synthesise the individual themes from each interviewee, which were developed in the index stage, the final stage of mapping and interpretation took place.

4.7 Summary

Methodological approaches and steps were presented in this chapter. The research has followed the interpretivist philosophy and inclined to inductive research approach, yet the interview schedule design was guided to some degree by existing theories and concepts relating to leisure and tourist experience, and the review of literature about sports tourist experience (Aim1). This study aimed to understand the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers (Aim2) and the key factors that influence it (Aim3). Giving the nature of this study, in the spirit of phenomenology, the present study focused on experiences of individuals who had travelled and stayed at least an overnight at the destinations to participate in open water swimming and consequently could be classified as tourists. Since the aim of the study was to understand the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers, to obtain this information qualitative research was found the most suitable, thus the collection of the primary data was sought through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which were found as the

most useful technique for gaining in-depth information. Following the sample selection and size, participants were recruited through purposive sampling methods, such as through gatekeeper (using a poster), and adoption of snowballing. Initially, a pilot study of two interviews was undertaken to assess the interview schedule design. Despite minor amendments, the data collection instrument proved to be suitable for a collection of rich data about the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and the key factors that influence it.

During the interviewing process, each interview was audio recorded and notes were taken. Following the interviewing process, the researcher transcribed interviews fully in verbatim of the participants. The transcriptions took place immediately after the interviewing. To ensure for accuracy, the researcher has re-listened each interview until satisfactory of the complete transcriptions. In line with the study of Miller (2012) who has assessed the active sports event tourist's experience of triathletes, framework analysis that was originally developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) was selected as the most appropriate analytical tool because of its time efficiency. To identify themes (codes), data was analysed initially manually and later, NVivo software assisted in further organisation of the primary data. At this point, the attention is drawn to analysis of the primary data that are reported next in Chapter 5, whereas in Chapter 6 the findings are discussed in conjunction with the secondary research that concerns bodies of leisure, tourist and active sports tourist experience literature.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS – EVALUATING THE ACTIVE SPORTS TOURIST EXPERIENCE OF OPEN WATER SWIMMERS

5.1 Introduction

In order to analyse the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and to assess the key factors that influence it, data analysis of the primary research findings is reported throughout the current chapter, whereas a comprehensive discussion of the key research findings in conjunction with the academic literature is provided in the following Chapter 6. As data analysis suggests the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers, and the factors that influence it are inseparable, because the factors continuously shaped the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers. Consequently, the factors are incorporated within the discussion about the experience of the active sports tourist. It also should be noted that during the data collection process, each experience was discussed with the interviewees at a home region and the length of the interview varied from twenty minutes to an hour.

During the interviewing process, open water swimmers recollected the stages of the active sports tourist experience such as planning, travel to, on-site and travel back. Interviewees also talked about the anticipation of their future involvement in the active sports tourism. For these reasons, the exploration of the active sports tourist experience in this study not only entails the on-site experience, but also takes into consideration the effects of the anticipation, travel to and back, with the primary focus on the on-site experience. Subsequently, the following content of this chapter provides an exploration and interpretation of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers. For instance, the experience of open water swimming within destinations is reported through this chapter. As the open water swimmers met other people during the course of engagement in the active sports

tourism, experiences of social interaction are also evaluated in the present chapter. However, before the analysis of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers can take place, a profile of the interviewees and characteristics of the last involvement in the active sports tourism of open water swimmers are presented in the following sections in order to provide a context of the primary research findings.

5.2 Profile of interviewees

In total, twelve interviewees represented the main study sample. As illustrated in table 5.1 (p. 90) the sample consisted of nine male and three female open water swimmers. The age of open water swimmers varied. Whilst the youngest one was 30 years old, the oldest interviewee was 65 years old. Geographically, three interviewees lived in Ireland and nine were UK residents. Furthermore, all interviewees had previous experiences in open water swimming, but each interviewee entails a different level of experience. The level was determined by a number of years that interviewees engaged in open water swimming, this varied from two years to over forty years. Moreover, the training pattern of open water swimmers differed, yet all interviewees seemed very committed, giving their weekly involvement of two times as a bare minimum, especially during the winter season. Those, who have engaged in the channel swims mentioned higher training patterns. Thus, all interviewees appear to identify themselves as open water swimmers, and some of them as channel swimmers. It may be worth noting though that some interviewees mentioned that apart from swimming, cycling, Pilates, hiking, downhill skiing, triathlon and rugby were other sporting activities they had progressed from or the sporting activities they still engage in, which can also illustrate their active involvement in other sports. The rest of the interviewees did not mention any other sporting activities, but this does not mean that they do not engage in any other activities; it appears, rather, that these interviewees engage further in mentoring and coaching others to open water swim thus their focus is upon a single activity of their interest.

Table 5.1 Profile of interviewees

Code of interviewees	Gender	Age in years	Years of ows* experience	Place of residence
F1	Female	39	10+	UK
F2	Female	43	7	UK
F3	Female	37	20+	UK
M1	Male	42	20+	UK
M2	Male	50	5	UK
M3	Male	65	2	UK
M4	Male	49	40+	UK
M5	Male	64	15+	Ireland
M6	Male	53	40+	Ireland
M7	Male	47	5+	Ireland
M8	Male	41	10+	UK
M9	Male	30	5+	UK

* Open water swimming

It needs to be noted that in line with maintaining the anonymity of all interviewees, the real names were removed and instead codes were assigned according to the interviewees' gender and the order, in which they were interviewed. For example M1=1st male interviewee, F2=2nd female interviewee, and so on. Rather than disclosing the real names of other people and organisations that interviewees mentioned during the interview, terms to represent a relationship with the interviewee and a type of organisation that was involved was assigned instead. For instance, 'brother', 'friend', 'coach', 'crew members', 'travel company', 'swimming association' is substituted in the transcripts and throughout the present chapter to maintain confidentiality of participants in this study.

5.3 Characteristics of the last involvement in the active sports tourism of open water swimmers

Each open water swimmer talked about the experience in a context to the different destination or various destinations where the open water swimming took place. Table 5.2 (p. 92) illustrates that interviewees spoke about the English Channel, the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, Loch Ness, Henley River, Ipswich, Sardinia, the Gibraltar Straight, the Catalina Channel, the Tsugaru Channel, around Manhattan and London. Therefore, the engagement in open water swimming took place on both, domestic and international levels. In addition, out of the twelve interviewees, eight participated in a sea swim, from which five engaged in a channel swim and three trained to undertake a channel swim in a near future. Other four interviewees participated in a shorter distance commercial and/or socially organised events, whereby F3 engaged in a river swim and F2, M3 and M9 participated in a lake swim.

In order to access the destinations, the mode of transport to, around and back varied. Whilst reaching domestic destinations, the majority of interviewees utilised road travel such as a car, minibus or a train. The air travel was undertaken to reach international destinations. During the sea swims, also a boat transport was utilised. Furthermore, analysis of the data suggests that the engagement in open water swimming entailed more than one night stay within the destination of the swimming activity, apart from M3, M9 and F3, who had only stayed for one night. The length of stay appears to link to the type of the open water swims that interviewees were undertaking. Particularly, for open water swimmers, who had undertaken a channel swim the stay within the destination seems longer, approximately a week.

Table 5.2 Characteristics of the last involvement in the active sports tourism of open water swimmers

Interviewees codes	Location and (type of water environment)	Type of swim	Accompanying group	Mode of transport to/within and back	Type of Accommodation at destination	Number of overnight stay
F1	Island of Man, 2012 (Sea)	Social swim	To- none Around- likeminded people Back- friend	Public transport-bus, metro Plane, car	VFR,	3
F2	Loch Ness, 2012 (Lake)	2mile race Social swim	To, around and back 15 females	Minibus	Hostel	3
F3	Henley river, 2012	14 miles race	To-none Around-friend Back-none	Car	VFR, London	1
M1	The English Channel, 2007 (sea)	Approx. 21 miles Channel swim	To-with family Around-family, friends and crew Back- family	Car, boat	Camping site, Dover	7+
M2	Hebrides, 2012 (sea)	Social swim	To- friends Around- friends +host Back - friends	Car , boat	Cottage,	7
M3	Ipswich, 2012 (lake)	2mile race	To, around, back-none	Car	B&B	1
M4	Sardinia, 2012 (sea)	Social swim	To-family/wife Around-family and likeminded people Back- wife and likeminded people	Plane, taxi, boat	Hotel	7
M5	The Gibraltar Straight, 2012 (sea)	Channel swim	To-friend Around-friend+host Back-friend	Plane, boat	Hotel(s)	7
M6	The Catalina Channel, 2012 (sea)	Approx.21 miles Channel swim	To-none Around-friends+host Back- none	Plane, car , boat	Hotel(s)	7
M7	The Tsugaru Channel, 2012 (sea)	12.5 miles Channel swim	To-family Around-family+host (crew) Back-family	Plane, boat, train	Hotel,	7+
M8	Manhattan Island, 1998 (sea)	28.5 miles Channel swim+race	To-wife Around-crew Back-wife	Plane	Apartment, New York	7
M9	London, 2012 (outdoor pool-man made)	Race Social swim	To- none Around-with likeminded people Back-none	Train	On the way/route	1

Open water swimmers utilised accommodation within a close proximity of the location where the swim took place. Out of twelve interviewees, three open water swimmers had stayed with their friends or relatives. Other interviewees had stayed at an apartment, in a cottage, on a camping site, in a hotel, Bed and Breakfast and a hostel. Consequently, analysis of the primary data suggests that out of the twelve interviews, a great variety of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers was recognised, but similar patterns are discussible. Next, the focus of the following sections is to provide comprehensive descriptions and explanations of patterns that concern the key findings of active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and the key factors that influence it.

5.4 Open water swimming experiences

The analysis of data suggests that the experience of the activity, open water swimming, played a very important part in the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers, thus following subsections reports through the findings that concerns aspects of such experience.

5.4.1 Mental and physical challenge

All interviewees expressed that the interaction with the environment, in which the open water swimming took place meant a challenge. As M3 noted the nature of open water swimming is generally challenging not only physically, but also mentally. Similarly, M1 explained that "it [swimming the English Channel] was a challenge, a big thing for my mind" and for M7, in his open water swimming experience "nighty per cent of swimming is in the head". Consequently, the challenge of the open water swimming took place on two levels: physical and mental. In other words, the experience of open water swimming seems to represent a test of mental and physical skills or as M7 explained "you know the body is tired but if you listen to your body you stop, it's the mind that controls the body, and then the body will keep going". Particularly, in a case of the channel

swims, a higher level of mental than physical challenge appears to exists in the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers. Despite this difference, both levels of the challenge appears to link to interviewee's risks and fears.

Interviewees' risks and fears were primarily associated with dangers of the open water swimming and related to the distance of the swim and difficulties that interviewees could encounter along the swim. The difficulties seem to relate to dangers possessed by the natural environment and these are discussed within the next section in more details. Returning to the distance, it differed among open water swimmers; interviewees tended to express the distance in kilometres or miles and were perceived by each interviewee as long, thus physically and mentally challenging. For instance, M5 described that

"Swimming the Gibraltar was certainly the greatest challenge I have ever dealt with or faced, in terms of the length of the swim and how it work out on the day [because] when we swam I struggled and I was in a pain".

Another interviewee, M1 expressed a similar experience

"[When] swimming the [English] Channel you can keep throwing up and throwing up. You know when you stop, the only thing you want to do is to keep on swimming, and then you're going to throw up again, and then the pain goes, then the only thing what you want to do is to keep on swimming".

In addition, M7 described that

"it's like pulling a rubber band so far until you think it's going to break and then you realise well I'm not dead, I still can move my arms, I may still be in a lot of pain, but that, the pain of coming out and failing is a lot worst that the pain I'm in now. You know, that's going to be there, I expect the pain, I know it's coming, and I put it away, but the pain or thought of failing and having the regret for the rest of your life and living under the regret for the rest of your life is a way worst".

Consequently, the impact of the swimming distance on the physical level possessed risks of pain, sickness, injuries or even a potential threat of death, whereas on the mental level it appears to relate to worry of failure and feelings of regrets. Perhaps personality and previous experiences have influenced the way, in which interviewees persevered and coped with the physical impacts on their bodies and the ability they had developed to deal with it in their head (minds). Thus, the challenge seems to relate to interviewees' level of stamina, which appears to ally with the level of open water swimming that each interviewee possessed. The more experienced open water swimmers gave the impression of seeking higher challenges as they seem to possess a higher level of skills, resistance or perseverance.

5.4.2 Challenge: nature of environment

As reported in the previous part, the last experience represented a challenge, which related to something new as all interviewees acknowledged that they had never experienced open water swimming in the particular settings of the destination before. For instance, interviewee F3 described that swimming the Henley River was a brand new swim for her and F2 travelled to Scotland, "purely to swim in Loch Ness, because I'd never swum in Loch Ness before". In addition to the novelty of the challenge, all interviewees mentioned that the challenge was attached to unforeseen outcomes. Subsequently, along with the aforementioned

distance of the open water swimming, interviewees were facing and overcoming risks and dangers that were associated with the natural environment. As M1 noted, "you don't know what is going to happen" or "what is down there" (M2). Thus, the fear of the unknown was formed by the risks that were associated with the natural environment, where the open water swim took place. For instance, all open water swimmers talked about risks, fears and dangers that were shaped by continuously changing conditions of the weather, water and wildlife.

The weather conditions appear to be crucial or as M6 put it, "the weather conditions are everything". Interviewees, who participated in the channel swims also talked about time constrains associated with a 'window', a weather window – a period of time, in which the swimmer was scheduled to swim, as once this period was over, the participant needed to reschedule or faced cancellation. For instance, M6 described that the weather conditions were very good when swimming the Catalina Channel, whereas M1 experienced contradictory when swimming the English Channel and remarked upon how the weather influenced his experience undesirably.

