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Enhancing the Irish Adventure Tourism Product through Networking

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Enhancing the Irish Adventure Tourism Product through Networking

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The thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Research Masters of Business.
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Abstract

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The adventure tourism industry is experiencing a period of accelerated growth (UNWTO, 2014) and is increasingly being recognised as a source of huge potential for Ireland (Failte Ireland, 2013). The adventure tourism industry in Ireland is highly fragmented, unregulated and mainly comprised of micro enterprises largely based in rural and isolated locations. These characteristics combine to enhance the uniqueness of the adventure product but also bring challenges for business development. Many challenges facing adventure tourism operators can be alleviated by strategic networking. The benefits of engaging in effective business networking range from aspects of learning and exchange, business activity and community benefits (Morrisson et al., 2004). Networking between businesses who share interests and markets has been shown to benefit stakeholders mutually, though it is crucial for the networking relationship to be appropriate and fair. The purpose of this research is to advance the adventure tourism product in Ireland by examining networking within the industry. This research adopted a subjectivist interpretive approach, using mixed methods, and was conducted in four counties in the southwest of Ireland (Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Clare). There are two unique aspects of this research, the first is the profiling of adventure tourism operators and the second is the use of a sociogram as a tool to gather key data about the habitual networking activity of the participating providers. The findings showed that networking takes place regularly between adventure tourism providers and a range of providers in the wider tourism sector. Networking was largely considered by adventure tourism providers to utilise scarce resources and result in uncertain outcomes. The findings revealed a number of barriers to networking including a lack of networking supports and effective coordination. With purposive structures and guidelines, networking can become a catalyst to enhance the adventure tourism product and the industry.

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List of Abbreviations

ATDI	Adventure Tourism Development Index
ATTA	Adventure Travel Trade Association
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DPC	Dublin Port Company
DTTS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
ETC	European Travel Commission
ETC	European Travel Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GWU	George Washington University
ICU	Irish Canoe Union
ISA	Irish Surfing Association
ITB	Internationale Tourismus-Börse
ITIC	Irish Tourist Industry Confederation
IVEA	Irish Vocational Educational Association
KCC	Kerry County Council
LEADER	Liaisons Entre Actions de Developpement de l'Economie Rurale
NCEO	National Commission on Entrepreneurship
NGB	National Governing Body
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
OEI	Outdoor Education Ireland
PADI	Professional Association of Diving Instructors
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SERA	South East Regional Authority
SME	Small or Medium Enterprise
SPA	Single Pitch Award
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

Chapter 1- Introduction

Background to the Research – Bridging the Gap

The adventure tourism industry is a valuable one within the tourism sector. Adventure tourism in Ireland has seen major growth in recent years, mirroring the upward trend internationally, and continues to support Ireland's economic recovery by offering visitors more reasons to explore Ireland in new ways, to stay longer and spend more. The adventure tourism industry is comprised mainly of small and micro businesses scattered widely throughout the Irish landscape. This makes the industry highly fragmented, particularly considering the lack of unity or even regulation within the sector. At present, academic research on the Irish adventure tourism industry is sparse and there is none to date that addresses networking activities of providers. Research from countries whose industry is better established, in New Zealand, Scotland and Canada, shows that efforts to provide opportunities for collaboration are favourable and can bring wider benefits. The study of behaviours within an industry is seen to be in a particular context and current literature suggests that findings of such research may not be applied generally.

This research examines networking in the Irish adventure tourism industry. Business networking is a highly researched and well documented strategy in the promotion and development of businesses. The adventure tourism industry in Ireland is an emerging niche in the tourism sector and, while the tourist perspective is presented regularly through Fáilte Ireland reports, the adventure tourism business owners' perspective is as yet unexplored in relation to networking and development strategy. In small Irish businesses and in the tourism sector, where over 90% of businesses are described as micro or small in size, attempts have been made to highlight the benefits that networking with other providers and secondary businesses can bring. Networking within local and regional areas has been encouraged by agencies such as Fáilte Ireland and Local Enterprise Boards but this has not been specific to the adventure tourism industry save for Fáilte Ireland's 'activity hub' initiative which appears to have receded and lost momentum.

Context of the Research

This research will give a clearer picture of the networking activity and the current situation for adventure tourism providers in the southwest of Ireland during a unique social, economic and cultural time. The four counties selected for this research, were chosen based on their diversity of landscape; coastline, mountains, rivers and lakes. There is a range of adventure activities available and the number of providers is abundant. Tourism has been identified (DTTS, 2013; 2014) as one of the growth sectors to aid the Irish recovery from recession and vast measures have been taken to build the tourism industry with particular focus on the product. This can be seen in the marketing strategies of key tourism projects most notably The Wild Atlantic Way and The Gathering 2013, which aimed “to be the biggest tourism event ever held in Ireland by enticing Ireland’s 70m global diaspora to come home to Ireland in 2013,” (Fáilte Ireland, 2012). This year-long event sought to attract people to Ireland based on their genealogy and appreciation of Irish culture and was supported by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. In fact, the latest Tourism Industry Review for Ireland (Fáilte Ireland, 2013b) shows that confidence in the tourism sector is at its highest since 2007.

This research will also give a snapshot of the adventure tourism industry from the perspective of providers. Most feedback and research in tourism is concerned with the tourist or traveller perspective. If we know what the tourist wants and how to create the product then we are satisfying the demand. In recent years however, the way in which business is conducted; network formation, diversifying product, offering better value for money, and employing marketing strategies, has changed considerably and continues to transform. Not only must the tourism industry consider the tourist perspective, it must support the provider (Tourism Renewal Group, 2009).

The Irish adventure tourism industry has come about organically as the supply and demand for adventure tourism has grown in recent years. Adventure tourism is considered to be a high yield sector (Fáilte Ireland, 2013b), is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors (UNWTO, 2014) and has garnered the spotlight of late from marketing strategies such as The Gathering, The Wild Atlantic Way and the hosting of the Adventure Travel World Summit in 2014. It is hence interesting to note, and therefore a crucial part of this research that a profile of Irish adventure tourism industry providers has not previously been carried out. While the core focus of this research is primarily concerned with the networking activities of adventure tourism providers it is essential and vital to firstly contextualise this with profiling those who comprise the adventure tourism industry in order to build a contextual platform upon which the remainder of the study can be founded. This profile will serve two purposes; firstly, to provide the first adventure tourism profile of any kind in Ireland and secondly, to provide statistical information for the networking research.

