

Provision Stra

Throughout this book it has been maintained that the unique phenomenon of sports tourism arises from the interaction of activity, people and place. The participation chapters, particularly Chapter 3, discussed how activities, people and places contribute to the experiences of sports tourists. Such experiences and their role in the trip decision-making process discussed in Chapter 4 led to the development of a Revised Sports Tourism Participation Model in Chapter 5 (see Figure 5.5). As noted in the previous chapter, this participation model is a useful tool in examining the provision strategies of sports tourism providers as it assists in segmenting the sports tourism market and identifying the role of sports tourism in the holiday decision-making process.

However, the Revised Sports Tourism Participation Model, while illustrating the range of sports tourist participants, does not allow for a similar illustration of provision. For such an illustration, it is useful to turn to the Model of Sports Tourism Product Types, developed from the discussions in the previous chapter (see Figure 8.1). The use of these two models allows a discussion of provision strategies that can examine the ways in which providers match sports tourism behaviours with sports tourism products. In some places this may mean varying one or all of the activity, the people or the place, in others, it may mean creating new sports tourists through, for example, converting intenders into actual participants.

A key consideration for the examination of provision strategies is the unit of analysis. Sports tourism providers come in all shapes and sizes, from an independent cycle hire firm that provides cycles and suggested routes

for day hire, to large tour operating conglomerates, such as Thomson's and First Choice, for whom sport is an important part of much of their product and who operate on an international basis. Obviously, the strategies of these firms will vary considerably as a result of their size. In some places, for example the Thrace region of Greece (Vrondou, 1999; Weed and Jackson, 2008), an area, city or region may be attempting to promote itself as a sports tourism destination. In these situations, it is likely that there will be some public sector involvement from local or regional government. Again, the unit of analysis is important, because the focus could either be on the destination as a whole, incorporating a range of both commercial and public sector organizations, or on the strategies of an individual provider. Strategies at the 'destination' level, while not unrelated to those of individual providers, are likely to take on a different form, particularly in relation to marketing and promotion (Weed, 2003d). A further consideration is the nature of provision as on-going, or as a one-off occurrence like the Olympic Games. Much research exists (Collins, 1991; Bramwell, 1998a, 1998b; Getz, 2003; Weed, 2008a) detailing the importance of capitalizing on major events in attracting pre-event tourists and continuing to attract tourists after the event. However, these strategies for provision are very different to those employed by providers, such as Club Med, that offer an 'on-going' product.

The previous paragraph notes that, particularly at 'destination' level, some providers may be from the public sector and this is perhaps particularly the case in cities such as Manchester and Sheffield (see case study in Chapter 11), where the public sector has had some role in relation to policy and planning, facility provision, marketing and promotion, or research. However, in many cases, the role of the public sector relates to the support or facilitation of provision by others and, as such, it is important to recognize the relationship of provision strategies to the role of policy-makers. The Policy Wheel, discussed in Chapter 7 (see Figure 7.1), highlights the range of potential activities and issues for sports tourism policy-makers although, as the discussions in Chapters 6 and 7 show, collaboration on these issues is often not as developed as it might be. Nevertheless, the discussions in this chapter will, where appropriate, highlight the role of policy-makers in supporting provision.

The discussions in this chapter are organized around a range of provision strategies that are illustrative rather than exhaustive and relate to the issues raised in the Revised Sports Tourism Participation Model and the Model of Sports Tourism Product Types. These strategies are:

- converting intenders
- generating repeat visits

- expanding participation profiles
- cooperative marketing
- capturing spontaneous behaviours
- creating competitive advantage
- exploiting intenders.

The extent to which varying the activity, the people or the place can be an effective way of expanding provision is discussed and the relationship of provision to policy is highlighted. A key factor in the following discussions, developing further the perspectives in Chapters 4 and 5, is the role of sports tourism in the trip decision-making process.