> "When I arrived [to Dover], I reported to the captain and he said: oh yeah, this girl is going in a few hours, I'll catch up with you tomorrow, and the next day, he said: that's great but the weather is not good, so I'll catch up with you tomorrow. The next day came, the weather is going to get worst, I'll catch up with you tomorrow, and next, and so on".

Similarly M3, who participated in a shorter distance race event commented how the event was rescheduled by noting that "there were some issues with the event itself, because of the weather conditions. It was meant to be on Saturday, but they had to move to Sunday". The unpredictability of the weather related to risks of associated dangers of winds, rainfalls and storms, which tended to have a further impact on the quality of the water and safety of participants. Consequently, as important as the weather, the quality of the water environment was also

important. For example, all interviewees touched upon the water temperatures, some interviewees talked about dealing with coldness others with the warmness. The water temperature depended on the location, the way participants' bodies responded to the actual water temperature of the swimming environment, interviewees' preferences of the water temperature and what open water swimmers were used to, which again seem to ally to the level of skills and experience open water swimmers possessed. As F3 mentioned, "being in cold water doesn't bother me now with more experience", and F1 described that

"It was cold, quite cold. Most folks had early stages of moderate hypothermia – uncontrolled violent shivering. [But], I don't seem to suffer with this as much – mild hypothermia maybe but not the more severe kind".

In addition to the water temperature, interviewees mentioned the cleaness and the visibility of the water, strengths of currents and tides. Particularly there was a difference in a sea, wherein tidal height and strength appear to be crucial, as M7 described "we couldn't see any window, the tides were going stronger" and M1 expressed that "nobody likes swimming high tides". Adding to this, M2 noted that "one of the challenges in the sea is that the visibility is not great". Similarly, F2 who swam in the lake Loch Ness noted that "it was a blackest water I'd ever swam and if I put my hand in, I couldn't see it, you couldn't see anything under the water at all, and it turned from being a very calm day to an extremely choppy day". Another interviewee M7 described that

"[There is a] tide and current that goes through that channel all the time. It is on the westerly end, the land mass is higher than on the easterly end, so the water is kind of like a waterfall coming through on the China sea all the time, three or four miles. One day the current may be ten miles wide and the next day could be six miles wide. It's always going to be there, when the easterly wind blow you may as well not going to go

anywhere near it and unfortunately, the window is always easterly, because you're like heading to a north pole there, you know, and the wind just comes down there".

As essential as the weather and water, wildlife was also important in the experience of open water swimmers. For example, in lakes and rivers interviewees mentioned seeing fish, whereas in a sea, interviewees noted sharks, dolphins, seals, squid and jellyfish. As M2 described "I have never swam with seals and or so close to them, well I don't know if they are going to be friendly or taking my toe". Other interviewee mentioned there was a lot squid there, dolphins, [and] the jellyfish are constant; they're everywhere where you go" (M7). Hence, the interviewees described that the experience of open water swimming brought a sense of wildness or as M1 explained "I had this conversation with my friends and fellow swimmers and yeah outdoor swimming, gives you this great sense of wildness, of being in wildness, being in wild".

5.4.3 Personal responses to challenge

The open water swimming in a particular environment was underlined by a personal or a group goal as a mean of challenge, but also as a mean of training to develop and master skills in open water swimming, health and fitness, adventure, socialising, feeling of enjoyment, a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment. Usually a multiple means underlined the involvement in open water swimming away from one's home and work environment. For example, F3 described her experience to be underlined by a purpose of the training;

 "especially in this year 2012, I've set myself a number of goals I wanted to achieve in terms of swimming goals and this one [Henley river] was probably the last one for the season…[as] I swim solo the English Channel the next year, …so as a preparation, I have swam about four big challenges and all of them involved travelling".

Another interviewee (M6) talked about swimming the Catalina channel, because he viewed it as a mean of self-actualisation, fulfilment and status, by noting

"[Swimming the Catalina Channel] it's considered to be part of something we call the Triple Crown. There are seventy five people who have swum the English Channel, around Manhattan and Catalina, it's kind of, … the concept of a bucket list…It's like a list of things you would like to do before you die, so some people would like to go to Paris, some people would see America, it's kind of like that".

Whilst for M1 swimming the English Channel meant to reach a personal fulfilment and support to a charity, for M7 the goal was to complete Ocean7-seven channels of the world, as a result of which he gained a status of being the first person in the world to achieve this, and thus there was a sense of pride. Similarly to M1, a charitable support was important also for M7. Furthermore, the open water swimming experience entailed thinking and concentration so the swim could be completed. Whilst swimming longer distances such as in the case of the channel swimmers, M6 explained that "you try not to think too much when you swim, you focus, but sometimes you can lose your focus. [But] you need to focus". Interviewees who participated in a channel swim used different techniques to stay focused. For instance, M5 mentioned that "some people are really good in focusing, but I'm not really good at focusing myself, some people they have certain patterns that they say mantra or they sing songs". Other interviewees used feeding patterns, children mantra, saying a pray or rehearsing Shakespeare play. For instance, M1 remarked upon his experience that contained elements of solitude, praying and extraordinary when he explained that

"while you're there [swimming the English Channel],…it's you being lost in the desert for a while and that gives you the chance as to people in desert, when they get lost in the desert, like thinking, so it's sort of a mystic experience really, and when you learn to deal with it then you

realise that at the end of the day, that every time you go beyond your limits than it's just you and you. So you better like yourself a lot, you're not going to have anybody else as company and to do that I'm pleased to say that it was the mystic experience; then I found it the most appropriate moment to say a pray".

"I think about everything, what I'm going to have for a dinner, what I'm going to do later…, but sometimes I completely zone out and just enjoy it. Think about what I see, think about how my body reacts to the water, how physically hard I need to work in the water, all sorts" (F2).

"Well [I think about] everything and anything really, I try not to think too much and just enjoy the experience, but it depends sometimes on the mood, what happens in my work, how is my wife, etc. See, for example, I'm aiming to swim the English Channel and for that I've got myself, I'm going to get myself a Shakespeare play, so I could play it to myself there" (M4).

Subsequently, despite the open water swimmers were facing physical and mental challenges of open water swimming, which one may perceive as unpleasant, at the same time, undertaking the challenging task of open water swimming and pushing oneself beyond his or hers limits has brought a broader spectrum of emotions. More importantly, the fact that all open water swimmers in the present study had overcome the challenges has brought something incredibly positive to their experience. Consequently, apart from the physical and mental episodes, data analysis also suggests that a great fluctation of emotions was triggered during the engagement in open water swimming. Interviewees experienced rather contradicting emotions, such as feelings of worry, frustration, anxiety, nervousness, relieve, excitement, fun, exhilaration, happiness, tiredness, relaxation, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of extraordinary and fulfilment. For instance, interviewees felt nervous, anxious, cautious or frustrated, especially prior to their swims, or as M6 put it: "you're always a bit nervous before the

swim". The nervousness evoked particularly during the anticipation stage and linked to the previously mentioned distance of the swim. These emotions also linked to a sense of unknown and potential difficulties that individuals feared to encounter. As M1 described, "when I started developing my channel swim program I was cautious that every big swim could be my last swim." Apart from the fear of being able to cope with the long distances, interviewees felt anxious and cautious over the aspects they did not seem to have any control over, such as the unpredictability of the weather, water and wildlife conditions. Thus, M3 remarked upon his emotional states

"I was nervous; the water takes you quite a lot from your comfort zone, cause the water looks pretty daunting and cold, and sometimes, it's pretty cold and you know that you are going to be there for some time and that's what makes it quite apprehensive, but then on the other hand, it's pretty exciting, and consequently there is the feeling of achievement at the end".

Therefore, it appears that open water swimmers were not just coping with and overcoming challenges of the environment, but to some extend they seem to thrive on them. For instance, whilst F3 explained that "even you go to the open water for a little bit, you just get this buzz of it, just being there, and it's a great experience", for M1 the open water swimming experience entailed something "mystic and extraordinary". Thus, for all interviewees overcoming difficulties and completing a challenging task of the swim was important, because interviewees gained a sense of accomplishment, achievement and fulfilment, mostly on both a personal and group level. Apart from the sense of achievement, by completing the swim, some interviewees also noted that competition with fellow open water swimmers was attached to their experiences (M3, M6 and M8). For example, M6 remarked upon having a few friends on the boat, and the way he felt competitive towards others.

"I had a few friends so my first question on the boat was to my training partner who has swum the Catalina two months ago, so, my first

question was: did I have a faster time then him, and then the woman who swam in with me to take a picture, she had three minutes time faster than him. So, I asked if I have swam it faster than her, and then the head of my crew chief is from Catalina, and I asked him if I had swum faster than him, and then there was the super star from Santa Barbara and I asked him. So the most important thing is to make it and then we always joke about the time, even the conditions are never the same, we do it in a friendly way".

Moreover, the personal fulfilment for some open water swimmers was as important part of their experience as the fulfilment of others. The others represented additional people and charities that the open water swimmers were involved and supported. As M1 explained, "I wanted to do something great and fulfilling in my life. I also did it for charity". Further to charity involvement, for M7 and M8 accomplishing the challenge meant rising a national awareness and/or a pride. In other words, or as M8 put it: "just to show the rest of the world that Ireland could complete".

In addition, as all interviewees recognised themselves as an open water swimmer, the enjoyment came simply from the activity itself - being outside in the natural environment or as M2 put it "oh, I cannot put it in the words, I like being in the water, I mean it's just wonderful". Similarly, F1 described, when she was able to swim in the sea, the experience was fantastic, because "it is exhilarating to swim in the sea when the water is cold". In a similar vein, other interviewee noted the "exhilaration and excitement after getting cold and warm again" (M9). Furthermore, whilst M6 summarised that swimming the Catalina Channel was 'fun', F3 talked about her love and passion of open water swimming when she talked about

"I actually love swimming outside, when you need to get hats and scarves on, so I actually do like when is this time of year, as you get this tingle feeling on your skin, when the water has a bit of the bite, I actually

like that feeling. You get the pink colour on the skin glowing. I quite like this experience, but I don't like when it's really cold and hurts, it then takes the pleasure out of that as it's not a swim then".

"I love it, swimming is one that I can completely switch off, it takes me to the other world completely… the colours of the water, you can see fish… I do love being outside. Each time you go, even it's the same place, each experience is different, because of the weather condition, and the wildlife and so, I love swimming because of the seeing and viewing".

As many interviewees engage in the activity that is normally undertaken at home settings away on their trips, it can be presumed that the activity at home settings already provides some level of enjoyment and stimulation that individual seek whilst being away. As evident from the previous quotations, open water swimmers enjoyed that the outdoor natural water environment provided them with a sense of relaxation and escape to 'another world'. It also provided them with a different perspective of the destination. While there were moments when the visual stimuli input may have been restricted, open water swimmers appreciated the scenery of the landscape from the water level, and the sense of wildness, both of which contributed in providing experiences distinct to the on-shore. Consequently, the following section will detail the analysis of data that concern open water swimmers' experiences of the destinations, where interviewees had swam and stayed.

5.5 Open water swimmers' experiences of destinations

As the activity of open water swimming, the visited destinations also played a role in the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers. This role appears to have significance in the active sports tourist experience, as the open water swimming dominated the destinations selection and was determined as the primarily activity undertaken within the destination by all interviewees. As a result, time and money available for other activities to engage in within

destinations could become limited. For example, M7 noted that "on all these trips [when swimming different channels] I wouldn't do any sightseeing whatsoever which was due to the fact of our short stay". Similarly, M6 "didn't do any tourist's things in Catalina except the swim" and M4 described that on his training holiday

"we swam every day, we probably did about three kilometres in the morning that was organised, then about three in the afternoon, sometimes more, and in the lunch time I would probably go for more swimming".

Subsequently, a majority of interviewees viewed destinations as a mean of swimming, training, eating, socialising, sleeping and resting, apart from M8, who also engaged in shopping and sightseeing, and M9, who visited his family. Thus, the role of the destination appears to be shaped by the activity and the destination of the swim itself. For example, M1 noted that Dover is a nice seaside destination with many Bed and Breakfast establishments' positively supporting and serving open water swimmers who travel and stay during their attempts to swim the English Channel. Whereas, M7, who was staying in relatively remote areas whilst swimming Tsugaru Channel, described that

"it's a hard lesson that you have to go there and spend a week, virtually in isolation, the closest shop was a twenty five minutes' drive from the north island and at the south it was twenty miles away, so you had to bring everything with you to survive. You survive on condition of raw fish and rice. Any drink you wanted was from a vending machine, but the people themselves were fantastic. The daily routine was got up at six o'clock in the morning, swim, home- have some breakfast and sleep. Then got up in the afternoon have a meeting to see where the weather was going and then I would rest".

Although open water swimmers discussed experiences in relation to various destinations, the primary focus of the engagement was upon swimming; the experience of the destination was underlined by this purpose. As discussed earlier, the analysis of primary data suggests that some open water swimmers favoured the opportunity to explore the destination from the water level to the land one. This provided open water swimmers with a different perspective of their surroundings. Open water swimming provided interviewees with an opportunity of solitude and being in a different environment that provided them with a different visual backblock. As an example could be M4, who emphasised a number of benefits or rewards that the open water swimming experience offered to him

"the great thing is that, when you are on the land you are always surrounded by people, but if you go on the holiday where you've got a boat [then you] go to places people wouldn't normally go to, unless they have a boat. Well the boat takes us to different places, sometimes we were swimming along the coast, sometime it was crossing between islands. Certainly, when you swim around the coastline you can see more than anyone, perhaps except from the scuba divers. First of all, you are more than in one environment, you're not just on the land; it's just nice to be in deep water as well, so you experience the place in an alternative way".