Overview of the Research Undertaken

This research aims to give insight to the adventure tourism sector by profiling the current adventure tourism providers in the south west of Ireland and examining their networking behaviours. The research will address the following questions:

1. What is the profile of Irish adventure tourism providers?
2. Why is networking so important in the Irish adventure tourism industry?
3. What barriers to effective networking exist and how can they be overcome in order to maximise networking potential?
4. What forms and patterns of networking exist in the Irish adventure tourism sector, and of these, which is most sector-appropriate and beneficial?

After a range of current literature relating to aspects of adventure tourism networking is presented, the appropriate methodology is selected and the findings are shown and discussed. The purpose of this research is to find out about the adventure tourism industry from the perspective of the provider and, specifically, to investigate how providers work with each other, the wider business community and supports. The objectives of this research are as follows;

- To identify the profile of Irish adventure tourism providers.
- To identify and evaluate networking structures and practices in place currently or in the past.
- To identify the barriers to effective networking for adventure tourism providers.
- To identify the supports needed by adventure tourism providers in order to maximise the potential of and overcome the barriers to networking.

The following conceptual framework of the research diagram, Fig. 1a below, illustrates the three major concepts of this research; the arena (the adventure tourism industry), the activity (networking) and the player (the Irish activity provider).

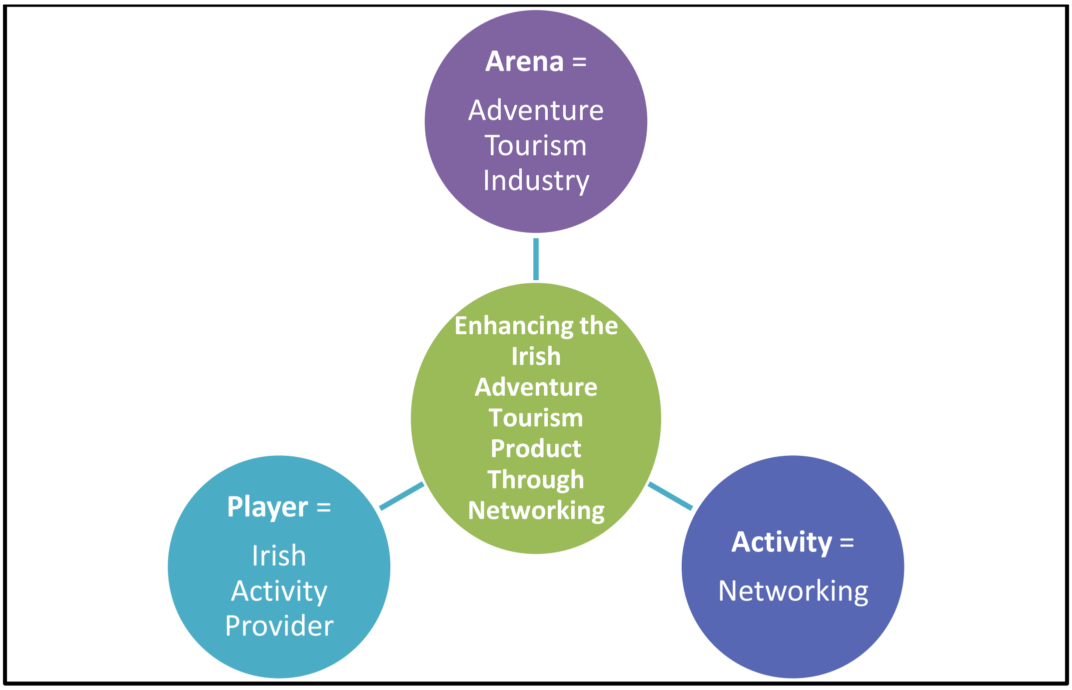


Fig. 1a. Conceptual Framework of the Research

Introductory Overview of the Methodology

The methodology takes a subjectivist interpretive approach and data is collected from adventure tourism providers through quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews. The questionnaire includes a sociogram, which allows for analysis of the providers' network. The richness of data from the sociogram and interviews is framed by the statistical data arising from the questionnaires. These methods combined with a comprehensive review of current literature give a triangulation of data about the current situation of the Irish adventure tourism industry.

Outline of the Thesis - Chapter Guide

Chapter 2, the literature review, is comprised of an introduction and two main sections; Adventure Tourism and Networking; these are the two major research areas. So that the examination of literature is given context, it should be pointed out that a profile of adventure tourism providers and the Irish adventure tourism industry structure has not been produced in any other literature to date. Before attempting to apply theories of business networking to the industry, what is known of the industry must first be presented. The first aim of this research seeks to do just that, to profile the Irish adventure tourism industry so that it may inform the manner in which networking is utilised by the participating providers.

Networking relationship types are presented and explored from geographical clustering, through cooperation and collaboration to coopetition. These concepts are applied to the tourism industry in the third section of the chapter and a range of topics found in current literature are discussed such as; destination tourism, motivations to network, innovations and online networking as well as the benefits and challenges of networking in tourism present.

Chapter 3, the methodology, contains a comprehensive description and justification of the methodology for this research. The approach to sampling is explained and the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods is explained and the means by which they are carried out, analysed and presented is discussed. This research also uses a sociogram to analyse networking patterns among adventure tourism providers and this instrument will be presented and described in detail in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4, the findings and discussion, presents and discusses the extensive research findings and is presented in three sections; 4.1 'Introduction', 4.2 'Adventure Tourism in Ireland' and 4.3: Networking in Adventure Tourism. This chapter examines the existing adventure tourism product and a wealth of current knowledge about the factors affecting the industry at present; infrastructure, development and future trends. It also contains a profile of Irish adventure tourism providers, their business and key insights into the sector. The third section of Chapter 4 culminates with an analysis of networking within the adventure tourism industry. Various aspects of business networking are discussed and key insights are presented, including how networking is defined by providers, the benefits and challenges of networking, motivations and barriers to actively engage in networking and innovation are discussed. The results of the quantitative research tool, the sociogram, are also presented and analysed, giving a unique and raw snapshot of the actual habitual networking of adventure tourism providers.