CONVERTING INTENDERS

The concept of 'intenders' was drawn from work on arts audiences by Hill et al. (1995). In Chapter 5, the concept was outlined as relating to those who are positively inclined towards sports tourism and the idea of a tourist trip involving sports tourism behaviours, but who never quite 'get round to it'. However, there is an important division in the intenders category and this relates to the role of sports tourism behaviours in the trip decision-making process. As Chapters 3 and 4 noted, sports tourism is often a factor, albeit one among many others, in destination choice. Here, people may have undertaken a trip with the intention of engaging in some sports tourism behaviours while away but, in the event, not actually done so (as evidenced by, *inter alia*, Tokarski, 1993; Reeves, 2000; Keynote, 2001). In such cases, the differentiation between intenders and participants is not apparent until the trip is undertaken. Issues relating to this category of intenders are discussed later under the 'Exploiting Intenders' heading.

For many sports tourism products, the differentiation between intenders and participants is apparent pre-trip, simply because participants will book a trip involving sports tourism behaviours while intenders will not. Often, because there is a positive attitude towards the idea of sports tourism participation on a trip, intenders will appear on providers' mailing lists because they are likely to have sent off for brochures or registered an interest in sports tourism. Converting such intention into actual participation is clearly one potentially productive strategy for providers.

The potential sports tourism product that intenders are considering will obviously affect the way such strategies are followed. For providers in the 'Sports Participation Tourism' category, it may be that special discounts for 'first-time' sports tourists are offered, or 'taster' days or weekends with other newcomers where all equipment, instruction and accommodation

is provided on site. A useful example of such provision is provided by the National Mountain Centre at Plas-y-Brenin in Wales. Alongside provision for more experienced and advanced sports tourists, introductory two-day courses are offered in rock climbing, mountaineering, kayaking and canoeing. These courses include on-site accommodation, all necessary equipment and training and supervision by qualified instructors. Specially tailored versions of these 'taster' courses are run to cater specifically for families and, as discussed in the next section, further 'intermediate' or 'technique development' courses are offered to encourage repeat visits.

In these cases, the strategy is similar to that followed by those tourism companies that offered the first overseas package holidays to tourists that had never travelled abroad before. The strategy is to make booking the trip as easy as possible and, as everything is provided through one contact, the customer will feel comfortable and at ease with trying a new activity (Holloway and Taylor, 2006). Such feelings of comfort and safety are further enhanced by the involvement of policy-makers who draw up 'safety codes' and 'accredit' providers, particularly for the types of outdoor and adventurous activity sports tourism described in the above example.

Simple targeted marketing is one way in which intenders are converted. The discussions in Chapter 5 highlighted the importance of identity (Green and Jones, 2005) to understanding sports tourism participation. These discussions also noted that it is possible for intenders to be highly identified with an activity, without actually participating in it. One such example is spectating. For many intenders, watching sport on television is an important part of their lives, although they may never have actually attended a live event (Weed, 2003a). The targeting of such people by event providers is one key way in which intenders may be converted. This may be through advertising the event on television during another televised event, through targeted mail-outs to those subscribing to satellite or cable channels or, in cases where intending spectators are also active participants in the sport in question, by targeting clubs. Athletics provides a useful example of two of these strategies. In Britain, the ticket office for forthcoming athletics events is often advertised during televised athletics events broadcast on the BBC. This is almost unique, as the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) is a publicly funded broadcaster that carries no commercial advertising. Addresses of athletics clubs are also often passed on to event promoters by UK Athletics, the sport's national governing body, who are then targeted to receive ticket offers for forthcoming events.

Of course, the targeting of clubs is also a strategy for both event sports tourism and sports training tourism providers to generate new custom. For many sports participants, the idea of combining active sports tourism

participation in an event (such as the New York marathon) with a holiday may be attractive, as may the prospect of a trip involving sports training tourism with friends and training partners. There are a number of companies who specialize in offering trips to events and to training venues and, while much of their advertising is done through sports-specific magazines such as *Runners World*, *Adventure Kayak* and *Triathlete*, they also target sports clubs with special offers for group bookings. The 'Volcano Triathlon Training Camp' at Club La Santa in Lanzarote, for example, has been specifically targeted at triathlon club secretaries and can incorporate participation in the Volcano Triathlon, which in 2007 was in its twenty-third year.