Moreover, whilst F2 described that "the area of the Loch Ness was magical", F1 noted that "it is always nice to go to Isle of Man, [as] it is a beautiful island." Similarly, M2 talked about how he enjoyed his experience of beaches, and a castle whilst swimming in Hebrides

"…and then another two days, we spend going and enjoyed the swimming. Then we went on some beaches, and on the Hebrides, to the western Hebrides, there's nothing until you get to America. You've got the Atlantic sea on the west and the beaches are very gorgeous, so we

went rolling in, body surfing and just generally enjoying the water, then to other beach afterwards, and on the East side of the Hebrides, the beaches are even bigger and we basically just went for the swim in these shallow seas, …and then Castle Bay, which is the capital of Barra and that's where our accommodation was and there is a little castle out there in the harbour so we decided we swim around the castle and back again".

In addition, M8 commented that

"…when swimming many things are happening, in terms of looking at the signs, looking at the New York skylight, talking to your crew, you know, it was a race as well so you were sprinting you're racing against about sixty other people so it was a loads and loads of things happening all the time. It's pretty amazing really".

Interviewees, who engaged in commercial racing events as a part of their trip, also described the impacts of the organisation of events to be important in shaping their experience. For example, more experienced open water swimmers such as M1, M4, and F2 talked about the lack of value to participate in some commercial event, which appears to link to time, monetary costs and the level of challenges that the events offered. Open water swimmers spoke about the impact of wetsuit and non-wetsuits events policies and expressed that participation in some of the commercial events that are currently available in the UK was limited or completely omitted by them, as events did not offer the non-wetsuit participation. F3 described that "it's a really shame that some of the event organisers do not allow non-wetsuit entrance [as] for me it's completely different swimming experience. I prefer not having a wetsuit at least your body can feel the reaction to the cold". One of the events that allowed the non-wetsuit participation was mentioned by F3, who then pointed out some pitfalls in the organisation of the event.

"Well, from the organisational perspective, they didn't have enough of supporting kayaks. For the non-wetsuit participants they meant to have a kayak for each participant, so we could swim in our own pace, but we end it up swimming in groups as the rest of the participants with the wetsuits".

Having discussed the synergies between the experience of the activity, in this case, open water swimming, and place that concerns experiences of locations, where the activity took place and other locations, such as accommodation and catering, people were also important in the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers. Consequently, the social experiences are discussed next.

5.6 Social experiences of open water swimmers

Over the course of experiences of the open water swimmers as the active sports tourists, other people were encountered. The social interaction included a variety of people; open water swimming tourists mentioned family members, friends, other open water swimmers and open water swimming enthusiasts. The social interaction also encountered new people, such as boat pilots kayakers, swimming associations' representatives and event employees. Although interviewees were facing the challenge when swimming on their own or as M1 remarked upon his experience when swimming the English Channel that "it's just you and you, …you're not going to have anybody else as company", simultaneously, all interviewees explained how open water swimming provided them with an opportunity to spend time in the company of others. Firstly, open water swimmers commonly used 'we', referring to themselves and other people involved in their experiences. For example, M2 described that "the open water swimming is absolutely about a team effort", similarly the team was important for F1, because her trip meant joining a team of people who she was preparing to swim the English Channel. As she described,

"it was a good team experience. See, four of the members of this team live on the island so they swim together quite regularly, but myself and another girl, we do not live on the island so it is a great opportunity for us to swim together as a team, because we don't swim that often" (F1).

Then she continues that important part of her experience was…

"definitely the social interaction, and also the fact, I was able to swim as a part of the team. Because of swimming the channel as a team, we are going to support each other, and because I don't know all of them so well it was a great opportunity to get to know each other more, as well as to meet other islanders who support our team" (F1).

The analysis of data made evident that a majority of interviewees mentioned that their active sports tourist experience was a team one. In the case of channel swimming, interviewees particularly talked about the importance of other people, because of their support. As M7 reflected "once they believe in you and they think you can get across it becomes in my head it becomes easier, it's a very strange thing". They, referring to family, friends and other like-minded people, some of whom become a part of interviewees' crewmembers, and hence co-creators of the experience. As important as the company of people who accompanied interviewees from their home environment, all interviewees enjoyed chances of social encounters that occurred with other open water swimming enthusiasts. These encounters were sometimes particularly enjoyable, because they were not initially anticipated and because they allowed the open water swimmers to interact with like-minded people. For instance, F3 described that "I swam with my friend, but I also knew there a few people from previous events". Apart from the social interaction, bonding with like-minded people and a sense of camaraderie was noticed in the experiences of all open water swimmers. Open water swimmers kept checking on each other, supporting and encouraging their fellow swimmers in participation. For example, M2 mentioned that he was "very lucky that the other two members were very experienced, doing for decades swimming outdoors and [so it] is nice to swim with people who encourage you

and I've been doing the same ever since". Consequently, the social experiences entailed something more than the social interaction, open water swimmers experienced the sense of bonding and camaraderie.

As it was noted at the beginning of the present section, the experience of active sports tourists also had arose from the interaction and social encounters with new people. For instance, the new social encounters included fellow event participants and event employees. As M9 remarked upon "I knew some people that I never met but we spoke on the Facebook, and they were having some swims somewhere else in the morning so I'd met with them earlier in the morning first, and then had some breakfast all five of us". Open water swimmers who engaged in a channel swim also talked in their experiences about boat pilots or a skipper and swimming association representatives that were required. M3 also raised the importance of small accommodation providers, by referring to the Bed and Breakfast owners as 'very accommodating' and 'friendly'. Moreover, it is worth noting that when open water swimmers talked about their experiences, they mentioned their dressing code: wetsuit and non-wetsuit, which appeared to reinforce the social identity and sense of camaraderie by allying individuals to a certain group. For example, non-wetsuit dressing could depict and reinforce the identity of channel swimmers, who seem to possess a higher level of stamina and be more experienced in open water swimming.

5.7 Summary

The analysis of the primary data demonstrated that the active sports experience of open water swimmers is a complex phenomenon shaped by a number of elements and is inseparable from the factors that influence it. The experience stimulated a combination of states such as mental, physical and affective states. For instance, the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers aroused from the exposure to challenge that the activity represented. The challenge appears to vary between interviewees, as what one interviewee perceived as a challenge, other

may have not. Indeed, the individuals' personalities, their level of stamina and previous skills and experiences may have influenced the scale of challenge that open water swimmers were willing to undertake and seeking, but each interviewee seemed to be pushing himself or herself beyond self-determined limits by undertaking new challenges.

The challenge occurred on both physical and mental level and triggered a range of emotions. Interviewees faced risk of pain and fears that the open water swimming could represent. Therefore, the experience of the swimming was not only physically challenging, but also mentally. Furthermore, there was a sense of novelty and unknown attached to the experience of open water swimmers, which related to the natural environment, where the swim took place. Open water swimmers discussed conditions of weather, water and wildlife as factors that could influence their experiences dramatically and in doing so made the activity challenging. Nevertheless, the natural environment evoked states that one may perceive as more positive; open water swimmers enjoyed being in the natural environment as it provided them with a sense of escape, freedom and intrinsic enjoyment. Moreover, an individual's and/or a group goal underlined the challenging experience. The goal represented a mean of keeping healthy and fit, training, learning and mastering the open water swimming skills. Open water swimmers viewed their last experience as a mean something new and unknown, adventure like states and open water swimmers who participated in races mentioned also competition. Further to this, with the completion of the swim, a sense of accomplishment, achievement, enjoyment, and/or fulfilment on both a personal and a group level, was evoked.

As other people were encounter by open water swimmers, the experiences included social interaction with family members, friends and other companions or as some interviewees referred to them 'crew' members. Meeting new people, such as other open water swimmers and host population, was described by interviewees. Subsequently, interviewees expressed a social interaction, but there was something more to experiences of the social interaction, open water swimmer

demonstrated bonding with like-minded people and sense of camaraderie as important part of their active sports tourist experience. To move to the final part of this thesis and to allow discussion of the key research findings in conjunction with the secondary research that concerns active sports tourist, leisure and tourist experience bodies of literature, the findings of the active sports tourist experience reported throughout the current chapter are fed into the following Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the primary research findings evaluating the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and the factors that influence it were reported. The findings are integrated in the present chapter to progress to a discussion of the key research findings in conjunction with the secondary research that concerns academic literature about leisure and tourist experience (Chapter 2) and the experience of active sports tourist (Chapter 3). Before the discussion can commence, however, it needs to be noted that although the present chapter is structured into three subsequent sections, the researcher's notes taken during the data analysis procedure and the findings have indicated that they should not be regarded in isolation, as a strong association between them appears to exist.

It should also be borne in mind, as touched upon in the previous chapter that the findings have demonstrated that the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers is a complex phenomenon and difficult to separate from the key factors that influence it, because they appear to become an integral part of the experience. As with the previous chapter, the key factors that influence experiences are integrated into the discussion about the experiences of active sports tourists, open water swimmers. Firstly, the discussion will focus on the content of the experiences of the activity-open water swimming, which appeared to be intrinsically motivating and rewarding for participants. Secondly, experiences of the destinations are explained. Subsequently, the chapter progresses to discuss the content of social experiences.

6.2 Experiences of open water swimming

Within disciplines such as human psychology and sociology, a number of scholars have attempted to understand the leisure experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Neulinger, 1974, 1981a, 1981b; Stebbins, 2007). Neulinger (1974, p.xi) was the initiator of viewing leisure as "an experience, a process, an on-going state of mind." In Neulinger's (1974) view, the perception of freedom is the key to leisure experience, which is simplified to choose the activity voluntarily, and that participants find the activity intrinsically motivating and rewarding (Neulinger, 1974, 1981a, 1981b). Moreover, the concept of motivations has been discussed further within the leisure and tourism literature as one way to understand participant's behaviour and experiences (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Crompton, 1979; Maslow, 1968; Pearce, 1988; Pearce, 2011; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983; Ryan, 1993, 1997, 2002). Hence, a great number of studies emerged from both, socio-behavioural science literature (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Csikszetmihalyi, 1975; Maslow, 1968), as well as marketing and business management oriented literature (Pearce, 2005; 2011) to understand motivations. The literature shows complexity between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that there is a consensus that multiple motives or goals tend to underline participants' engagement in leisure (Beard and Ragheb, 1983) and tourism (Crompton, 1979; Pearce, 1988; Ryan, 2003).

Similarly, the concept of motivation is considered and found valuable by a number of researchers within the tourism, sports tourism and adventure tourism literature (Elmes and Barry, 1999; Ewert, 1985; Gibson, 1998a, 1998b; Gammon and Robinson, 1997; Gillett, 2011; Kurtzman and Zauhar, 2005; Johnston, 1992; Loewenstein, 1999; Pomfret, 2006; Reeves, 2000; Tabata, 1992; Weed, 1999; Weed and Bull, 2004). For instance, in the context of sports tourism, Weed and Bull (2004) propose that motivations are dynamic, variable and combine motives of both sport and tourism participation. So too, the heterogeneity of motivations among the active sports tourist has been identified by other researchers (e.g. Bull, 2006; Gibson, 1998a). For example, an earlier study of Gibson (1998a), which

focused on the active sports tourists, shows that motivations of sports tourists may vary, even within a small group, because each person may be motivated by different factors, which could be influenced by different factors, such as a person's past experiences (Breejen, 2006; Pearce, 2005; Ryan, 2002), personality or cultural traits (Kleiber, et al. 2011).

Thus, the analysis of the primary research findings appears to be in line with what may be expected about motivations based on the previous research in leisure, tourism and sports tourism literature as discussed above, and initially reviewed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. For instance, in line with leisure studies (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Neulinger, 1981a, 1981b) the importance of the perception of freedom and intrinsic motivation was illustrated in the present study as all interviewees expressed that the engagement in open water swimming was chosen voluntary for its intrinsic rewards. The experience was initially underlined by some predetermined goals or intrinsic motive and typically, more than one motive seemed to underline the individual's engagement (challenge, novelty, training-learning and refining skills, sense of achievement, fulfilment, social interaction and bonding). For instance, open water swimmers talked about their participation as a mean of experiencing something challenging and new, wherein the challenge took place within oneself and the environment where the activity of open water swimming took place.

Challenge appears to be in agreement with seminal motivational studies of both leisure and tourist experience (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Ryan, 2003). In a similar vein, the findings support the sports tourism literature, where it is suggested that challenge is a central tenet of sport participation (Weed and Bull, 2004). As open water swimmers described, the challenge was associated with risks and fears, which were both anticipated and unexpected, because of the difficulty to predict conditions and potential dangers that aligned with the natural environment. Scholars such as Ewart (1989) and Hall (1992) suggests a risk as an important feature of adventure tourist's experience. Thus, there is a consensus that challenge and the associated risk links to individual competence (Jackson and

Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Pomfret, 2006). The level of perceived challenge seems to ally to the perception of physical and mental skills that participants possessed. In other words, the level of competence seems to stimulate the selections of the open water swimming challenge that participants were seeking and willing to undertake. Consequently, an optimal balance between challenge and skills or the level of competence seemed to be important features for determining the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers.

Various theories and concepts may assist to explain the relationship between the skills one possesses and the challenge that one seeks. For example, open water swimmers initially desired to test their previously developed mental and physical skills. They appeared to seek a refinement of their skills to mastering open water swimming, which is discussed within key motivational theories in leisure and tourist experience literature, such as the leisure motivation scale, where mastery and competency motive can be identified (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Ryan and Glendon, 1998). The motivations of open water swimmers seems heterogeneous and person specific. In a similar vein to Robinson and Gammon (2004, p. 231), who discussed the complexity of motivation and drew attention to the primary and secondary motives that seem also relevant to the active sports experiences of open water swimmers, in the article of Kruger, et al. (2011) heterogeneity of motivation among open water swimmers to the South African event was recognised. Moreover, there appears to be also a sense of competence that is attached to the experience of open water swimmers, the feeling that participants' were aware of their skills and knowledge in their chosen activity (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 1984; Csikszentmihalyi and LeFevre, 1989; Ellis, Voelkl and Moris, 1994; Graef, Csikszentmihalyi and Gianinno, 1983; Mannell, Zuzanek and Larson, 1988; Priest, 1992).