Chapter 5, the conclusion, highlights the main discussion points arising from the data presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents and draws the research conclusions and implications for policy and practice, nominates issues for potential further research and describes the limitations of the research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is laid out in four major sections; 2.1 'Introduction', 2.2 'Adventure Tourism', 2.3 'Networking' and 2.4 'Networking in Adventure Tourism'. Each major section contains numerous sub-sections. The introduction section includes sub-sections on tourism policy, strategy and trends. In 2.2 the 'Adventure Tourism' section addresses the development and profile of adventure tourism with attention paid to the Irish context. The players and structure of adventure tourism is funnelled from the international to the regional, and the adventure tourism providers' motivations to work in the industry are explored as well as business supports and hubs.

Section 2.3 'Networking' offers definitions of networking and networks as well as a broad range of literature on the types and forms of networking including clustering, collaboration, cooperation and coopetition. The final section, 2.4 'Networking in Tourism', brings together the literature on the two main themes; adventure tourism and networking. While there appears to be only a small selection of current literature that relates directly to the objectives of this research, there are vast amounts of literature that relate to aspects of this research (Morrison, 1998; Augustyn and Knowles, 2000; Morrison et al., 2004; Scott et al., 2008). There appears to be a wealth of literature to suggest that strategic alliances are favourable and that adventure tourism, as a growth sector, can only benefit from well managed and strategic networking arrangements.

The area of business networking is a broad and complex one in terms of both the academic literature and its' practical application. Within such a broad topic there must be context in order to correctly and specifically apply networking strategies to a particular type of business. This research specifically deals with the adventure tourism industry; an industry that is dominated by small and micro sized firms, operating independently and often either in rural and isolated locations or within a ‘tourism destination’.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, different types of networking strategies are appropriate to different sectors and structures. There are many factors at play including the business sector, business size, location including proximity of businesses to each other, equality between stakeholders and expectations of potential outcomes. Other more complex issues are discussed later in the chapter but what is important to make clear from the outset is that the subject of this research is networking and the context is adventure tourism. An initial exploration of the context of adventure tourism will help to direct and focus the review of current literature to follow.

This chapter will define the main terms, show how adventure tourism is becoming a well established industry and explore the characteristics of the industry and its stakeholders. The chapter will continue on to present the major theme of networking. Current definitions, types and structures of business and community networks will be explored. By the end of this chapter the links between adventure tourism, business success and strategic networking activities will be clearly made. Chapter 3 will outline the methodologies to be employed for the research.

2.1.1 Tourism Policy and Strategy

Tourism policy and strategy plays a key role in developing tourism business networking. National and international tourism policy provides a broad description of trends and patterns in the wider tourism industry. Regional, local and targeted (for example towards types of adventure tourism providers like watersports providers) strategies can encourage business owners to engage with support agencies and other businesses, perhaps in initiatives to network together for mutual benefit. “The collaborative agenda has emerged as a major theme in contemporary public sector activity in the UK and internationally,” (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002, p.208). This extends to activities that are influenced by government policy and funded by government initiatives. The difficulty with policy, however, lies in its translation from the boardroom to practical application by the tourism provider and this is where an effective strategy can be very useful.

Tourism Ireland's Strategy for Growth (2012) identified some key drivers for the development of the tourism industry in Ireland from 2011 onwards. Six strategic areas are as outlined in Fig. 2.1.1 below. Specifically, two areas here relate directly to networking and are echoed throughout much of the most recent literature as very important for growth; co-operative marketing and a vastly increased online presence. It appears that visitors to Ireland right now and for the future expect a full and lively experience of the country. There seems to be no longer the idea of single-purpose tourism, rather, tourists seem to want to 'pack in' as much as possible into their time abroad. This idea can be seen in further literature around and niche markets and destination tourism as outlined in other sections of this chapter.

Fig. 2.1.1 Six Strategic Pillars for Tourism in Ireland. (Adapted from Tourism Ireland Marketing Plan, 2011, p. 3)

Enterprise Ireland has rolled out a reform of the structure of County Enterprise Boards into a small business support infrastructure under newly labelled Local Enterprise Offices. Incorporated into this reform is an endeavour to continue working with local businesses and the wider community to create a mentor type structure of support for small and new enterprises (DJEI, 2014).

The Irish government committed to carrying out a Tourism Policy Review in the second quarter of 2014 (DTTS, 2014) which will guide a national tourism strategic plan to underpin investment and expansion of the tourism sector. In addition, ITIC (2013) pointed out that tourism infrastructure is an area for development and stated that a €150 million investment in tourism infrastructure would generate more than enough of a return from direct and indirect tourism spending. The UNWTO Global Report on Adventure Travel (2014) raises the issue of private-public sector collaboration and promotes its importance because of the interdependency of public and private sectors.

> "Ultimately, while governments can work to ensure that attitudes, policies, and practices are in place to create fertile ground for adventure tourism, the success of the sector relies on the creation of innovative, compelling products by the private sector too."
>
> (UNWTO, 2014, p. 56)

In terms of developing Irish tourism infrastructure, a balance must be struck between providing necessary services and preventing damage or erosion to walking routes, trails and landscape (KCC, 2013).

Tourism Ireland (2013) recognises that competitive and efficient access to Ireland is a concern and must be addressed urgently. Route expansion and development is a priority and Tourism Ireland is committed to collaborative marketing with air and sea carriers to improve this. The ESRI is currently carrying out research on Ireland's infrastructural requirements as part of the Arctic Climate Change, Economy and Society (ACCESS) project. This will inform tourism policy on some of the larger infrastructural issues while county development boards are invited to examine local infrastructural requirements. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTS) is developing a national tourism policy that will give direction on tourism marketing, tourism product development, training, innovation, enterprise support, competitiveness and policy implementation. The DTTS recognises the centrality of tourism to economic recovery and have called on interested parties to contribute towards the development of policy (DTTS, 2013). At present, there is no policy or strategy in Ireland that informs the adventure tourism industry specifically.