The market for corporate hospitality is also about converting intenders, but here the intenders are companies requiring a unique venue to entertain clients and, increasingly, to reward and entertain their own employees in what has been termed 'participative hospitality' (Lambton, 2001). A key element in converting such companies to hospitality participants is the extent to which they can be convinced that the venue and event in question is congruent with their corporate image and target audience. A successful hospitality operation at an event sports tourism venue can provide a significant income – research from the Corporate Hospitality and Event Association showed that the UK hospitality market was worth £650 million in 2000. However, Lambton (2001) believes that there is no question of hospitality making or breaking an event financially, rather it 'is there to reflect the event's inherent qualities' (p. 56) and is a key part of brand building. As such, the decision as to which type of corporate 'intenders' an event or venue seeks to attract is important and should be aimed at generating a truly mutually beneficial and complementary relationship between event organizer and hospitality client.

In a similar way that sports participation tourism providers may offer 'taster' weekends for 'first-timers', luxury sports tourism providers may attempt to capitalize on their corporate conference or incentive market to encourage guests to return on another occasion with friends or families. Many country house hotels, such as Pawleys Plantation Country Club in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, have both extensive conference and sports and leisure facilities. Complementary access to sports and leisure facilities for conference guests is one way in which such providers attempt to covert such participants who may fall into the intenders category into participants with their families.

Strategies aimed at converting intenders for whom sports tourism plays a significant role in the trip decision, tend to relate to individual providers, or groups of providers packaged together by the specialist sports tour operating firms described above. In many cases, strategies at the destination

level, while sometimes relating to the conversion of intenders, largely fall within the other categories discussed below.

GENERATING REPEAT VISITS

The generation of repeat visits is a provision strategy that is inextricably interlinked with the conversion of intenders. The offers and incentives used to attract first-time sports tourists described above are made because it is hoped that having got a taste of sports tourism participation, guests will return for another, longer, higher-priced stay. Here, sports tourists are being offered a sports tourism experience that they know and that, in many cases, they cannot get at home. As discussed in Chapter 4, sports participation tourism based around such activities as mountaineering and kayaking often cannot be accessed in the home environment, due either to lack of resources, lack of equipment, lack of like-minded people or lack of place experience. While a lack of resources and equipment can prevent the activity from taking place, a lack of like-minded people and imposing or extraordinary places can detract from the experience that is a key part of sports tourism (Weed, 2002d). Activity centres such as Plas-y-Brenin, described above, and Twr-y-Felin in South Wales, provide not only the necessary equipment and resources for the activity, but also the people and the places necessary for the experience. Consequently, as described in Chapter 4, much of their trade comes from repeat visits. The study of Twr-y-Felin (Reeves, 2000) showed that 45 per cent of visitors had previously visited the centre within the last six months, while 44 per cent indicated their intention to 'definitely return'.

The role sports tourism can play in generating both visits and repeat visits for family groups should not be underestimated. For many families, the availability of activities that will keep the children occupied can be a central factor in destination choice. The study of Butlins Holiday Worlds in the UK (Reeves, 2000) provided evidence of this, with 73 per cent of respondents being on holiday with their children and 85 per cent having previously visited Butlins in the last three years. The opportunity for sports tourism participation had played some part in determining holiday choice for 69 per cent of these holidaymakers, with the following comment from a focus group being representative of many others in emphasizing the importance of sport in providing activities for children:

We weren't really bothered about the sports and recreation facilities for ourselves, but we have two young children and they get bored very easily, so this was an easy choice to keep them out of trouble and in one place.

Similarly, the availability of sports tourism opportunities on beach holidays has been shown to be a factor in generating repeat business (Jackson and Weed, 2008), although the repeat business in such cases is more likely to be to another destination owned by the same tour operator. This is because holidaymakers come to recognize certain brands as providing a certain type of product (Morgan and Pritchard, 2000), in this case good provision to engage in sports tourism behaviours.