Other theory that could perhaps further explain the relationship between various motives of participants and the skills could be Deci and Ryan's (1985, 1991) self-determination theory, which has been previously applied in the sport literature (Pelletier, Fortier, Vallerand, Tuson, Briere and Blais, 1995). In Deci and Ryan's

(1985, 1991) view, motivations vary in line with changes in participants' perceptions of competence and self-determination. Self- determination theory suggests that people have an intrinsic desire to explore and understand their environment through their life (Deci and Ryan, 1991) and that this desire or interest drives their involvement in particular activities. The present study seems to corroborate with this point as all participants had a genuine interest in open water swimming. Participants also described that they needed to possess skills to be able to respond to the challenge to ensure that the swim could be completed. Moreover, the skills were developed over a lengthy and highly committed training period, which seemed to reflect the degree of challenge participants sought to undertake. This also could be exemplified further by the individual's years of involvement in open water swimming, where the more experienced swimmers sought higher challenges. This could subsequently link to individual career development in his/her respective activity, which appears salient in both leisure and tourism literature (Pearce, 1988; Stebbins, 2007). For example, Pearce's (1988) model of the travel career ladder depicted that more experienced tourists tend to travel further. Alternatively, career development was identified in Stebbins' (1992) framework of serious leisure where one of the important qualities of the serious leisure participants is their tendency to shift and progress from smaller challenges to higher-level ones and as such be developing career within an activity.

If competence links to skills, and the balance of challenge-skill was important to open water swimmers, there appears to be a link to another concept, i.e. that of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990, 2000). As Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 2000) and Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) claim challenge is one of the key components of flow. Similarly to Deci and Ryan (1991), Csikszentmihalyi (1975) describes skills as a function of natural ability, experience and learning process with one's ability to learn and use new skills in order to handle challenges posed by external environments. As Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) explained further the perception of both the challenge and skills tends to be higher so participants feel pushed and it could in turn eliminate the experience of feeling boredom. The findings of this study appear to correspond well with this aspect, as

all interviewees described to engage during their last experience in new challenges that the participants perceived on a new level and potentially entailing more risky situations (e.g. longer distances and rougher conditions). Thus, Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, (1999, p. 38) proposed that taking risks puts one on the edge of the challenge-skills balance equation, extending challenge (and thus skills) beyond comfort zones. Alternatively expressed, a person pushing himself/ herself to the limits is a state that tends to accompany the state of flow (Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi, 1999).

Having drawn the discussion to Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) concept of 'flow', it further suggests that activities that generate 'flow' require clearly defined goals, a sense of control, focus, and total immersion in the activity. All open water swimmers, who were interviewed in this study, described that the swim was underlined by a predetermined goal. Apart from challenge or testing and refining ones skills, open water swimmers sought a sense of achievement, and fulfilment of self and others that was likely to arise once the challenge was completed, and thus the challenge was overcome. During the recollection of the experience of open water swimmers, it was also evident that open water swimmers experienced moments when they had completely immersed themselves in the activity; the activity required them to focus and concentrate and there appears to be a tendency to lose a sense of time. This seems particularly evident in the case of channel swimmers, where merging action and time was experienced. Whilst many uncontrollable and unpredictable natural factors could occur within the environment, and hence the control over the action may sound rather controversial, it appears to exist and links to the individuals' acceptance of their inability to have any control over nature, but their ability to cope with difficult situations both physically and mentally. This coping mechanism subsequently seems to assist in overcoming the challenges possessed by the external environment.

As Csikszentmihalyi (1992 cited in Elkington, 2011, p. 266) described, "implicit in what individuals describe is possibly as opposed to actuality of control… What

individuals tend to enjoy is not the sense of being in control as much as the sense of exercising control in personally challenging situation". People experience feelings of control over action and environment, but there a 'paradox of control' exists, because one does not seem to have a complete control over the environment. Therefore, more precisely, there seems to be a lack of the sense of worry about losing control and "what people enjoy is not the sense of being in control, but the sense of exercising control in difficult situations" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 59). According to Csikszetmihalyi (1992, p. 61), "it is not possible to experience a feeling of control, unless one is willing to give up safety of protective routines".

In addition, Elkington (2006, 2008 cited in Elkington, 2011) focusing on flow based serious leisure found that trust in the other participants in the activity being pursued at the time is often an important condition for feeling that one has control. It follows logically that, if the eight components of flow (sense of competence in executing the activity; requirement of concentration; clarity of goal of the activity' immediate feedback from the activity; sense of deep, focused involvement in the activity; sense of control in completing the activity). Moreover, Elkington (2011, p. 276) suggests variation in pre and post flow experiences; "flow-base serious leisure experience [that] stands as meaningful subjective experience that integrates three distinct but interrelated levels: the individual, significant/involved others and the place/settings". As Stebbins (2010) points out if all eight components are not represented, other states of flow may occur as already suggested by an early study of Massimini and Carli (1988) which provided more differentiated models based on skill-challenge balance, their study showed variation in states resulting from the skill-challenge equilibrium. Eight channels were recognised: arousal, flow, control, boredom, relaxation, apathy, worry and anxiety.

Similarly, apart from cognitive states, the experience of open water swimmers was accompanied by a great variety of affective states. On the one hand, there were emotions that one may perceive negative, such as fear, anxiety or worry, on the other hand positive emotions were aligned, such as exhilaration, enjoyment and pleasure. All of these emotions appear to corroborate with the number of

studies that deal with moods, emotional states and satisfaction in leisure and tourist experiences literature (Hammitt, 1980; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983; Rojas and Camarero, 2007).

As discussed earlier the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) seems to have also some relevance as it could explain the variety of emotions because of the skill-challenge balance. Approaching the state of flow during recollection, the triggered emotions were positioned on the board line of the 'flow tunnel'. For example, prior to swim, feelings of worry, excitement, thrill, anxiety and/or nervousness were aroused. Simultaneously, however, by overcoming and accomplishing the challenge of open water swimming-sense of control, the open water swimmers gained a feeling of exhilaration, a sense of wilderness, tiredness, a sense of achievement, a sense of total enjoyment, fun or as some open water swimmers described the experience provided them with a sense of extraordinary. It appears, therefore, that despite open water swimming representing a challenge that one may perceive negative, at the same time open water swimmers experienced positive emotions, because of the intrinsic rewards from satisfying needs of self-fulfilment, self-esteem and self-gratification as suggested in Maslow's (1967) hierarchy of needs. Affective states of self-fulfilment, pride, excitement, happiness and enjoyment are also emotions of the experiences identified in Kaplanidou and Vogt's (2010) the study of small-scale sport events

As touched upon earlier, open water swimmers found the experience enjoyable and satisfying, and these emotions are commonly identified as important within the leisure and tourism experience literature (Gunter, 1987; Henderson, 1990; Lee, et al. 1994; Shaw, 1985; Samdahl and Kleiber, 1989). However, the higher level of arousal and the sense of fulfilment and extraordinary especially among channel swimmers appear to strongly ally to the state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Subsequently, the findings also appear to corroborate another work of leisure studies, Stebbins' (2007) framework of serious leisure, where it is suggested that individuals, who engage in serious leisure activity could result in 'flow' like states. Moreover, as in a study of Elkington (2011) serious leisure

participants, open water swimmers, seem to have opportunities for flow-based serious leisure experiences.

Not only have open water swimmers illustrated one of the serious leisure qualities of perseverance by handling and overcoming challenges posed by the external environment, or the potential of developing career within the activity, the experiences of open water swimmers were perceived intrinsically motivating for its intrinsic rewards (Stebbins, 1992). More recently, Stebbins (2007) has expanded upon the rewarding mechanism of participants who engage in serious leisure activities and suggests that the rewards tend to occur on a dual-level, personal and social. In this study, open water swimmers seemed to experience multiple personal rewards such as those already alluded relating to self-enrichment, self-actualization, self-expression, self-image and self-gratification. The majority of open water swimmers, particularly the channel swimmers, described a personally enriching and cherished experience.

Subsequently, in the present study, open water swimmers could be classified as engaging in what Shipway and Jones (2007) referred to within sports tourism literature, as serious sports tourism or as in leisure studies Elkington's (2011) flow-based serious leisure activities as an experience that constitutes three levels: the individual, others and place. While the individuals' experiences with their respective activity - open water swimming were discussed in the previous paragraphs, open water swimmers described social experiences, which are explained further in the present chapter within a separate section (6.4). Moreover, the experience of place played also an important role in the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers. Subsequently, the discussion will continue to focus on the content of the experience of the environment, where open water swimmers had undertaken their activity and stayed.

6.3 Open water swimmers' experiences of destinations

Findings of the present study suggested that the actual activity, the open water swimming played a central part in the active sports tourist experience of those interviews. The drive of the athlete was underlined by the desire to visit destinations that embrace opportunities for engagement in open water swimming. In other words, the individuals seemed to be drawn to visit a destination, because it provided opportunity for experiencing the open water swimming 'challenge' within the selected environmental settings of the destination. Attached to this was a sense of novelty and unknown to the experience, which is an important feature the adventure tourist experience, because the novelty and unknown is associated with the potential risks and danger of the natural environmental settings that are difficult to predict (Hall, 1992) and which were similarly identified among open water swimmers in this study.

With reference to the tourism and sports tourism literature the sport activity of open water swimming could be perceived as a push factor (Crompton, 1979), because of its intrinsic motivations and the subsequent intrinsic rewards. Moreover, the environment was important as it provided the platform within which the activity took place and the experience could be created. Particularly, the different water resources (rivers, lakes, seas) that provided an opportunity for personal challenges were important in the experience of the open water swimmers in visiting the destinations. In this sense, the water resources were able to act as attracting features that pulled tourists to a destination, from their home and work as well as away from other alternative destinations. Consequently, the water environment could be perceived as the primary 'pull' factor to visit the destination (Crompton, 1979), because like beaches and landscapes these tend to relate to the attractive features of a destination (Uysal and Jurowski, 1993). Therefore, it seems that the particular water environmental settings of the destination in combination with the activity were the pulling factors for open water swimmers to visit various destinations.

As open water swimmers were consciously aware of their surroundings, the landscape of the destination also played a role in the experiences of open water swimmers, but the findings suggested that there appears to be a difference between the experience of open water swimming environment (water) and the experience of the destinations (land). Within the sports tourism marketing literature, the role and meaning of destination in sports event experience was assessed in a recent study of Kaplanidou and Vogt (2010), where findings suggested that an environmental meaning is attached to the experience and links to the scenery, countryside, and new places. Similarly, the awareness of the surroundings is not new within adventure tourism and the present study appears in line with a study of female adventure tourists (Myers and Hannam, 2012). In the present study, the swimming environment (water resources) of the destination provided an opportunity to experience enjoyment of the 'off shore' surroundings.

Moreover, there were moments, when open water swimmers expressed visual input and enjoyment of their surroundings; open water swimmers talked about colours of the scenery and observing their surroundings from the water level. The water environment seemed to offer a different perspective of viewing the horizon and the water mass that surrounded open water swimmers, and subsequently provided them with a sense of wildness. Perhaps, similar to what Urry (2002),within the tourism literature, refers to as a 'romantic' gaze, where the emphasis is upon solitude, privacy and a personal, semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze, such as the landscape of mountains. In this respect, Urry (2002, p. 13) argued that "swimming and other sports, shopping and eating and drinking all have particular significance if they take place against a distinctive visual backcloth. The visual gaze renders extraordinary, activities that otherwise would be mundane and everyday".

In the context to destination, apart from the cognitive and physical states open water swimmers also described emotional states. Some of them referred to the experience as being extraordinary or unique, because of the continuously changing natural conditions of the environment, such as weather, water and

wildlife by which open water swimmers were challenged by, and which they needed to overcome, so they could reach the sense of achievement, self-fulfilment or extraordinary. Therefore, it appears that while a water environment appears to be central as it provided the opportunity for experiences of arousal and potential flow; satisfying the higher-level need of self-fulfilment, esteem and self-actualisation, the experiences of the land environment appear to be peripheral or functional. The lesser importance of the destination settings can be similarly identified in Bull's (2006, p. 271) study on cyclists, where his participants demonstrated that "while on one level the destination and setting were unimportant, the actual quality of the race environment was regarded as significant".

Although the land environment of the destinations may not be of the main importance, the water resources within the destination appear to be salient. For this reason, there appears to be a strong relationship between the experience of open water swimming and destinations, and thus the experience of activity and place seems integrated. This integration supports the earlier works in sports tourism literature, such as Standeven and DeKnop (1999, p. 58) which proposes that the nature of sports tourism is an "experience of physical activity tied to an experience of place". It also verifies Weed and Bull's (2004, 2009) notion of the 'interaction between activity people and place'. The synergies could be explained further by literature on the leisure experience. Apart from enjoyment and evidence of fulfilment of the higher needs such as self-actualisation and esteem needs (Maslow, 1967; Pearce and Caltabiano, 1983), the land settings of the destinations appear to provide satisfaction through fulfilment of the lower level needs, such as a need for resting, sleeping, and socialising with friends (Maslow, 1967).