2.1.2 Tourism Trends

Networking is a medium through which trends in the tourism sector can be communicated. News about how trends may influence tourist behaviours, expectations and attitudes as well as technical and technological developments filters down from global levels to national and regional tourism businesses. It is important for tourism providers to be informed about the trends that affect their industry. By being proactive and staying up to date with knowledge, innovation and industry forecasts, tourism providers can make their businesses more relevant and be more prepared for the future. Transport infrastructure, product development, future trends, and sustainability of tourism, however, should always be studied when examining trends in tourism (Eccles and Costa, 1996).

Fig. 2.1.2 Trending Activities for 2013/14 (From ATTA, 2013, p.22)

A major trend, that is evident in many sub sectors of the tourism industry, is blending different niche, or specialist, markets together. Twinning complementary activities means that providers can offer a better package, more innovative products and tap into a broader spectrum of markets. An overlap in the adventure and sports tourism markets, for example, and can be exploited and used to benefit both areas; as can be seen in the recent rise in popularity of adventure race events. Born from the concepts of marathon and expedition races, adventure racing can be experienced in various settings from urban adventure races like the Rat Race to isolated and rural areas like

Gael Force in Killary, Co. Mayo. Adventure racing is difficult to define but Wilson (2007) describes it as a race event of varying duration, location and disciplines though usually involving a combination of some of the following; kayaking, orienteering, mountain biking, swimming, rock climbing, abseiling, trekking and sometimes requiring problem solving. This idea of blending disciplines and involving creativity in activity is echoed by Fennell (1999; 2001) who devised an acronym for the collective adventure, culture and ecotourism as ACE. This shows the attempt to merge various aspects of the industry in order to attract a broader spectrum of visitors.

Buckley (2006) describes an example of blended markets, an example might be where wildlife tourism can be found within adventure tourism. Since adventure tourism takes place in the outdoors, usually in unique or remote locations, there is a possibility of coming into contact with wildlife during the activity session, for example spotting seals while surfing or birds while mountain climbing. The principal focus may be on the activity, with wildlife as one component of the scenery and setting; or it may be on the wildlife, with the mode of access seen as a way to improve viewing opportunities. The location of adventure activities and providers can be a crucial deciding factor for the success of the activity and for attracting clients. The practice of blending or linking adventure activities together or with other tourism niches requires networking between providers. This networking may take any form, as outlined later in this chapter, depending on the commitments of the providers.

This research is not directly concerned with the tourist perspective but, as part of the trends recognised by regular research reports, providers should be mindful of how tourists' habits change. Globalised markets have a great effect on the tourism market in terms of communications, networks, information sharing and expansion. Globalisation is pushing competition but also forcing companies and destinations to strengthen their strategic alliances in order to stay on top of trends and demands (Kylanen and Mariani, 2012). Deuchar (2012) emphasises below how important it is for adventure tourism providers to stay up to date.

"In an industry, both in New Zealand and elsewhere, that is characterised by a predominance of primarily family-run small tourism enterprises, the economic sustainability of tourism is dependent on the ability of these STE owners/operators to adapt to both global forces and the changing demands of 'new tourists' who are increasingly informed and sophisticated in their choice of tourism products."

(Deuchar, 2012, p. 129)

Value may be found in tourism where the traveller doesn't have to cover vast distances in order to gain a variety of experiences; where there exists a network of independent providers in one general area (Wang and Krakover, 2008; March and Wilkinson, 2009). County Kerry Development Plan 2015-2021 recognises that tourists are seeking a genuine experience and moving away from tours; exploring Ireland at their own pace and moving freely between attractions. This requires an integration of tourism, transportation and land use policies. Overall though, the authenticity of the tourism experience is a key factor (Olsen, 2002; Week, 2012; UNWTO, 2014).

The UNWTO (2014) Global Report on Adventure Tourism described a new trend across the adventure tourism sector called 'disintermediation'. This describes the removal of the travel agent in the transaction. The travel agent or tour operator has, in the past, been the middle man between the customer and the provider. This trend has direct implications for networking and for innovation in marketing by providers.

2.2 Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism has been defined as "commercially operated activities involving a combination of adventure and excitement pursued in an outdoor environment," (Bentley et al., 2001, p. 32). This may incorporate a broad spectrum of activities ranging from high-risk adventure activities (e.g. white water rafting) to low risk ones (e.g. tramping) (ibid.). The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) defines adventure tourism as "travel outside a person's normal environment for more than 24 hours and not more than one consecutive year. A trip may be classified as an 'adventure' trip if it involves two of the following three elements: (1) interaction with nature or (2) interaction with culture or (3) a physical activity, while the core of adventure is a trip which involves all three elements," (ATTA, 2010b, p.7). ATTA claim that increasingly, traditional leisure operators are incorporating elements of adventure into tourism so this definition may be effected in the future (ATDI, 2012). Adventure tourism must simply be adventurous; it should be outdoors and be perceived to be risky or spontaneous and it must include exploration, discovery or engagement with culture.

Definitions may vary between countries depending on activities offered and geography, climate and infrastructure. One example is the fact that the Canadian definition includes the element of an unusual mode of transport required for adventure tourism. This is likely to be because of the extreme weather winter conditions and vast expanses of land mass (Easto and Warburton, 2010). The UKTS definition omits walking and cycling from what is included in adventure tourism. This would have major implications on the accuracy of data on the adventure tourism economy, as would the omission of daytrippers from what is considered to be 'true' tourism (Swarbrooke et al., 2003).

It is notable that all of the above definitions refer to something other than taking part in a prescribed activity. The language used to define adventure suggests a sensory and reflective experience that delves further than simple participation. The definition above allows for the subjectivity of the participant and a variability in the intensity of the activity itself, as well as uncertainty of the outcome. "All pursuits that provide an inherently meaningful human experience that is related to a particular outdoor environment – air, water, hills, mountains," may be described as adventure tourism (Darst and Armstrong, 1980, p.3). Walle's insight model (1997) alludes to the idea that adventure tourism is a sort of quest for insight or knowledge and that this kind of philosophical pursuit underpins adventure tourism. "Recognition of the value of the emotional appeal of adventure tourism is perhaps one of the sector's greatest strengths," (Easto and Warburton, 2010, p. 17). Mortlock (1984) echoes Maslow (1964) in describing involvement in adventure activities as akin to a *peak experience*. For Mortlock there are four stages of the outdoor journey; play, adventure, frontier adventure and misadventure. Each stage is linked with an increased skill, competence, and readiness to take risks.