At the top right of the Revised Sports Tourism Participation Model, the subcategory of elite athletes is a lucrative market for providers. Evidence of the importance of repeat visits in this sector is given by the fact that certain destinations have almost cornered the market in this area (examples being La Manga in Southern Spain, Club La Santa in Lanzarote and San Diego in California), although some of the bigger players such as Disney are now moving into provision in this area. However, the nature of the product can be very different to that of other sports tourism types. The elements of the place that are important are less related to experience and more related to quality of facilities and support and climate (Jackson and Reeves, 1998). Consequently, some elite sports training tourism venues, such as Club La Santa in Lanzarote, also provide for sports participation tourism and trips involving non-elite training and instruction. However, other venues, such as Bisham Abbey and Loughborough University, both in the UK, where the emphasis is on facilities and sports science support and the trips are usually more intense training days or weekends, only provide for the elite element of sports training tourism (Weed, 2008a). As such, their ability to attract repeat visits has been based on the quality of service they are able to offer to elite athletes. In fact, in recent years, in recognition of the quality service such venues provide, their development has been publicly funded as a result of government policy initiatives related to the development of elite sport and the provision of a network of facilities and services comprising an English Institute of Sport (Shakespeare, 2002).

In relation to event sports tourism, there has been some research on customer loyalty, particularly in relation to football (King et al., 2002), focusing on the utility of relationship marketing, which Clowes and Tapp (1998) suggested may be a more appropriate approach than a price or promotion response to the need to fill seats. A specific study of stakeholders at Nottingham Forest Football Club in the UK (Hearne, 2003) suggests that the relationship approach has worked in developing a good rapport with supporters groups. However, despite these specific examples, there must be some doubt as to the extent to which this approach is as useful in other areas where there is not such an emotional attachment to the teams and clubs in question.

Some event sports tourism products are used as a way to introduce tourists to a particular area and to generate repeat visits, either to other sports tourism events and activities or to other tourist related aspects of the destination. One of Manchester's policy goals in hosting the Commonwealth Games was to introduce visitors to Manchester as a broader urban tourism destination and to showcase other elements of Manchester's tourism product, some of which comprise sports tourism products (Regan, 1999). Lancashire's County Cricket Ground, which is also a venue for Test Match Cricket, and Manchester United's Old Trafford Stadium, which contains a museum and visitor centre, were both prominently promoted in Commonwealth Games material, as was the city's range of cultural attractions, theatres and bars. In addition to introducing visitors to the broader tourism product on offer, strategies such as this may also play a role in expanding the participation profile of sports tourists.

EXPANDING PARTICIPATION PROFILES

One of the strengths of the Revised Sports Tourism Participation Model is that it is both a generic model illustrating sports tourism participation as a whole (see Figure 5.5 in Chapter 5), and can also be used to illustrate the different 'shapes' of participation for different sports tourism products (see Figure 5.6 in Chapter 5). Similarly, individuals may appear at one point in the model for one sports tourism product (e.g. an individual may be a committed football spectator at the top right of the participation triangle), but at another point for another product (e.g. as a spontaneous participant in water-sports tourism at the bottom left of the model). While the generation of repeat visits discussed above often relies on providing an experience of activity, people and place that cannot be attained in the home area, repeat visits can also be generated by strategies that attempt to expand the sports tourist's participation profile, thus offering a similar place experience, but through a different activity for which the sports tourism experience will inevitably be different.

A useful example of this type of strategy comes, initially, from the elite end of the sports training tourism market. During warm weather training trips, athletes often have long periods of rests between training sessions and, within the constraints of avoiding injury, other sports tourism activities often provide a useful diversion, both physically and mentally. Evidence from Reeves' (2000) study of elite athletes illustrates this, with athletes making the following comments:

I play a lot of golf. When we went to La Manga the camp was actually situated on a golf course. We also take part in activities such

as water skiing and swimming. It is like a half holiday, so we try and do as many activities as possible. We have to be careful of injury, but we must make sure that we are able to relax as well. The best way for me to do that is through playing sport.

(Emma Merry, 21, GB & England Intermediate International,
Discus and Shot Put)

We play anything to take the monotony out of athletics training all the time. We might go cycling or swimming, just to get out of the complex. When you are away training you tend to eat, breathe and talk athletics. So for example when I was in Lanzarote in January, we went swimming, played badminton and basketball and joined in with the aerobics.

(Jackie Agyepong, 26, GB & England Senior International,
100m Hurdles)

We have bicycles and we tend to play a lot of basketball. We do a lot of go-karting in Benidorm as they have brilliant facilities out there. Anything at all to stop the boredom while you are out there training hard twice a day.