In addition, as with long distance triathletes (Miller, 2012), runners (Shipway and Jones, 2007) and cyclists (Bull, 2006), open water swimming seems to be integrated to individuals' lifestyle and travel experiences. This seems to support the initially proposed idea of Gammon and Robinson (1997) that the sport tourists

could be grouped into different typologies depending on their primary and secondary motives, whereby "secondary motives should not be perceived as inferior or second rate, but rather as sources of enrichment to the primary ones" (Robinson and Gammon, 2004, p. 225). Although open water swimmer's primary motive was swimming, his/hers experience seemed reinforced by a number of factors that the activity and visited environment contained. These aspects parallel with Robinson and Gammon's (2004) later suggestions of the social elements, climate, scenery, the quality of the route or the host community, all of which also contributed to the overall experience of open water swimmers as the active sports tourists. The experience seems also to differ from other experiences elsewhere or back at home due to the natural conditions of open waters. This appears to illustrate that for some open water swimmers, the engagement in the active sports tourism offered them opportunity to experience both of the worlds; something they love to do at home and something they enjoy doing away, with other like-minded people. For this reason, the active sports tourist experience could be viewed to some degree as an extension of everyday life interests, which has been referred to within the tourism literature as de-differentiation (Uriely, 2005). Uriely (2005) argued that instead of viewing tourism as a mean of escape from life pressures as it has been identified in early studies (e.g Iso-Ahola, 1979), active sports tourism appears to represent an extension of everyday life in the minds of participants.

Moreover, open water swimmers discussed the experience of the destination in the context of the land environment, where open water swimmers were accommodated, which included interaction with service providers. For example, open water swimmers described the importance of destination providers such as accommodation, hospitality, and event employees, so it seemed that the destination primary purpose was to serve as a 'land base', where open water swimmers could rest, eat and socialise when they did not swim. For this reason, the experience of the destination appears to be complex; land appears peripheral or its importance seems secondary for open water swimmers. The experience of land seems to alight to the concept of casual, rather than serious leisure that tends to consist of less demanding activities. Variations appeared to exist also in

activities that the open water swimmers engaged in at the destinations and hence their experiences of the destination differ. In the present study, only a few open water swimmers talked about experiencing other activities - only a few mentioned shopping, sightseeing, eating out, socialising or visiting friends and relatives. A lack of the participants' interest in the destination does not indicate individual ignorance, it appears, rather, to corroborate findings of a study on triathletes (Miller, 2012), as the physical demands of the activity and individual commitment seemed to influence experiencing other activities that open water swimmers engaged in when they did not swim. Apart from the energy level that could have influenced the experience of destination, open water swimmers mentioned that other factors, such as available time and money for their stay could influence their choices of activities that were undertaken within the destination, and thus their experiences. Having discussed the experience of destination and the synergies between the experience of the activity and place(s), the analysis of the primary data also suggested that all open water swimmers got involved with other people, such as their companions, like-minded people and host population. Therefore, the context of social experiences is discussed next in the following section.

6.4 The social experiences of open water swimmers

The present part of the chapter focuses upon the content of the social experiences. It discusses with whom, why and how open water swimmers interacted with other people. Within the sports tourism literature, Bouchet, Lebrun and Auvergne (2004, p. 135) have developed a theoretical framework, which demonstrates the shift from the modern to postmodern tourist who consume sport tourism by "seek[ing] group experiences where strong emotions and affective relations can be formed". Incorporating the experience management perspective, a study of Morgan (2007) focused on the nature of the interaction between sport tourists and destinations. Morgan (2007) acknowledged that the social experience is a widely recurring theme in the experience literature and claims that if visitors interact with both locals and other people within a group, the social experience is more

likely to be new, unique and memorable (Morgan, 2007). This was apparent in this study as similarly, the importance of the social experiences was important to open water swimmers. Developing friendships and interpersonal relationships, as well as the need of supporting others has also been illustrated within earlier developed works concerning the motivations of leisure and tourism engagement (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Maslow, 1970; Ryan and Glendon, 1998). In line with the leisure and tourism literature, the findings of the present study illustrated social interaction as an important dimension of the experience of the open water swimmers, because the majority of participants were initially motivated to interact with other people. More recently, Kaplanidou and Vogt's (2010) study explored the meaning of sports event experience and corroborate the importance of social aspects, such as socialization, meeting other people, engaging in holiday with family and friends for sports event participants.

In the present study, a majority of open water swimmers talked about the company of people who participants knew; they usually consisted of family members and friends. On the other hand, the social encounters entailed various new people from transportation providers, such as boat pilots or a skipper, to accommodation providers and/or event employees, who participants encountered and interacted with at the location/place of the swim. As briefly mentioned above, the accompanying group could entail both people who interviewees knew and new individuals, who became involved because of the swim. Subsequently, the social encounters with likeminded people and associated experiences were important to the majority of open water swimmers, and even to a greater extent the channel swimmers as they strongly emphasised the importance of other people that were involved and supported them.

Similarly, an earlier study by Green and Chalip's (1998) about female football players found social interaction and bonding important to active sports tourist's experience. Moreover, as all open water swimmers emphasised the importance of being with likeminded people; they showed appreciation of the support and encouragement from other open water swimmers. This supporting spirit within

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the community is not new within the sports tourism literature as it was also evident in an earlier study by McCarville's (2007) focusing on Ironman events and Miller's (2012) study on triathletes. The experience of the open water swimmers entails the social attraction of likeminded people, who could interact at different levels in competitive or more social events. Other people accompanied most of the open water swimmers, with a collaborative goal set between some participants as different individuals contributed to the maintenance and development of the group, wherein subsequent feeling of the group accomplishment could be trigged. Hence, the findings appear to corroborate and provide further evidence of social rewards that participants can gain from the involvement in the serious leisure activity (Stebbins, 2007).

Despite the variety of social encounters and subsequent experiences, the analysis of collected data closely parallel with the proposition of Gillett (2011) that interpersonal relation represents an important aspect of the sport tourists' experiences. However, as in Gillett's (2011) study that focused on sports tourist motivation of Master Games participants, the level to which open water swimmers regarded their involvement as an opportunity to be in a company of other likeminded people appeared to imply something more than social interaction; it demonstrated the importance of bonding and sense of camaraderie. Specifically, a strong sense of camaraderie was identified among channel swimmers who placed a considerable value on the opportunity to share their 'unique' and 'extraordinary' experiences within a close circuit of family, friends and other likeminded people, or as they referred to them: 'crewmembers'. All interviewees talked about how they valued the support of family and relatives, crewmembers or other likeminded people that were involved in the swim. It therefore appears that although the activity of open water swimming may not be seen as a typical team sport, all open water swimmers talked in their experiences about the activity being about a team effort, which could further depict the presence and importance of the community and social world that surrounds participants who engage in open water swimming.

The individuals in the present study gave the impression of being part of a broad community of likeminded people who interact and share their interest and experiences of open water swimming. These aspects appear consistent with the previous work of many motivational models, where social interaction and sense of belonging is seen as a major driver for sport consumption (Kirkup, 2012). Nevertheless, as Gillett (2011) notices the sense of camaraderie has been explored to a lesser extent within the sports tourism literature. A limited number of studies have focused on understanding the importance of travel for participation in sport, with an exception of Green and Jones (2005), who explored the concept of social identity using Stebbins' framework of serious leisure. Other studies have considered an application of the Stebbins's framework and while Shipway and Jones (2007, 2008) assessed the running careers of amateur marathon runners, Bull (2006) considered the application of serious leisure in a study on cyclist and Miller (2012) on triathletes.

The application of serious leisure framework in this study has also illustrated the serious leisure behaviour of open water swimmers. Moreover, it is worth noting that when open water swimmers talked about their experiences, they mentioned their dressing code: wetsuit and non-wetsuit, which appeared to reinforce the social identity and sense of camaraderie by allying individuals to a certain group. For example, non-wetsuit dressing could depict and reinforce the identity of channel swimmers, who seem to possess a higher level of stamina and be more experienced in open-water swimming. These value, norms and behaviour could differentiate the individuals from other groups, which could ally with a term 'unique ethos' as initially suggested by Yinger's (1960) conceptualisation of subculture where each sport and/or leisure activity would have own social world (Green and Jones, 2005). The 'unique ethos' is similarly reflected later in Stebbins' (2007) fifth quality of the serious leisure.

Furthermore, for open water swimmers it seemed important to be recognised as a member of a social world or subculture as interviewees had found the social experiences both intrinsically motivating and rewarding (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990;

Neulinger, 1981; Stebbins, 2007). As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the level of commitment that open water swimmers interviewed in this study engage in their activity of interest, seemed to depict characteristics of serious leisure participants, whereby the outcome gained by participants could outweigh the costs of taking part (Green and Jones, 2005; Stebbins, 1992). The level of commitment appeared to reinforce personal identity as an open water swimmer and social identity in the sense of how other participants perceived them within a particular community of other likeminded people. Thus, the sense of identity and community was important in the active sports tourist experiences of open water swimmers.

6.5 Summary

The present chapter provided discussion of the content of the primary findings, which evaluated the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers in conjunction with the secondary research. Therefore, this chapter has provided progression from description and explanation to integration with the literature that concerns leisure, tourist and understanding of the active sports tourist experience (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3). Firstly, it focused on understanding of the open water swimmers, their experiences and behaviours. The outcome of the onsite experience appears to closely relate to flow. As the sporting activity takes place within the destination, so it seems that the experience of the activity and destination is integrated. Subsequently, the content of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and the synergies between experience of open water swimming and the experience of destination were discussed. The discussion has progressed to the content and influences of social experiences, where social interaction, identity, bonding and sense of camaraderie were important in shaping experiences of open water swimmers. As the discussion of the primary research finding was presented, at this point, the present thesis will move on to conclusions and will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 provided background to the present study, set the research aims and outlined thesis structure. While a critical review of leisure and tourist experience bodies of literature took place in Chapter 2, the academic literature in Chapter 3 aimed to develop understanding of the active sports tourists. Both of these chapters provided definitional discourses of each phenomenon and reviewed theories, concepts and methodological approaches of existing research that concerned experiences. In addition, Chapter 4 of the thesis presented the methodological approaches and steps undertaken in the present study. In a subsequent Chapter 5, findings that concentrated on evaluating the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers and the key factors that influence it were reported through, whereas the findings in conjunction with the secondary sources were discussed in the previous Chapter 6. Thus, this chapter sets conclusions to the present study; it includes presentation of the key research outcomes and evaluations of the research process, which will progress to provide direction for future research.

7.2 Research outcomes

A considerable attention has been paid to experience of leisure and tourism, thus the review of the academic literature presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 has made evident that a great range of theories have been developed in order to understand the nature, construction and factors that shape participants' experiences. These theories and existing knowledge has been housed in a wide range of disciplines, such as psychology (Neulinger, 1975, 1981a, 1981b; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), sociology (Stebbins, 1981), socio-psychology (Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987; Mannell and Kleiber, 1997), geography (Urry, 1990),

economy (Clawson and Knestch, 1966) and business management and marketing oriented literature (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). While the focus of Chapter 2 was on leisure and tourist experience and the academic literature appears to be developing well and expanding, the second part of the literature review (Chapter 3) concentrated upon the understanding of active sports tourists and their experiences, where the academic literature appears to be less developed in contrast to leisure and tourism studies.

In addition, within the sports tourism literature, previous studies about active sports tourists have started to indicate the unique nature of the experiences and heterogeneity of active sports tourists. While Shipway's (2010) study demonstrated the unique nature of experiences amongst long distance runners, Miller's (2012) study aimed to understand the event experience of long distance triathletes. As all open water swimmers interviewed in this study travelled and stayed within the destination, they can be evidently considered as falling under the broad umbrella of the active sports tourists. The academic literature also made evident that prior to this study, existing research had not offered any substantial evidence regarding the nature of the experience of open water swimmers as the active sports tourists, and the extent of the identification with the act of participating in open water swimming as the serious leisure activity has been limited. The exception is a study by Hasting et al. (1995), which identified the six characteristics of serious leisure participants in Master swimming events and the study of Kruger, et al. (2011) on motivations of open water swimmers at a South African event. Consequently, the literature pertaining to active sports tourist provided an opportunity for the primary research of this study, which subsequently aimed to provide a deeper understanding of experiences of open water swimmers.

This study established that the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers is a complex phenomenon and inseparable from the factors that influence it. Firstly, the findings illustrated that the open water swimming activity played an important role in the active sports tourist experience; the drive of open

water swimmers was underlined by the desire to visit a destination that embraced opportunities for engagement in their respective sporting activity. In other words, the individuals seemed to be driven to visit the destination, because it provided an opportunity for experiencing open water swimming that represented a personal challenge within the selected natural environment of the destination. The analysis of data also suggested that a sense of novelty and unknown; an adventure like state was attached to the experience, because of the potential risks and dangers that the natural settings possessed and represented physically and mentally for each open water swimmer. As the open water swimmers were driven to the destinations to participate in their activity of interest, the sport dimension appears to represent the push factor, because of its intrinsic motivations and rewards.

As Gibson (2004), in her study on the active sports tourists claimed early research has focused more on profiling participants and there was a need to move forward beyond the questions of 'what' to 'why'. In a similar vein, Weed (2005, 2006) criticised sports tourism research as being too descriptive, with a limited exploration of why people find such type of experiences so enjoyable that they would like to repeat them. Elaborating on the suggestions of both, Gibson (2004) and Weed (2005b, 2006), yet bearing other studies' contributions in mind, this study adds to the current knowledge. As open water swimmers' experiences are so enjoyable that they would like to repeat them, because they can result in what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) defined as 'flow'. However, as Haworth (1997, p. 93) noted a high level of enjoyment can be associated with other channels than flow; "the usage of 'flow' as synonymous with enjoyment is…unjustified, as high enjoyment is associated with other channels and less than half of flow was found to be very enjoyable".