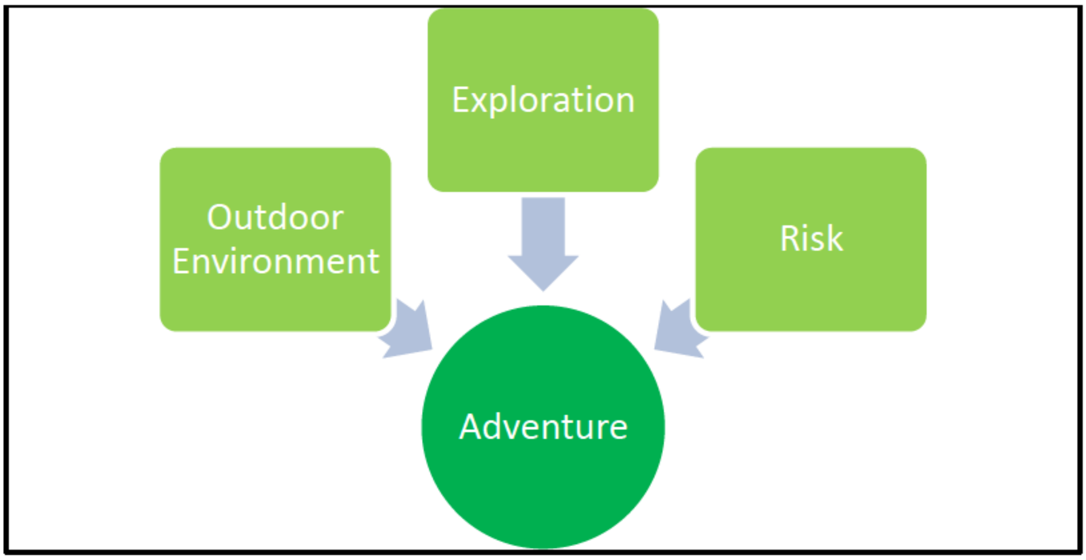


Fig. 2.2 Defining Adventure

The word 'adventure' includes ideas of exploration, expedition, and engagement (Beedie, 2003) though it is seen to be subjective and variable according to the physical setting and the participant point of view (Mortlock, 1984; Weber, 2001; Buckley, 2006).

As illustrated in Fig. 2.2 above, adventure tourism is not just about the outdoors but it involves exploration and risk. The activities involved in adventure tourism are not equal in terms of challenge and independence; activities with a higher level of challenge and independence are deemed 'high adventure' as opposed to leisure activities which have a low level of challenge and are less independent for the participant.

Adventure involves a challenge, not only in undertaking a physical skills but tapping into a personal adventure requiring mental and emotional strength. "Adventure tourism is based in natural rugged locations with participants interacting with the environment," (Tshipala and Coetzee, 2012, p. 101). Mortlock describes the balance of excitement between the challenges and rewards in adventuring:

"To adventure in the natural environment is consciously to take up a challenge that will demand the best of our capabilities – physically, mentally and emotionally. It is a state of mind that will initially accept unpleasant feelings of fear, uncertainty and discomfort, and the need for luck, because we instinctively know that, if we are successful, these will be counterbalanced by opposite feelings of exhilaration and joy."

(Mortlock, 1984, p.19)

Generally, adventure tourism activities tend to be categorised as being hard or soft activities (Millington et al., 2001). Fáilte Ireland's (2009) structure reflects the appeal to the tourist rather than the activity; extreme adventure, family adventure and soft adventure. Adventure tourism is similar to, and can incorporate, other branches of the tourism sector; coastal tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism, sports tourism, and agri-tourism to name but a few. Though they are strictly separate entities (Hinch and Higham, 2001), there are close similarities between sport tourism and adventure tourism.

Adventure tourism is an industry that is at once a particular niche in tourism and a broad outlet for exploration and discovery. Different levels of adaptation and progression can be applied to various adventure products depending on experience and skill level: Extreme or at one end of the spectrum (Martin and Priest, 1986). “Adventure tourism provides the opportunity to satisfy the urge for exploration, for discovery,” (Marson, 2011, p.13). Excitement, discovery, discomfort and risk are also elements of adventure tourism (Hakkarainen, 2010, p.3). “

2.2.1 Development of Adventure Tourism

As a commercial enterprise, adventure tourism is relatively new in the tourism and leisure industry but as a concept adventure tourism has been around for centuries. One of the key events for the development of the greater tourism industry was the Grand Tour, a traditional coming-of-age tour of Europe by young men of means in the 17^{th} to 19^{th} centuries (Towner, 1985). The Grand Tour was an exploration and education in culture and an adventurous experience and it was this type of travel that began adventurous inquiry within tourism (Kane and Tucker, 2004). An expanding appetite for discovery of the natural world followed with exploration of far flung and remote areas such as the Arctic region, Everest and China. From these exploratory beginnings sprung the commercial adventure tourism industry. The efforts of explorers Tom Crean and Ernest Shackleton inspired some hard adventure products such as treks to Everest base camp.

Adventure tourism came from being a niche market under the umbrella of tourism and has become one of the fastest growing and most lucrative categories of the mass market tourism sector today (UNWTO, 2014). Adventure tourists are known to typically spend 30% longer (9 days on average) and 40% more money on their visits to Ireland according to data presented by Fáilte Ireland (2013c). Ireland’s main overseas markets are the U.K. and mainland Europe and activity seeking tourists tend to visit the following areas in Ireland in search of adventure; West Cork, Cork City and Harbour, The Ring of Kerry, Dingle Peninsula, and counties Galway and Mayo (ibid.).