(Paul Hibbert, 30, England Senior International,
400m Hurdles)

The extent to which this recreational participation is likely to translate into subsequent sports tourism behaviours on other trips during which sports training tourism is less important is debatable because such activities are undertaken largely as merely a diversion from elite training. There may, however, be opportunities to encourage athletes to return with their families, or to develop broader sports tourism interests once their elite athletic career has come to an end.

The previous section described Manchester's strategy of exposing sports tourists at the Commonwealth Games to other aspects of the city's tourism offering in order to generate repeat visits. At the city level, specific policy has been developed aimed at using a profile of event sports tourism products as the hook on which city visits can be generated. Consequently, the place experience of Manchester is similar, but the central activity – a test match, European football tie, athletics meet, or other event – is different. This is a strategy that Sheffield has also used to good effect (see Chapter 11).

Perhaps the most obvious areas in which participation profiles might be expanded are in sports participation tourism and luxury sports tourism.

This is because, in most cases, providers of these sports tourism products offer a range of activities. Some visitors to outdoor activity and adventure centres will be committed sports tourists across a range of activities and for such multi-activity participants the expansion of the participation profile is unlikely to be a fruitful provision strategy. However, for those whose sports tourism behaviours on such trips are focused on a single activity, at whatever level, opportunities exist for providers to expand their participation profile through a number of strategies. Several examples of such strategies are related to the use of space. Henderson and Frelke (2000) discuss the close association of space with the activities and practices of those who use it and point out that the provision of social spaces, such as bars and/or restaurants, at multi-activity centres where sports tourists participating in different activities can mix will often be one of the most effective ways of expanding participation profiles. Simply talking to people taking part in different activities may be enough to encourage people to try something new. Similarly, if activities take place in relatively close proximity to each other, then seeing others take part in activities may also encourage new activity take-up. Providers may try to capitalize on this by offering short, supervised 'come and try it' sessions in different activities for those on a single activity trip, or may offer similar taster weekends as might be offered when trying to convert intenders as discussed above. Plas-y-Brenin, the National Mountain Centre in North Wales, does this, offering 'have a go' multi-activity weekends which provide 'a whirlwind tour of canoeing, orienteering, climbing/abseiling and skiing' (Plas-y-Brenin brochure, 2007). All of the above also applies to the luxury end of the market, although strategies for such providers can often be more focused on capturing spontaneous behaviours, particularly in country house hotels with extensive spa facilities (Weed, 2003e).

For some providers, the provision of opportunities to take in a number of sports tourism activities at a relatively introductory level is the central tenet of their product. Here, the pre-trip decision is to engage in sports tourism behaviours across a wide range of activities, thus the participation profile is expanded at a relatively introductory level. Examples of such providers would be Center Parcs and Club Med, both of which offer a range of recreational sports tourism opportunities in a relaxed environment. The Center Parcs villages are largely sited in Northern Europe in forest locations and are each centred around an indoor simulated subtropical pool environment, with the further provision of, among others, tennis, badminton, cycling, health centre and spa activities. In contrast to Center Parcs, Club Med villages are largely located in warm locations and so there is no need for an indoor pool environment. Club Med also employs 'animators' or activity leaders who tend to the needs of guests, not only in relation to their sports tourism behaviours, but also to generally encourage and facilitate their

While the strategies discussed under this heading have focused on varying the activity at a particular place, a further strategy may be to vary the place. This may be done by large tour operators who can offer a range of activities at a range of places, but can also occur through arrangements for cooperative marketing of sports tourism opportunities.

COOPERATIVE MARKETING

A variation in activity and/or place experience is perhaps an obvious way to expand sports tourism take-up. In many cases, cooperative marketing is a sensible way forward because the sports tourism behaviours generated by such variations are often supplementary or complementary to current participation, rather than being replacement activities. Even where there may be some displacement of those seeking sports tourism opportunities, the reciprocal benefits of cooperative marketing can far outweigh the disadvantages (Selin, 2000).