As in Miller's (2012) study on triathletes, the analysis of open water swimmers' experiences support the importance of challenge-skills balance, because in order to respond to the challenge, requisite skills had been developed over a prolonged training period to ensure the swim was completed. What was more; the findings of this study were able to uncover the experiences of arousal, relaxation, anxiety

and the opportunity for Elkington's (2011) flow-based serious leisure experiences. The present study's findings illustrate how open water swimmers completely immerse themselves in the activity and how it requires them to focus. After the completion of the swimming 'challenge', open water swimmers gained a sense of complete enjoyment, exhilarations, fun and a sense of achievement and extraordinary, which further depicted opportunity for experiencing 'flow', but similarly to the study of Elkington (2011) variations exist in pre and post flow experiences.

In addition, the present study illustrated the importance of other people in the experiences of open water swimmers, whereby the qualitative approach of this study allowed the researcher to discuss further with whom, why and how open water swimmers interacted with other people who became part of the overall experience. As in the earlier developed works concerning the motivations of leisure, tourism and sports tourism (e.g. Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Maslow, 1970; Morgan, 2007; Ryan and Glendon, 1998), the importance of the social interaction, such as developing friendships and building interpersonal relationships, as well as, the need of supporting others, was described by open water swimmers. The level to which participants regarded their involvement as an opportunity to be in the company of other likeminded people illustrated the importance of bonding and the sense of camaraderie. Specifically, a strong sense of camaraderie was identified among the channel swimmers who placed a considerable value on the opportunity to share their 'unique' experiences within a close circuit of people.

Moreover, all open water swimmers talked about how they valued the support of family and relatives, or other likeminded people, thus the study illustrated the activity is about a team effort, which could further depict the presence and importance of the community and social world that surrounds individuals who engage in open water swimming. The individuals in the present study gave the impression of being part of a broad community of likeminded people who interact and share their interest in open water swimming as open water swimmers

emphasised the importance of being with likeminded people; they showed appreciation of the support and encouragement from other open water swimmers. Such evidence of the supporting spirit within the community is not new within the academic literature, as evident in the earlier study by McCarville's (2007) who analysed participants in Ironman events or Miller's (2012) study on triathletes. Other people accompanied most of the open water swimmers, with a collaborative goal set between some of the participants, as different individuals contributed to the maintenance and development of a group task, whereby a subsequent feeling of the group accomplishment was trigged. Consequently, the findings of the present study showed that open water swimmers possess characteristics of serious leisure participants, who according to Stebbins' (2007) gain social rewards from their involvement in the serious leisure activity. Therefore, the findings have showed that while the application of serious leisure framework (Stebbins, 1992) is helpful for understanding the behaviour of open water swimmers as it provides description of participants' behaviour and rewards that open water swimmers gain from the activity engagement.

Similarly to the study by Elkington (2011), which brought together the concept of flow and serious leisure for the first time empirically, the present study considered both theories together in the context of sports tourism. As with Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Stebbins (2007), a qualitative approach was utilised in the present study. Therefore, the knowledge delivered from the primary research adds to the existing knowledge by considering aforementioned concepts and addressing recommendations, of some academics, such as Bull (2006), who identified that Stebbins (1992) concept of the 'serious leisure' would be suited for adopting in qualitative research to provide a deeper understanding of sports tourists. In addition, building upon Bull's (2006) proposition, and in line with Shipway and Jones' (2007) and Shipway's (2010) study on runners, the adoption of Stebbins (1992) serious leisure framework, while utilising qualitative and explanatory research approach was useful in this study. It enabled the researcher to add to the current literature an understanding of behaviour among other identifiable subgroup of the active sports tourists - open water swimmers, who seem to follow/mirror the characteristics of serious leisure participants. As

Kleiber, et al. (2011, p. 102) argued for more attempts to access the cognitive components of the experience, "that is, what people are actually thinking or imagining when engaged in leisure", the present study described what open water swimmers thought and how they felt about their leisure activity when taking place from their home and work environment.

Apart from the applicability of the aforementioned concepts, the present study considers experiences in the context of destinations, and as occurred on the land with service providers of transport, hospitality and accommodation appeared to offer different experiences. As pragmatically for open water swimmers the experience of the destination seemed to matter less, what seemed to matter more was the water environment where the swim took place. Despite these differences in the importance of the land and water environment in the active sports tourists, the experience of the destination and activity was difficult to separate, thus synergies between activity and place were illustrated in the present study; the environment seemed necessary to provide activity settings. For this reason, different water resources (rivers, lakes, oceans) appeared particularly important for open water swimmers as they provided opportunities for experiencing new challenges, and hence they could represent for the open water swimmers the 'pull' factors to visit the destinations. The open water swimmers identified destinations' features, such as weather, water, wildlife, landscape and other people as an important aspect of their active sports tourist experience, which simultaneously seemed to contribute to shaping the experience. Consequently, it could be assumed that the water location of the destinations may be alternatively perceived as attractions or pull factors of the destinations (Crompton, 1979).

In the literature that concerns sports tourism, Weed and Bull (2004, 2009) suggested that the sports tourism experience arises from the unique interaction between activity, people and place. The present study appears to corroborate their proposition further, because the findings of the present study illustrated commonality and relationship between individual dimensions. However, each dimension seems more complex and variations of their significance can be

identified in the present study, which was already illustrated by previous studies as well (e.g. Green and Chalip, 1998), but the present study offers much needed empirical evidence for Weed and Bull's suggestion of unique interaction. between the sporting activity, destinations (place) and people. This phenomenological study of open water swimmers, who travel to participate in this type of activity, also has contributed to the existing research by providing understanding of experience of another identifiable subgroup of the active sports tourists. The qualitative approach allowed access to the cognitive and emotional responses of active sports participants.

The analysis of the data illustrated how open water swimmers faced contrasting mixes of emotional states, such as feelings of anxiety and fun at the same time. These feelings were experienced by all open water swimmers regardless of their level of skills, knowledge and previous experience, particularly, because of the natural conditions that were unpredictable, and allowed experiences to be unique. As such, the findings provided a unique insight into the cognitive and emotional states of open water swimmers, who engage in their activity of interest away from their home environment. Moreover, in a broad context of swimming the findings extend the work of Kruger, et al. (2011) on the motivation of open water swimmers. Specifically with reference to leisure, tourist and active sports tourist experience literature, the present study makes an addition to the existing body of knowledge by adopting inter-disciplinary and inter-field approach. Therefore, the findings from this study, exploring the experiences of open water swimmers and the key factors that influence it have led to a deeper understanding of the unique nature of open water swimmers' experiences, as the active sports tourists. Moreover, as in the study by Shipway (2012), Stebbins (2006) six 'Ws' -who, when, where, what, whom, and why were adopted and addressed in this study. Hence, the additional value of this study is the adoption of qualitative research that has provided personal views about the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers.

7.3 Reflections and evaluations of research process

This section reflects upon a research process presented in this thesis. It evaluates the research quality, such as credibility and validity are primarily taken into consideration. Different academics suggest that every research involves inherent limitations that constrain the strength and utility of the reported research findings (Gillett, 2011; Perry, 2004), therefore, this study is no exception and limitations are also detailed in the second part, which then progresses to suggestions for future research.

7.3.1 Evaluation of the research quality

Earlier in the methodology (Chapter 4), Polkinghorne (1989, cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 215) developed five criteria for the assessment of validity in qualitative research. While some aspects to reassure credibility and validity were presented in the sub-sections about ethics (4.5.6.1) and pilot study (4.5.6.2), the five criteria suggested by Polkinghorne are re-stated and addressed in more detail in this section, because they seem to provide a useful benchmark for evaluating the research process in this study.

1. *Did the interviewer influence the contents of the participants' description in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the participants' actual experience?*

In order to ensure that the descriptions of the experience reflected the participants views, a number of steps were undertaken in the present study. Initially, the researcher set aside her standpoint to avoid bias and any potential prejudices (see p.79). Secondly, the design of the in- depth, semi-structured interview entailed a series of questions that served as a guideline for the interviewing only. In these questions the academic jargon was avoided to allow more fluent discussion with open water swimmers. Although the initial interview schedule was piloted, there

were times, when some questions were missed during some of the interviews, because the interviewees had already dealt with the topic, and hence asking questions again seemed repetitive and could have distracted the natural flow of the interviews.

If interviewees have raised any unexpected answers or provided interesting points related to the researched topic, the nature of a semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to probe. In other words, the structure gave opportunity for asking additional questions such as 'why'. 'Why' questions were employed as a form of a 'soft' laddering technique, which was previously adopted in a study by Kirkup (2012) who focused on Olympic spectators, so it could be maintained that the researcher attempted to avoid influencing the content of the interviews. It needs to be noted though, that as the role between the researcher and the interviewees was to co-author in the discussions, because the researcher had a minor knowledge about the experience, there may have been moments when the content could have been influenced without intention. However, apart from the interview questions, the researcher aimed to act primarily as a listener to interviewee's views about their experiences of travelling to participate in open water swimming away from their home and work. This role was retained during the interviews and the researcher aimed to avoid filling the silent gaps as much as possible.

In addition, flexibility in choosing time and location was offered to interviewees, so they could feel comfortable and undistracted in their surroundings. The majority of interviewees chose for an interview to take place at their home settings and interview was arranged at a convenient time to them to avoid any potential distraction. Prior to the interview process, a formal and semi-formal conversation via email seemed valuable to reduce open water swimmers' anxiety to take part in interviews as the research was stranger to them. Although, the recording was used, a verbal consent was gained beforehand and then the recorder was simply turned on and left until the interviewing process was completed. After each interview, transcription of data took place and this step is highlighted through the following criteria.

2. Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?

In the present thesis, interviews were transcribed by listening to the audio recordings within a short time scale once the interviews had taken place, so the potential unclear passages caused by accent variations or recording deficiencies could have been remembered. In order to ensure interviewees' points of views, thus meanings they attached to the active sports tourist experience were represented, all transcriptions were also offered to open water swimmers if they wished to check for accuracy. If this scenario occurred, one of the participants made minor amendments by adding information. It needs to be stressed though that in order to retain the participants' views, the researcher has never second-guessed, in other words, when a word was missing in data, a gap was left rather than replacing it. Apart from a few unclear words that the researcher needed to re-listen or was left to omit, the rest of the interviews were re-listened to one more time, while proofreading the transcripts for clarity and type errors.

3. In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?

As suggested in the previous criteria, the researcher has never second-guessed unclear passages or meanings in that sense to maintain the participants' views in this study. The researcher have consciously tried to maintain what the interviewees said and meant, rather than focusing on what the literature was predetermining or was felt by the researcher. In line with this, it should be noted that throughout the interview process, probes were used only to ensure clarity of statements, such as reassurance of meanings and providing explanations of points that aroused during the in-depth, semi-structure interviews. Therefore, it could be proposed that the analysis of the data are accurate and does not present findings that possess alternatives.

4. Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?

Initially, various analytical techniques have been considered, but in line with the previous phenomenological research in area of the active sports tourism (Miller, 2012), Ritchie and Spencer's (1994) framework analysis was elected. The analysis entailed five stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, chartering and finally mapping and interpretation and these assisted in providing the primary findings. Firstly, the researcher aimed to become familiar with all the materials that were utilised for collection of the primary data (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994), in particular interview transcripts and research notes were reviewed on a number of occasions, either by re-listening to audio recordings and/or reading transcripts to identify key ideas and recurrent topics. During the second stage, the purpose was to identify a thematic framework, in which the key concepts and themes expressed by participants formed a basic thematic framework (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). During the indexing stage, data were preliminary coded manually along text. Once quotations were transferred to findings chapter, any notes that were assigned during a preliminary analysis were kept or added alongside the text to assure that the meaning and the context was retained.

In addition, the computer program NVivo version 9 was adopted in a later stage of analysis to organised the data and assign nodes (codes). During this stage, the researcher maintained a high level of cautiousness to keep referring back to the entire transcripts as well as to the notes that were developed during interviews and familiarization phase (Furber, 2010) alongside the transcripts. The indexing process has enabled the researcher to become immersed in the rich data, and it was possible for the researcher to find that the initial draft of theoretical framework needed purifying, but this is not unusual, because in this type of analysis the groups of themes can be merged, or new groups can emerge (Ritchie, et al., 2003). In the present study, the initial draft of the theoretical framework was revised on a number of occasions, until no new themes (codes) were emerging and data saturation has taken place. In order to synthesise themes from

each interviewee, the following stage of chartering related to situation when researcher input data in tables or charts according to the themes (codes) that were developed in the indexing stage. This has led to the final stage of mapping and interpretation, a stage when the main aims of this study were addressed. The individual steps of the framework analysis were followed with cautiousness and doing so, it can be maintained that it is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience.

5. *Is the structural descriptions situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations?*

The nature of qualitative study appears to make generalisation of the qualitative data challenging. However as the present study has focused on the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers, it is hoped that other studies that focus on the same topic could find the results valuable for understanding experiences of open water swimmers or other groups of active sports tourist. In a broader spectrum, the initial concepts of leisure and tourist experience the academic literature that were reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 have been useful in the context of the active sports tourist experience. For this reason, it could be proposed that other studies of leisure and tourism may find descriptions and explanations of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers valuable in other situations. As previously alluded, this study findings are consistent to similar studies within a different context, such as studies on long distance runners (Shipway, 2010; Shipway and Jones, 2007) or Miller's (2012) study on triathletes, thus supporting, to some extent, the external validity of the present study. While it could be maintained that the aims of the present study were successfully achieved through the secondary and primary research, the following section draws upon possible limitations of the present study

7.3.2 Limitations of the study

As with other research, a number of limitations could be drawn upon in the present thesis. The nature of qualitative study in general brings limitations of small purposive sampling and difficulties to generalise data (Willig, 2008a). Although the sample population did not have an equal distribution between individual genders, and the sample seemed quite heterogeneous, the sample was well represented in terms of range of skills, knowledge and experiences that interviewees possessed. The unequal gender representation could possibly indicate that males engage in open water swimming more than females as in a study of Kruger, et al. (2011). Nevertheless, the sample size of the research population and data collection was successfully achieved via different approaches for recruitment of participants, which delivered findings about the active sports tourist experiences of open water swimmers that were discussible in the present study.