In terms of the development of individual adventure tourism enterprises in Ireland, the literature suggests that the infrastructure poses difficulties. Challenges may arise when attempting to fit a tourism economy into a rural location because of an inefficient tourism infrastructure and socio-political traditions that inhibit innovation and change (Hall et al, 2005). Ateljevic (2009) explored the issues faced by rural small tourism firms (STFs) during a transitional economy in New Zealand; among the barriers to business development and creation were; managerial weakness, limited access to core business disciplines, limited access to financial support, infrastructural regulations and lifestyle motivations of the business owners. Potential growth of the adventure tourism business can be a demotivating factor for providers, according to The Economic Planning Group of Canada (2014), a move towards mass tourism is potentially a move towards diluting or over exposing the product. It is important to preserve and extend adventure tourism by building a sustainable industry that will continue to develop. Part of the adventure tourism industry is the attraction to nature and the thrill and enjoyment of activities in natural resources. Authentic and natural landscapes provide the setting for adventure activities so for the adventure tourism industry to thrive in future there must be an undercurrent of preservation and sustainability (UNWTO, 2014) among providers and participants.

The Irish adventure tourism product is portrayed by tourism authorities as a new, innovative and quality product and this is the image and brand that the industry is trying to achieve (Fáilte Ireland, 2012). The industry is made up of small businesses, varying in skills and experience, that offer the full spectrum of air, land and sea adventure activities. The Irish adventure tourism product offers a wide variety of experiences from soft to hard activities and caters for those with a thirst for adventure. The Irish adventure tourism product is one that is offered in rugged and extreme locations across the island of Ireland. It is a country steeped in history, heritage and culture where these elements seep into the products and services that are offered by activity providers across the country. The adventure activities on offer in Ireland take place in every kind of unique landscape that is on offer; from the dramatic coastlines, limestone cliffs, the alien-like landscape in the Burren, the rampaging rivers and calm peaceful lakes to the expansive mountains and wild forests. It is a new and exciting industry and one whose product and brand image is competing on an international stage with the more developed players, Canada, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland (ATTA et al., 2010a) in the world adventure tourism arena.

The Irish adventure product promotes the area that the activity is offered in. It boosts overall tourism activity and increases tourism spend. It can also help to regenerate rural and coastal areas and can add to the employment and community development within the area.

This section explores the industry that the providers operate in and the product that they call adventure tourism. Only when the industry is profiled, the product identified and the market considered can the activity of networking, which will improve the product and enhance the industry, be explored.

The Irish adventure tourism product is diverse, natural and exciting. The range of products on offer can range from a simple windsurfing lesson on a sheltered beach to a lead climb on one of Ireland's impressive cliff faces. These activities can be done in a number of locations around the world but what gives Ireland a distinctive feel is the combination of the unique natural setting and the character that is so often referred to by visitors. With the exception of snow sports, every element of the adventure tourism product range is available in close proximity in Ireland. It is notable that on the ATDI rankings of tourism competitiveness, each country ranked above Ireland offers extensive adventure snow sports.

Ireland, as an adventure tourism domain, has thousands of kilometres of rugged coastline that offer every kind of adventure activity, from diving to surfing to sea kayaking. It also has a massive variation of lakes, rivers, mountains and forests that serve as a complete adventure tourism playground and each element or activity is only a few hours' drive to the next. Ireland also offers culturally vibrant cities and urban centres for the city adventure tourist. Heritage and cultural aspects and the draw and friendless of the Irish people it makes for a product or industry that can compete on the international stage with the likes of New Zealand, Norway, Scotland and the other developed adventure tourism countries.

Adventure tourism has been seen as a niche in the tourism sector (Brunelli et al., 2010) but the 'soft' adventure activities are beginning to appeal to a broad spectrum of tourists. Regular tourists are beginning to incorporate adventure activities into their travel plans (ATTA et al., 2010b; 2012). Marson (2011) identifies the uniqueness of niche tourism and explains that through its development, it may ironically, move towards mass tourism thereby losing some of its appeal. Beedie (2003) concurs by warning that it is important not to lose sight of the 'extraordinariness' of adventure by imposing risk management strategies and tourism infrastructure. The adventure market itself can be split into; winter, water, land and air activities. With a great expansion in each of these micro-niches, adventure tourism has become part of a mass market product as can be seen in Irish (Fáilte Ireland, 2009) and international (Queensland Adventure, 2008; ATTA et al., 2010b; 2012) emphasis on developing the adventure tourism sector. Ironically, a way to preserve and grow the adventure tourism industry is to blend it with other niches within the tourism sector.

A tourist who plans to spend a week on the south west coast of Ireland surfing and windsurfing may also expect to be easily able to visit monuments of historical significance, fine restaurants and bars, to sample some local music and culture and perhaps take in a day of sightseeing as well. Here, the main purpose of the trip is the adventure element but the consumer expects to engage with a number of niche tourism sectors and expects to be able to access a number of them easily around one main location. This becomes destination tourism and the very nature of its development calls for strategic networking between neighbouring providers. A destination based tourism industry can be purposefully developed to benefit all stakeholders rather than a 'cluster' of tourism products striving without a unified purpose.

2.2.2 Profile of the Adventure Tourism Sector

Adventure tourism has planted its roots firmly in the soils of a select few countries that provide a package of great seasonality, experienced professionals and exciting terrain. These factors can be seen in typical adventure tourism countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Norway. Each of these adventure tourism strongholds has developed an adventure industry based on building on their strengths and supported by a system of tourism infrastructure.

The ATDI (ATTA et al., 2012) ranks the adventure tourism competitiveness of developed and developing countries based on ten pillars of competitiveness as illustrated in Fig. 2.2.2 below.