Cooperative marketing may take place at a number of levels but, at its most straightforward, it simply involves mutual promotion of activities and facilities at a particular destination (Briggs, 2001). This is often led or supported by local or regional policy-makers who may develop 'destination' marketing strategies and promotional materials. The cases of Manchester and Sheffield in relation to event sports tourism are one example, but there are many others in relation to other sports tourism products. The 'Melbourne Now' campaign by the Victoria Tourism Commission in Australia was seen as effective in collectively marketing parks and recreational facilities as tourism attractions (D'Abaco, 1991), while cooperation among tourism firms on the Waterfront of Wellington in New Zealand (Doorne, 1998) has seen that area emerge as a destination for recreational sports tourism participation.

An example of national level cooperative marketing of a luxury sports tourism product can be found in the promotion of golfing breaks in Scotland. As discussed in Chapter 8, policy partnerships between the Scottish Tourist Board and sportsscotland have promoted Scotland's golf tourism product as the 'Home of Golf', while the commercial consortium 'Connoisseurs Scotland' specifically targets the 'discerning traveller' demanding the highest standards of both accommodation and facilities. A similar national level example, although not from the luxury end of the market, is provided by Vrontou's (1999) work on sports tourism policy and promotion in Greece, where there has been a deliberate policy of marketing a range of areas in Crete as destinations for 'soft' sports tourism as a strategy to diversify away from the traditional mass tourism product.

Cooperative marketing is a strategy usually aimed at sports tourists from the centre of the Sports Tourism Participation Model, more regular

participants who may be seeking to expand their portfolio of experiences. This may be related to 'collecting places' (Urry, 2001) as discussed in Chapter 3, or to expanding the participation portfolio, as discussed above. For active participants in event sports tourism, providers of other events see each event as a prime marketing opportunity to promote travel to their event (Green, 2001). The trade exhibitions that accompany large mass participation events, such as the London and Chicago marathons, will always contain a considerable number of stalls promoting other events such as running races, triathlons and endurance cycling, all of which might be seen as appealing to the type of sports tourist who would take part in a marathon. On a smaller scale, cars parked at local 10-kilometre running races, to which people may have travelled as a day trip (McGehee et al., 2003), taking in lunch with family and friends after the event, will always attract a number of flyers for other events under the car windscreen wipers.

There is a great deal of cooperative marketing that takes place between outdoor activity providers. Centres that specialize in some activities may contain material for other centres that provide related and complementary activities. In other cases, instructional centres will provide information on where sports tourists can continue their activity once they have developed the required competences. Skiing providers may also organize some cross-promotion of facilities and destinations. For example, 'Top Ski Austria' is a marketing alliance of the country's top eighteen ski resorts (Hudson, 2000) which, in addition to the mutual promotion of facilities, also aims to organize the type of joint marketing activity described above. While in some of these cases, the cross-promotion may appear to be of competing resorts, this may still be an efficient business strategy given the motivations of many sports tourists. Notwithstanding the importance of generating repeat visits discussed in a previous section, many sports tourists are motivated, as described above, to 'collect places' (Urry, 2001) and, as such, will demand new place experiences. If resorts accept that certain sports tourists will not return year after year, then it makes sense to promote other destinations in return for reciprocal promotion of their resort (McDonald and Milne, 1999).

CAPTURING SPONTANEOUS BEHAVIOURS

One type of cooperative marketing described in the previous section – that of cross-promotion at the destination level – can aid considerably in capturing spontaneous sports tourism behaviours that have not been planned prior to the trip. The capturing of spontaneous behaviours will often be by

providers of supplementary sports tourism, but can also be a productive strategy for luxury sports tourism and event sports tourism providers.

While some forms of supplementary sports tourism are provided because the availability of sports tourism activities plays a part in destination choice, for other forms, sports tourism behaviours are the result of decisions made once the destination choice has been made. At some destinations there may be some supplementary sports tourism products that might be considered 'must-see' activities, such as a trip to see the Yankees play baseball during a visit to New York or a visit to the Australian Gallery of Sport or a cricket international at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on a visit to Victoria. At other destinations, sports tourism behaviours are the result of opportunistic decisions, often made on the spur of the moment while at a destination. This is where strategies aimed at capturing spontaneous behaviours, particularly cooperative marketing, are important.