The researcher employed purposive sampling, initially through gatekeepers, which progressed to utilising a snowball technique. The snowball technique tends to be criticised in the literature as the non-probability forms of sampling could influences the data (Saunders, et. al. 2009), but in the present study, it needs to be emphasised that each participant discussed experiences in relation to different occasions and destinations. In contrast, the fact that a friend or someone who the participant knew had suggested to him or her engagement in this study appeared to reduce reluctance and raise willingness to share personal experiences with the researcher who was perceived, otherwise, as a stranger. Furthermore, whilst the researcher was the main audience to listen to the active sports tourist experiences of open water swimmers, the fact that the interviewing was recorded might have suggested, that the interviewees were aware that there would be other potential audience interested in their opinions. For instance, the interviewees could have presumed that members of the academic team, other audience is reading the information, and therefore the content could have been adjusted and given accordingly. It should also be borne in a mind that interviewees were likely to

retell the experience to the researcher after telling to other people such as family members and friends or during interviews for media or other research, so the repetition, audience and memory may have influenced the content expressed by individuals. As such, the answers could have been rehearsed, some aspects forgotten and thus the content of the experience could have been influenced to some degree, but this does not mean that the outcomes of the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers are less meaningful or valuable.

In the present study, the analysis of the active sports tourists experience appears to illustrate that motivations mirror rewards to a high extent. This can indicate either that the initial motivations that participants had were successfully met, or perhaps, because both facets were discussed during the interview, which took place in a recollection phase and for this reason, they may have been matched. Furthermore, the findings of this study have indicated that apart from visual input other senses were engaged, yet these were not addressed in this study in a detail nor were they intended in the primary data assessment. However, it is believed that sensual stimuli was also important in the active sports tourists experience as the open water swimmers mentioned water taste, temperatures and the tingling feeling of cold and warm on their skin after being in the water, which seem to result in the feelings of contrasting emotions such as anxiety and exhilaration. There was also the movement of open water swimmer's body, the pace and rhythm they had swam through the water, as well as the auditory input through communication with other people.

Thus, based on the present study findings it could be assumed that the experience entailed multisensory input, other than just visual. As the researcher intended to follow phenomenological thinking of Husserl, whose view links more to the positivist thinking – structured approach, whereby the researcher mediates between objective and subjective reality, thus limitation with epistemological positioning could exist (see Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001; Pernecky and Jamal, 2010). The choice of utilising framework analysis, which allows interpretation, contradicts partially with the initial basis of phenomenology that seeks

description without aiming to interpret, though hermeneutic turn claims that every description has already attached interpretation (e.g. Van Manen, 1990, Heidegger, 1996). Therefore, a future research is encouraged to undertake hermeneutic or 'existential phenomenology' that builds upon hermeneutics - 'lived experiences' and to use an interpretative phenomenological analysis, such as in a study of Elkington (2011) that took into consideration both the concept of flow and the framework of serious leisure. However, as previously alluded, it was not in the scope of the present thesis to present all aspects of the experiences, perhaps it could be said that it may be impossible to understand the complex nature of experience thoroughly by a single study. Therefore, it needs to be borne in mind that the focus of the present thesis was condensed to physical, cognitive and affective states of the onsite experience that was discussed once participants returned to their home environment.

As Ryan's (2011) has recently suggested the tourist experience is complex and in order to study tourist experience it is necessary to study individual stories that one evaluates not as definitive assessments of true, it acts, rather, as a source that provides knowledge of other's experience. The present thesis builds upon Ryan (2011) proposition, and in doing so, it needs to be borne in mind that the explanatory nature and qualitative approach of the present study did not aim to serve as absolute assessments of truth. Instead, the approach acted as a source that undertakes an assessment of others' experiences of a particular phenomenon; defined as the active sports tourist experience of open water swimmers.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

The presented thesis has further illustrated that people who engage in open water swimming are an identifiable group of the active sports tourists. This therefore signifies and supports the importance of other type of sport in addition to the previously considered research within the active sports tourism literature. As the primary research has concentrated on the understanding of the active sports

tourists experience only, but other people were evidently involved, future research could concentrate on the experiences of 'others', the participants, who accompany the open water swimmers, particularly those, who are involved in channel swims, such as coaches, family, friends and various other supporters. In addition, although a number of studies are already undertaken within the active sports tourism literature (runners, cyclist, triathletes, and football participants), uniqueness and heterogeneity were identified in the research and reinforced by this study's findings. Therefore, more understanding is needed from other groups as this could lead to identifying further sub-niches, commonalities and differences between the individuals and their respective activities they engage in, and finding the significance that these activities have for an individual. In addition, the adoption of an explanatory study and the use of qualitative approach in the present study suggest that in order to provide a deeper understanding of the active sports tourist experience, future research ought to be qualitative to progress the area of the active sports tourist experience further. There seems to be an opportunity to explore narratives of experiences among different types of sports (wo)men - amateur, hobbyists or volunteers (Stebbins, 2007) or devotees, recreationalists and aficionados (Kruger, et al. 2011). Researchers can access narratives by exploring diaries, blogs, specialised magazines or story lines.

As noted earlier, while the serious leisure framework (Stebbins, 1992, 2007) appears to be useful for description of the behaviour of open water swimmers, the concept of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) appears to be reasonably applicable to further understanding of the experiences of the sporting activity at the destinations. Therefore, the application of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) through lenses of 'serious leisure' (Stebbins, 1992, 2007) is further encouraged in the sports tourism research. As the experience of the sporting activity and destinations appears to be integrated, future empirical research could stimulate enhanced understanding of the interaction between activity, people and place as originally suggested by Weed and Bull (2004) and reinforced in their second edition in 2009 and supported by Gillett's (2011) thesis. While, the relationship between activity and people has already deserved some attention in the literature and furthered the understanding by utilising theories such as the social identity

(Green and Jones, 2005), the relationship between the place where the activity takes place and the destinations as a whole deserves more attention in future sports tourism research to provide further explanations of such experiences.

Within the study area of sports event tourism and the active sports tourism, both suffer dominance of positivist and quantitative research, this study's findings provides a more detailed exploration of experience within the existing body of literature. Hopefully, this will encourage use of qualitative approaches in future research that considers the exploration of experience from the participants' view. It is also hoped that by understanding the distinct and sometimes extraordinary experiences of open water swimmers, further research on this interesting sub-group of active sports participants is inspired. It is believed that such research could further influence sport, tourism and leisure providers as well as a range of governmental bodies to refine their physical activity, health and safety policies and strategies to help maximize the opportunities that participation in a leisure activity like open water swimming offers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Type of research questions	Strategy	Paradigm	Method	Other Data Sources	Major references
Meaning Questions-eliciting the essence of experiences	Phenomenology	Philosophy (phenomenology)	Audiotaped 'conversations' written anecdotes of personal experiences	Phenomenological literature; Philosophical reflections; poetry; art	Bergum (1991) Giorgi (1970) Van Manen (1984, 1990)
Descriptive questions-of values, beliefs, practices of cultural group	Ethnography	Anthropology (culture)	Unstructured interviews; participant observation; Field notes	Documents; records; photograph; maps; genealogies; social network diagrams	Ellen (1984) Fetterman (1989) Grant & Fine (1992) Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) Hughes (1992) Sanjeck (1990) Spradley (1979) Werner & Schoepfle (1987a, 1987b)
"Process" questions-experience over time or change may have stages or phases	Grounded theory	Sociology (symbolic interactionism)	Interviews (tape-recorded)	Participant observation; memoing; diary	Chenitz & Swanson (1986) Glaser (1978, 1992) Glaser and Strauss (1987) Strauss (1987) Strauss & Corbin (1990)
Questions regarding verbal interaction and dialogue	Ethnomethodology; Discourse analysis	Semiotics	Dialogue (audio/video recording)	Observation; field notes	Atkinson (1992) Benson & Hughes (1983) Denzin (1970, 1989) Douglas (1970) Heritage (1984) Leiter (1980) Rogers (1983)
Behavioral questions Macro Micro	Participant observation Qualitative Ethology	Anthropology Zoology	Observation; field notes Observation	Interviews; photograph Videotaped; note taking	Jorgensen (1989) Spradley (1980) Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1989) Morse & Bottorff (1990) Scherer & Ekman (1982)

Source: Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 224)

Poster for Participants Recruitment

Open Water Swimmers

Manchester Metropolitan University

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Hello,

Do you travel and compete in open water events overseas or in the UK and stay overnight?

If yes, then I would be very interested to talk to you about your experiences.

Ideal candidates:

* Non-elite with different level of knowledge, skills and experiences

* Have travelled and stayed at least one night where the event was held

How much of your time is needed:

* Up to 30 min conversation about your last event experience

* Time and location is arranged upon your convenience

If you are interested and enjoy talking about your experiences, or just want to find out more, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me on the contact details below

I am very looking forward to hearing from you all,

Kind regards and best wishes,

Andrea Muranovova, MPhil student MMU

Contact: Andrea **openwaterswimmingevents@gmail.com** mob. **07960750572**

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Pilot Interview Schedule

INTRODUCTION

- *Hello*

- *It's great that you've agreed to participate and are willing to help me to pilot this interview*

- *I hope it's not a problem, but because we're going to be talking and just to help me to take notes, I'm going to be recording this interview*

- *But of course, once I type up the interview I'll email it to you and if you'd like to delete anything just delete it out, because your contribution to this research is fundamental*

- *Or please just let me know now or during the interview and I'll make alternative arrangements and start taking notes*

- *Are you okay with the recording?*

- *By the way, what is your email address?*

- *Thank you*

- *Now, I'd like to pint point some ethical consideration to this interview*

o *I'd like to stress that your name will not be disclosed at any time, or any other names in that sense you may mention*

o *Instead I will assign pseudonyms to guarantee your confidentiality and anonymity*

- *The interview should last 30 min to 1hour*

- *If at any time you wish to stop, or do not wish to answer a particular question, please feel free to say so*

- *Now I just like to provide you with a brief to this interview :*

o *In the interview I am concentrating on the experiences of individuals who have travelled and stayed at least overnight within a destination to participate in open-water swimming*

o *I may sometimes refer to it as active sports tourism, to differentiate it from other types of tourism that you may engage in, and we may have a chance to touch upon during our conversation.*

o *I also would like us to talk about the factors which have influenced your experiences that we're going to talk about now….*

o

Is there anything you are unsure about before we start?

SECTION1: THE ACTIVE SPORTS TOURIST EXPERIENCE OF OPEN WATER SWIMMERS (Aim 2 and 3)

>> Ok, so if we now straight dive into your last swim, that required you to travel and stay at least overnight within the destination where it took place

Q1.   Could you please tell me about the last experience of open-water swim you took part that involved an overnight stay at the destination?

i. Where did it take a place?
ii. How long did you stay for (nights)
iii. Have you been there before? (memory, previous experience of the event and/or place/destination)
iv. For the same event or on any other occasions (e.g. tourist, visitor, business travel)?
v. Why (What were the reasons for participating)did you participated in this particular swim
-activity, people or the place you have visited?), (what was the goal)
a. competition
b. developing skills (competence-mastery)
c. challenge with oneself, environment or others
d. social (social interaction)
e. intellectual (mental learning, exploring, discovering, imagining)
f. stimulus avoidance (escape-from work, everyday life…)
vi. Is it what you've just mentioned what motivates you to take part in general?
vii.   Anything else?
viii.   How did you feel about going to this particular event? List of feelings……
ix. Did anyone or anything (e.g. time, finances) influence your decision?

Q2.   How did you plan for it?

i. What were the thinks you were looking forward to? (what did you think (expectations)?
ii. What were the challenges with the arrangements?
a. Work arrangements
b. Other arrangements

1. Registration
2. Travel
3. Accommodation
4. Others

>>*So you've said you've travelled to ……...*

Q3.   How was your journey there?

i. Who with?
ii. Why?
iii. What did you do and see on your way?

>>*if we return just*   **after arrival to the destination**

>> *So ones you have arrived to…………………*

Q4a.   Would you recall how you felt and dealt emotionally with all the practical stuff?

i. Accommodation
ii. Event
iii. Training
iv. Transportation
a. Parking optional depend on transport
b. If train
v. Food
a. Own
b. Out
vi. Other services

>>*now I would like you to think about the actual day of the event/swim*

Q4b. Would you be able to recall
i. How did you feel when you'd woken up (could you sleep?) List of feelings (nervous, excited?)
ii. What was going through your mind?(thoughts and feelings)
i. How did you get to the event location and why (this way)?
ii. What happens once you are there (I mean at event location)?
iii. Did you talk to anyone(other participants, if so
a. what about?
b.   And why? (e.g takes away the tension?)positive negative?
i. Could you recall and tell me what was going through your mind during the actual swim? (flow-control, time merging etc.)
a. Aiming to gain feelings and thoughts and senses- what could you see, hear, feel (..the water (cold) how did you feel? (in zone?)

b. Challenge-skills balance, Action-awareness merging, Clear goals, Unambiguous feedback, Concentration on the task at hand, Sense of control, Loss of self-consciousness, Transformation of time, and Autotelic experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

<u>**After event**</u>

>> Once the race/event is over would you talk me through what happened then, and then, and then.