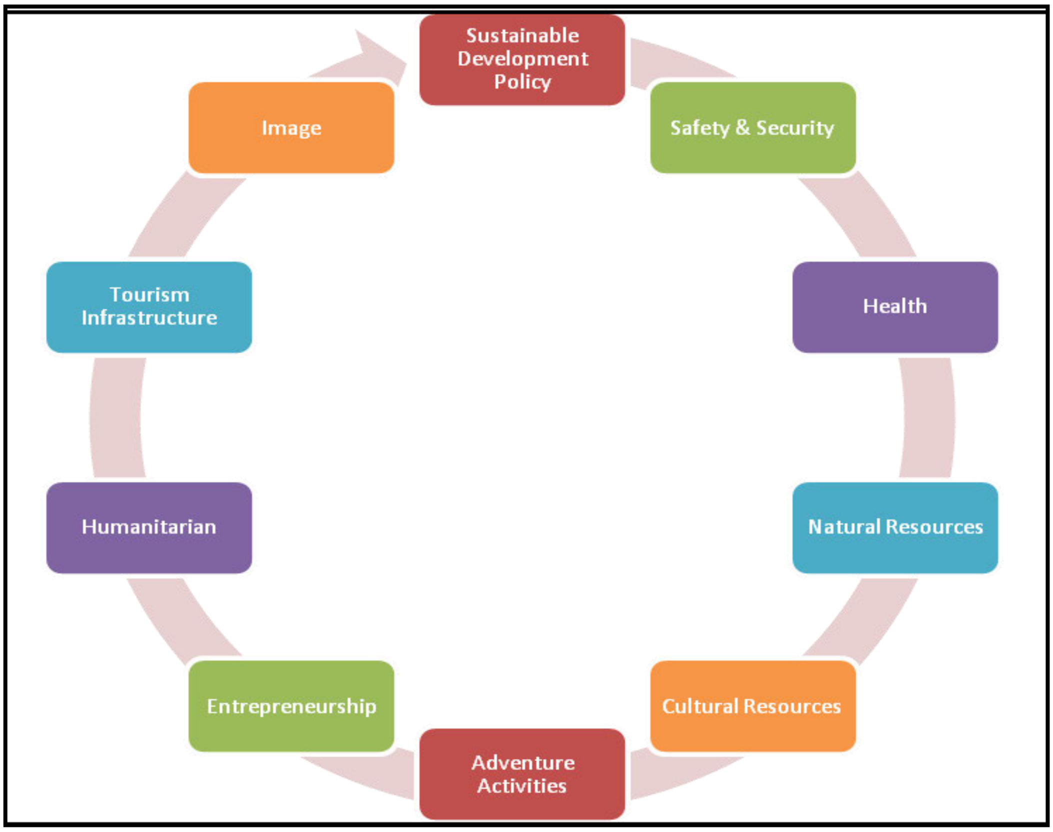


Fig. 2.2.2 Ten Pillars of Adventure Tourism Competitiveness. (Adapted from ATTA et al., 2012)

Switzerland, New Zealand and Canada topped the developed countries list and Chile, Czech Republic and Slovak Republic topped the developing countries list in 2011. Given the socio economic changes in Ireland since 2008 and the fact that winter activities in Ireland cannot compete with those with high altitudes and guaranteed snowfall, it is not surprising that it is not featured in the top ten. However these pillars of competitiveness serve as a useful guide in developing a strategy for establishing an adventure tourism industry here.

Tourists are attracted to Ireland for culture, heritage and a warm welcome (Millward Brown, 2007). Adventure tourism in Ireland is based mainly around the coast. As an island there is a richness of coastal landscape and natural terrain which can be explored and used as a medium for adventure. Surfing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, cliff climbing, and sea kayaking are just a few of the activities available along the Irish coast. Moving further inland there is an abundance of hills and mountains, lakes and rivers to host adventure tourists. The climate in Ireland remains mild all year round which allows most adventurers to continue their pursuits any time of the year. Mountain biking, rock climbing and hill walking enthusiasts are enjoying the results of a focus on increased demand for serviced routes and trails throughout the country and with dedicated National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for most activities there is a wealth of information at hand. The adventure tourism sector fits well within most communities in Ireland where it is often linked with destinations; climbing in the Burren, surfing in Donegal, mountain biking in Wicklow.

The adventure tourism industry in Ireland is populated almost exclusively by small and micro businesses (Bauer, 2010; 2013) which Hussey et al. (2010) assert are more reactive than proactive when it comes to strategy and training. This means that the smaller tourism businesses are dependent upon the owner/ manager to provide opportunities for not only skill enhancement but broader skill and knowledge bases such as ICT, marketing, business development and facilitation skills (Inui et al., 2006; Fáilte Ireland, 2007). The Irish adventure tourism product is similar to the Scottish one where there is high fragmentation among providers because of low entry barriers. It is simple and straightforward to set up; there is no formal registration, no background or qualifications check, no police vetting and initial costs are low for most activities (Easto and Warburton, 2010). In theory all that is required is equipment. Insurance is not even required and cover goes unverified and is the sole responsibility of the provider.

2.2.3 Adventure Tourism Players and Structure

Adventure tourism in Ireland is made up of many different players. The industry is split into two main entities; private and public (or government funded) operations. The private sector is made up of very few large adventure centres, for example Killary Adventure Centre in Leenane and Delphi Mountain Resort in Connemara, as well as smaller mobile operations like G-town Adventures in Cork and Kingdom Waves in Kerry. The vast majority of businesses in the adventure tourism sector in Ireland are small or micro enterprises (Bauer, 2010; 2013). According to the European

Commission (2003), a small enterprise can be categorised as one with between 10 and 50 employees and a micro enterprise is one with fewer than 10 employees. Micro firms are the most common business size in the Irish tourism industry (Fáilte Ireland, 2004) and make up over 90% of all business sizes in the European economy (European Commission, 2011). These definitions are based generally, but not solely, on the number of employees who are in full time employment which, due to seasonality for one, is not necessarily relevant in the adventure tourism industry where providers employ casual and additional seasonal staff as required. In general, throughout much of the literature on adventure tourism providers, businesses are loosely described as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) rather than small and micro (Shaw, 2004; Ateljevic, 2007; Thomas et al., 2011).

The difference between the two categories; larger and smaller providers, are the facilities and services that can be offered but the quality of the experience is down to the running and the experience of the individual enterprises and instructors. Many of the bigger resorts offer increased level of service and extras like accommodation, dining, entertainment and toilet and shower facilities on site whereas the mobile operations normally just offer the adventure experience. This means that the smaller mobile operators are flexible and can change locations easily and have fewer outgoings. On the downside they often have a basic package on offer without 'the trimmings'.