The capture of potential spontaneous behaviours is largely about ensuring that information is available to such participants in the right place at the right time (Ortega and Rodriguez, 2007). This may mean leaflets and posters in local accommodation, information in strategic places around the destination and an awareness of the availability of sports tourism products among those working in other areas of tourism within the destination. For example, the Royal Malta Golf Club, part of the Marsa Country Club in Malta, runs an 'affiliate' programme among hotels on the island whereby hotels can become affiliated to the Royal Malta Golf Club and display the club crest in their foyer. This has been shown to be an effective strategy in capturing spontaneous golf tourism behaviours, aided by the ease with which a round of golf can be booked through the hotels (Bull and Weed, 1999).

In many cases, potential spontaneous sports tourism behaviours may simply be the result of 'coming-across', for example, event sports tourism products while 'wandering around' an area, particularly more low-key local events in urban areas (Law, 2002). Alternatively, supplementary sports tourism products, such as indoor events or fixtures like ice hockey or basketball games, may take place because bad weather has precluded participation in activities that might have been pre-planned. Similarly, the day hire of cycles, along with information regarding routes and potential stopping-off points, can also be a spontaneous, unplanned activity, although many hire centres are promoted in local guides (Koorey, 2001). In such cases, the destination level cooperative marketing and information provisions described above are key elements in strategies aimed at capturing such spontaneous behaviours.

Finally, at the luxury end of the market, country house hotels with extensive leisure and spa facilities may often generate repeat visits by

capturing spontaneous behaviours on a trip during which participants originally had no intention of utilizing such leisure and spa facilities. A pilot study at one such hotel by Weed (2003e) showed that a significant group of participants in the health/spa activities on offer decided to take up such participation opportunities upon arrival at the hotel, rather than the facilities playing any part in their pre-trip planning or trip decision. A significant minority of this group stated that their experience of the facilities at this hotel would lead them to consider such provision when considering future holiday plans for similar trips to country house hotels.

CREATING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

While strategies aimed at capturing spontaneous behaviours can be productive at destination level, the provision of opportunities in the luxury sports tourism, supplementary sports tourism and event sports tourism product areas can be part of a wider strategy to create competitive advantage over competitor organizations or destinations. Supplementary sports tourism facilities and events are now being used by a considerable number of tour operators, accommodation providers and destinations to 'add value' to their main product offering (Wright, 2007).

Many hotels now have their own health and fitness suites, either through direct provision or through strategic alliances with health club chains. Related to such provision, the health/spa/wellness concept is an area that is seen to offer considerable growth potential in the hotel sector. This is something that has been recognized by the French Accor hotel group, which has invested substantially in a wide range of health and wellness facilities across all its hotel brands in the last decade (Reznik, 2003). Such health, fitness and wellness facilities are also important in creating advantages over competitors in relation to business tourism. As noted in Chapter 1, if a hotel wishes to attract the lucrative conference market, top-class conference, meeting and exhibition facilities must be complemented by similarly luxurious leisure facilities.

The study of sports tourism in Malta (Bull and Weed, 1999) revealed an interesting way in which event sports tourism provision might be used to create competitive advantage. Some mass participation events, such as the Malta Marathon and Masters Open Swimming Meets, were attracting participants who were combining their trip to the island for event sports tourism participation with a family holiday. Malta had been selected as the destination for a package holiday at a time when it was possible for a member of the family to participate in an event. Here, the sports tourism participation

was only a small part of the holiday, but had been a key factor in destination choice. Research on both sides of the Atlantic (Dobson et al., 1997; Scott and Turco, 2007) indicates that sports tourism opportunities provided by events and tournaments, for junior or adult participants, can be the excuse for a longer family holiday at the destination in question.

Discussions in Chapter 8 outlined the extent to which supplementary sports tourism provision is used by the big tour operators to add an additional dimension to their traditional product offering, although increasingly at this level, the provision of this type of supplementary sports tourism is necessary to maintain pace with competitors, rather than create an advantage (Wright, 2007). Similarly, the Butlins Holiday Worlds studies (McKoy, 1991; Reeves, 2000) show how Butlins initially used sports tourism opportunities to update and refresh their product and to create an advantage over competitor providers. However, as time has moved on, almost all 'holiday village/camp' providers have some level of supplementary sports tourism provision (Mintel, 2002a). Furthermore, the arrival of the recreation and leisure village concept, exemplified by Center Parcs, has raised the stakes somewhat in this area of provision.