Q.5   What about after the event? (What did you think about….)

i. How did you feel emotionally and why?
ii. What did you think about the event settings and organisation
iii. What were the best parts of the event?
iv. What were the things that could have been done better, I mean did you miss anything?
v. Did anything unexpected happen?
a.   Pleasant
b.   Unpleasant
vi. Destination-was it easy to get around?
vii.   Did you do any touristy stuff? (e.g. sightseeing, eating out, other activities)and why?
viii.   What about People-locals other participants, staff
ix. Accommodation-type
x. Other businesses (shops, restaurants, etc.)

Q6.   How was your return journey/travel back?

i. What was going through your mind?
ii. How did you feel?
iii. What was different and similar to the journey there?

Q7.   Overall, in your opinion what do you think you have gain from this experience

i. Rewards
o   Personal
•   Personal enrichment (cherished experiences)
•   Self-actualization (developing skills, abilities, knowledge)
•   Self-expression (expressing skills, abilities, knowledge already developed)
•   Self-image (known to others as a particular kind of serious leisure participant)
•   Self-gratification (combination of superficial enjoyment and deep fulfilment)
•   Re-creation (regeneration) of oneself through serious leisure after a day's work

- Financial return (from a serious leisure activity)
- Social
- Social attraction (associating with other serious leisure participants, with clients as a volunteer, participating in the social world of the activity)
- Group accomplishment (group effort in accomplishing a serious leisure project; senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic)
- Contribution to the maintenance and development of the group(Including senses of helping, being needed, being altruistic in making the contribution)

ii. If we look back at what you've come to this event for and what you've taken from it do you feel differently about anything now?
iii. Why?

Q8.   What are your intentions for repeating this event again?

i. Why (what are the reasons for it? (why people want to repeat event)

Q9. What are your intentions for visiting this destination again and why?

Q10.   Have you already anticipated/planned/or made any arrangements for any future event? (looking for a link, relationship between recollection and anticipation)

i.   Why do you want to participate in this one?
ii. Any different reason to attend compared to the last one?

>> This concludes the interview. I would like to thank you again for your time and participation and mostly for your willingness to share these experiences with me. I have really enjoyed talking to you. Now, if you could spend a couple of minutes to fill some personal details (hand form)

>>Thank you again and just to finally reassure you, your information is going to be treated with a high confidentiality and anonymity.

>>Good Bye.

SECTION 2. : PERSONAL DETAILS

>>*As I have stressed at the beginning, no information will be able to be linked or followed to you, because I will give you a pseudonyms in the final thesis. If you have any concerns, relating this, please just let me know.*

Q11. Could you please fill in the interviewee detail sheet, if you need any assistance just let me know.

Age_____

Marital status   Single   Married   With partner

Children   Yes   no. _____
          No   age _____

Educational background_____(highest qualification)

Employment status, please state your profession _____(most recent)

Q12. How long have you been participating in open-water swimming events?

Q13. If travelling to participate in events, how many days do you like to stay within an event destination?

One day   2-3 days   Longer

How   often   do   you   train? _____hours/week _____miles/week

Where?   Open water based   (type)   Pool based
Why?_____
_____

Who with?   Individually   With   other swimmers
Why?_____
_____

Main study interview schedule

INTRODUCTION

- *Hello, my name is Andrea Muranovova and I am a postgraduate research student in Tourism Management at Manchester Metropolitan University.*

- *I am grateful that you have agreed to participate in the interview, and made this spare time to do so and most vitally, that you are willing to share your experiences with me. Your contributions to this research are fundamental and greatly appreciated. The interview should last approximately 30 min to one hour. If at any time you wish to stop, or do not wish to answer a particular question, please feel free to say so. (e.g. by saying I would like to pass on this…)*

- *I plan to audio record the interview. However, I would like to stress that no-one will be able to hear the recording, because this will simply be used by myself at home to make notes after the interview. This will allow me to give you my full attention during the interview.[pause]In a case, you do not wish to be recorded or would like to stop recording anytime during the interview, please do not hesitate and just let me know and I will make alternative arrangements and will take notes throughout the interview. Once the interview is transcribed, if you wish I email it to you and if you feel that there is any incorrect interpretation, please let me know. Your name will not be disclosed at any time, or any names (organisation, people) you mention in that sense. Instead, I will assign pseudonyms to guarantee confidentiality. (consent)*

- *Now, I would like to provide you with a brief to the interview:*

In the interview I am concentrating on the experiences of individuals, like you, travelling and staying within a range of destinations to participate in open-water swimming. I may sometimes refer to this as active sports tourism, to differentiate it from the other types of tourism that you may engage in, and we may have a chance to touch upon during the interview. I also would like to concentrate

primarily on the last open-water swimming occasion. So unless I indicate otherwise, I would like us to focus upon these aspects.

Is this Ok with you?

Is there anything you would like to ask me before we start?

Note: incorporate Stebbins 6Ws when asking, such as Who, What, When, Why, Whom, and Where

Q1.   Could you please tell me about the last experience when you travelled to participate in open water swimming and that involved at least overnight stay at a destination?

i. **I: Where?**
ii. **I: Have you been before?**
iii. **I: How long did you stay there for?**
iv. **I: Why did you participate**
Q2.   How did you get there?

i. **Mode of transport**
ii. **With whom**
Q3.   Would you recall how you felt about going? List of feelings

Q4.   Once you've arrived to …….. would you be able to recall and talk me through what happened there?

Q5.   During the swim, was there anything going through your mind?

Q6.   How did you feel after?

Q7.   What did happen then?

i. **Did you do any other sport activities & why**
Q8.   How did you get back home?

 i,ii same as Q2

Q9.   Overall, what are your thoughts on this experience?

Q10. What do you think YOU have GAINED FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?
LIST OF REWARDS

Q11. Were there any other things that influenced your experience we have just discussed?

Q12. Have you already anticipated any future trip to engage in open-water swimming again?

Manchester
Metropolitan
University

HOLLINGS FACULTY - RESEARCH ETHICS

Any research undertaken by the student stated below will be conducted, recorded and presented in accordance with the guidelines set out by the University Academic Ethics Committee. These guidelines are known as the MMU Academic Ethical Framework and may be accessed at: http://www.red.mmu.ac.uk/documents/res_files/ethics/ethical_framework.doc They are compatible with those published by the ESRC and other responsible bodies.

Name of student: ANDREA MURANOVOVA

Project/Dissertation title: EVALUATING THE ACTIVE SPORTS TOURIST EXPERIENCE OF OPEN WATER SWIMMERS

Student statement:

Before any research is undertaken, I would like to assure collaborators and participants of the following points:

- Participation in an interview is entirely voluntary.
- Participants are free to refuse to answer a question at any time.
- Participants are free to withdraw from an interview at any time.
- The interview/questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only within Hollings Faculty.
- Excerpts from this interview/questionnaire may be incorporated into a project report or dissertation, but under no circumstances will names or personal characteristics be included without prior consent.

Signed: .... Print Name:.................................

Interviewee acceptance:
Signed: .... Print Name:.................................
Date: ....

F1   1ST female interviewee   R-researcher
I-interviewee

INTRODUCTION

- *Hello, my name is Andrea Muranovova and I am a postgraduate research student in Tourism Management at Manchester Metropolitan University.*

- *I am grateful that you have agreed to participate in the interview, and made this spare time/have spared the time to do so and most vitally, that you are willing to share your experiences with me. Your contributions to this research are fundamental and greatly appreciated. The interview should last approximately 30 min to one hour. If at any time you wish to stop, or do not wish to answer a particular question, please feel free to say so. (e.g. by saying I would like to pass on this…)*

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(organisation, people) you mention in that sense. Instead, I will assign pseudonyms to guarantee confidentiality. (=sign consent, tick for emailing)

- *Now, I would like to provide you with a brief to the interview:*

In the interview I am concentrating on the experiences of individuals, like you, travelling and staying within a range of destinations to participate in open water swimming. I may sometimes refer to this as active sport event tourism, to differentiate it from the other types of tourism that you may engage in, and we may have a chance to touch upon during our conversation. I also would like to concentrate primarily on the last open-water swimming occasion. So unless I indicate otherwise, I would like us to focus upon these aspects.

- *Are you okay with everything I have just explained? (yes-verbal consent)*

R: What was your last experience that involved open swimming and required you to stay overnight at a desination?

I: I have just returned from a swimming weekend on the Isle of Man, where I joined five other people because we are going to swim The English Channel in September 2012.

R: How long for?

I: I flew on Friday to Douglas and got back on Monday.

R: Would you be able to recall, how you planned for it?

I: I was in communication with the team on the IOM to find accommodation with one of them but otherwise I researched flights on the internet; deciding to fly with

Manx2.com. They had the best flight times, although not the cheapest, but they fly from Newcastle, which is easy to get to by public transport. I didn't want to have to drive to the airport and park.

R: Have you been there before?

I: Yes, I have been for the same reasons in January, to meet with the people and the charity we are raising money for.

R: How did you feel about going there this time?

I: It is always nice to go to Isle of Man, it is a beautiful island and I was looking forward to meeting with the rest of the team. I was excited. Nervous about the fashion show, anxious about the vague arrangements for the fashion show (I like to be organised!), worried about how my eyesight would affect my swimming. I was in the middle of a diagnosed Multiple Sclerosis relapse, which was giving me quite severe visual disturbances including nystygmus and double vision.

R: Why did you go?

i: The main reason was to join the team of people who I am swimming the English Channel with in September and to carry out fund raising on Saturday night and Sunday morning. It was good fun.

R: As you have mentioned, what motivates you to take part in this activity and these types of events in general?

I: I got involved in open water swimming because I also do a triathlon. My late husband was a triathlete and he got me into triathlons and then into open-water swimming so it's a kind of progression from there really. I do not enjoy running

as much, but I do not mind it as a part of the triathlon - I just find it a bit dull, but I also ride a horse. I do many activities, now I am also learning squash, and I also cross country ski. I have climbed in the past and would like to start that again… I've now been open water swimming for about 10-12 years, and at the end of last year a post was made on Facebook in the IOM open water swimming club asking for volunteers to swim The Channel. I volunteered at once – I have no idea why! But it seemed a good way to stop me brooding over the death of my husband a few months before. I joined the IOM open water swimming club 3 years ago so I could compete in the mile swims they organise as part of the Queenie Festival held at the beginning of July. It consists of all sorts of activities, and one of them is an open-water swimming race.

R: Where there any challenges regarding your arrangements?

I: Not really, but going to Newcastle airport is a long distance to drive and unfortunately I cannot drive at the moment, because of my eyes due to my MS, so I went by a public transport. Carrying luggage through the Metro in Newcastle is the same as when you travel on other public transport while taking a luggage. I did not enjoy that.

R: Did you have to face the same challenges on your way back?

I: No, my friend actually picked me up in a car on Monday afternoon when I'd arrived. It was nice not to think I have to go back with my luggage on Newcastle public transport again.

R: Coming back to your stay, where did you stay when you were there?

I: I stayed at a friend's house in Port Erin.

R: What did you do while you were on the Isle of Man?

I: Saturday morning I took a bus to Douglas to go to a few shops to pick the outfits for the fashion show on the Sunday. I had lunch in a coffee shop and was then picked up by a team member and taken to Peel pool for our 2 hour swim session. Saturday night 2 team members met me back in Port Erin and we went out for dinner at a local pub.

Sunday morning we all met on the sea front in Port Erin for some publicity shots and then a good long swim without our wetsuits. The water was maybe 9C! After getting out and dressed we all went to a café on the beach for warming hot chocolate and cake.

Sunday evening was the fashion show in Port St Mary.

I travelled back to the airport by bus on the Monday morning for a lunchtime flight.

R: Did you participate in any open water race while you were there?

I: Not in any actual races but we did take part in the regular Sunday sea swims organised by the IOM swim club.

R: How did you feel after?

I: I was tired, it was a pretty full on weekend. We swam on Saturday in a pool for hours and then on Sunday we are in the sea for about 40 minutes without wetsuits, and it was only about 9 degrees. It was cold, quite cold. Most folk had early stages of moderate hypothermia – uncontrolled violent shivering. I don't

seem to suffer with this as much – mild hypothermia maybe but not the more severe kind. No idea why.

R: Overall, what did you think about the weekend?

I: It was fantastic; the best part was on Sunday when I was able to swim in the sea, because it is exhilarating to swim in the sea when the water is cold and it was a really good team experience. I enjoyed swimming as part of this team, and also we all went afterwards to this little café and have a drinks, hot chocolate. It was a good team experience. See, four of the members of this team live on the island so they swim together quite regularly, but myself and another girl, we do not live on the island so it is a great opportunity for us to swim together as a team, because we don't swim that often…

R: What did you find so rewarding about this experience?

I: …definitely the social interaction… but also the fact that I was able to swim as a part of the team. Because of swimming the channel as a team, we are going to support each other, and because I do not know all of them so well it was a great opportunity to get to know each other more, as well as meet other islanders who support our team.

R: Have you already made any arrangements for this future swimming event (English Channel)?

I: Yes, we have been planning it a while, because we are all so far from Dover. We are going to stay in these 2 cottages and going for a whole week. Each team of swimmers is allocated a week for their swim. Whether and when we go is dependent on the weather and is decided by the pilot of the boat accompanying us

across. We have to be there, sort of within an hour, before the start… so we can start when there is a window, a good weather window, so the accommodation is already planned and booked. We are treating it as a holiday, but also we are going to be there to swim the channel and there is no guarantee that we are going to be able to set off, because it so much depends on the weather and the sea conditions. We also do it for this charity so we need to raise about £ 10,000. I'm also doing the Great North swim, the 2 miles, but when you're swimming these Epic Events you're not allowed to swim without wearing wetsuits, which makes it quite different, because there's a different resistance due to the neoprene and I much prefer swimming without one, it feels much nicer? And certainly easier!