Despite the investment by a number of the large tourism firms in the provision of supplementary sports tourism products, evidence suggests (Keynote, 2001; Mintel, 2002c) that take-up of such provision is relatively low. Why, then, have providers invested so much in the promotion of such opportunities? The answer lies in the final provision strategy to be discussed in this chapter, the exploitation of intenders.

EXPLOITING INTENDERS

Discussions under the converting intenders section of this chapter described a division in the intenders category between those intenders taking a tourist trip during which sports tourism behaviours were planned to take place alongside many other equally important tourism behaviours and those for whom the conversion from intender to participant takes place with the booking of a trip in which opportunities for sports tourism behaviours have played a major role in the trip decision-making process. The latter category was discussed under the converting intenders heading, however, the former category, where intenders and participants are indistinguishable pre-trip, is the focus of this section.

Research at Butlins Holiday Worlds in the UK (McKoy, 1991; Reeves, 2000) provided primary evidence of the existence of intenders for whom potential sports tourism behaviours play a part in the trip decision-making

process, but for whom participation never actually materializes. The following quote, from a focus group of Butlins holidaymakers, is representative of this behaviour:

I must admit, I had all these great ideas of taking advantage of the facilities both indoors and outdoors, and in ten days all I've managed is a couple of games of snooker with a guy I met on the first day.

The use of sports tourism facilities and opportunities as a marketing strategy has been discussed under the previous heading, but a comparison of activity take-up with the priority given to sports tourism provision in marketing and promotional material reveals that the intention to engage in sports tourism behaviours on trips where there are multiple motivations towards a range of tourism behaviours is far greater than actual participation. Furthermore, a cursory inspection of the actual facilities offered at some hotels and a comparison of their capacity with expressed participation intentions (c.f. Keynote, 2001; Mintel, 2002c), leads to the conclusion that many providers are banking on take-up being low, because if the level of participation matched intention to participate, then the level of provision would be woefully inadequate. Thus, intenders are exploited by providers whose market research tells them that sports tourism provision sells holidays, but also tells them that activity take-up is comparatively low.

CONCLUSION – PROVISION OVERVIEW

The discussions of provision in this chapter have been intended to be illustrative of the strategies of providers, rather than provide an exhaustive coverage of such providers' behaviours. The chapter is not intended to be a 'how to' guide for sports tourism managers (see Turco et al., 2002, for that type of material), but offers an insight into the behaviours and objectives of those concerned with sports tourism provision.

The conceptualization of sports tourism as being derived from the unique interaction of activity, people and place has, once again, been useful in appreciating aspects of provision behaviour. Some strategies, such as the generation of repeat visits, aim to create a unique experience of activity, people and place that cannot be accessed at home, while others, such as creating competitive advantage and exploiting intenders, use the image associated with such experiences to sell various types of trips involving sports tourism. Variations in the nature of this interaction are also part of provision, with the expansion of provision profiles being related to the variation of activity, while cooperative marketing strategies are largely about varying

the place. Finally, strategies aimed at converting intenders and capturing spontaneous behaviours attempt to introduce potential sports tourists to this unique interaction in the hope that they will subsequently return to engage more regularly and extensively in sports tourism behaviours.

As the last substantive chapter before the case studies in Part 5, the material presented does provide a useful overview of the interconnected nature of knowledge about participants, policy-makers and providers. The Revised Sports Tourism Participation Model, developed in Chapter 5, is useful in informing the strategies of providers, while the Model of Sports Tourism Product Types, derived from the discussions in Chapter 8, provides a useful context for understanding provision strategies. In addition, the chapter has highlighted key areas where the work of policy-makers, in both supporting and making provision, can be important. The final part of the book now examines the behaviours, motivations and strategies of sports tourism participants, policy-makers and providers in relation to five very different sports tourism products.