The above operations are privately run ventures with no public funding and are in competition with the government funded V.E.C. Outdoor Education Centres (OECs), of which there are 12 distributed around the country. "Supported by the Department of Education and Skills through local Vocational Education Committees, OEI [Outdoor Education Ireland] provide an Outdoor Education service to schools, colleges and youth services in addition to a range of adventure sports and related courses for youths and adults through OECs," (IVEA, 2012, p. 37).

The adventure tourism industry in Ireland is, at present, an unregulated one. While individual activities are guided by regulations set down by their respective NGBs, there is no overarching regulatory body for adventure tourism. The need for regulation of the adventure tourism industry is an issue that has often been raised in terms of minimising risk and building quality into the industry (Bentley et al., 2004;

Page et al., 2005; Jennings et al., 2009). The lack of regulation also contributes further to the fragmented nature of the industry in Ireland at present. Providers as business owners are isolated because the umbrella of the 'tourism industry' is too broad and NGBs are activity specific and more focused on the sport/ skills development aspect of activities.

New Zealand, Australia and Scotland have all committed to regulating adventure tourism, either as part of the wider tourism industry; as devised by Visit Scotland Quality Assurance initiative (which is not compulsory), or as a standalone system of self regulation, registration and compliance, which is currently being rolled out in Australia and New Zealand through the 'Worksafe' initiative (Govt of New Zealand, 2012).

In Ireland, the move towards regulating the adventure tourism industry is only beginning to take shape. The Irish Sports Council (ISC) are currently inviting submissions to their adventure activities working group from adventure activity providers in Ireland on safety and standards in the industry. These will inform the development of a register of providers and give feedback on the industry at present (ISC, 2014). While regulation of the adventure tourism industry serves to improve the standard of the product, "there is an important blend of skills that are not taught as part of professional outdoor qualifications," (Easto and Warburton, 2010, p. 27). The 'unique experience' that adventure tourists seek is enhanced by these extra skills and they should not be lost through regulation. The establishing of a professional body for the adventure tourism industry may ensure that the industry is supported not just monitored through regulation.

In terms of finding a profile of adventure industry providers, Bauer (2013) identified some characteristics of soft adventure tourism providers while researching and assessing quality in the industry. Overall, she found that adventure tourism providers in Kerry and West Cork provide a high quality product and level of service while they are lacking somewhat in administrative competence. Marchant and Mottiar (2011) wrote about profiling the Irish surf tourism sector. This study was qualitative only and yielded, not a statistical profile of surf providers, but a descriptive profile of surfing business owners as lifestyle entrepreneurs. Neither of these studies provides a comprehensive profile of Irish adventure tourism providers in a broad sense.

2.2.4 Providers' Motivations to Work in the Adventure Tourism Industry

It is important for this research to address the context of adventure tourism providers so that specific networking behaviours might be identified and potential insights may be uncovered. This may help to understand the characteristics and challenges within the industry. People choose to work in or start a business in different industries for a variety of reasons. A phenomenon becoming more frequently documented is the influence of the social structure on a locality; to what extent it can shape local business, and how it evolves with time and tourism development. With development, comes human interest and many small tourism areas attract people, who may in turn set up their own enterprises. This can alter the social and cultural structure of a locality (Shaw and Williams, 1998). The Irish entrepreneur has been described as belonging to one of three categories (O'Farrell, 1986); the graduate entrepreneur, the opportunist entrepreneur, or the craftsman entrepreneur. This seems a broad selection and, more recently, it is clear that entrepreneurs may belong to more than one of these. One type of provider commonly seen in the adventure tourism industry is the 'lifestyle entrepreneur' (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). It is important to view this category of business owner in the context of the adventure tourism industry since significant parts of the profile of the lifestyle entrepreneur matches that of adventure tourism providers; a genuine love of the product or service offered, motivated by lifestyle factors rather than being profit-driven, although cashflow is extremely important (Hwang and Lockwood, 2006). Numerous examples of literature on the motivations of lifestyle entrepreneurs have found that lifestyle motivation may not be sustained long term (Buhalis and Cooper, 1998; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004; Morrison et al., 2008).

Making the choice to become self employed in itself may be seen, in today's context, to be a risky venture as is evident across Ireland since the recession began in 2008. In sharp contrast to the profit and success-focussed entrepreneurs of most business sectors, the adventure tourism industry is littered with business owners who may be called, 'lifestyle entrepreneurs' (Bauer, 2013). These are small, usually micro, business owners who are motivated not by developing a successful enterprise but by sufficiently maintaining a hobby based lifestyle in which they value quality of life over profit (Heelas and Morris, 1992; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000; Gray, 2002; Mottiar, 2007). Thorgren et al. (2014) identified 'hybrid entrepreneurship' where the owner is motivated by a passion for the business activity. Ateljevic and Doorne (2004) and Siemens (2007) found that the characteristics that make small tourism businesses dynamic and responsive also limit the business in many ways.

Concerning the labelling of hobby entrepreneurs or 'lifestyle entrepreneurs', the fact that this category of business people are in fact engaging in entrepreneurial activities is debatable for some (Warneryd, 1988; Macko and Tyszka, 2009; Rimmington et al., 2012); rather than growing their business, they tend to be concerned with survival and maintaining just enough to support their lifestyle.

According to Marchant and Mottiar (2011), lifestyle entrepreneurs may be categorised by either being 'constrained'; self-established within the locality year round, or 'non-constrained'; becoming active on a seasonal basis only. The driving factors for the lifestyle entrepreneur is atypical as they are less guided by financial gain, strategy and operations and work-to-live rather than live-to-work, usually in a business related to personal interests.

Findings show that their own experiences of travel and tourism are a motivating factor and that their motives tend to change over time (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011). A Swedish study of 176 lifestyle entrepreneurs found that management, access to natural resources and lifestyle were the most important factors to the entrepreneurs. Though they tended to take a relaxed approach, they still felt dominated by external constraints like slow profits, lack of capital funding, infrastructure and government taxes (Lundberg and Fredman, 2012). In fact, Morrison and Teixeira (2004) found that lifestyle entrepreneurs' management style "defies economic logic," (p.166). They often hold a romanticised notion of running a small tourism business and the majority need to work longer hours than they would have liked or expected just to keep their businesses open.

2.2.5 Business Supports

Supports can range from business development, including mentoring, to training support and access to financial assistance. Business supports in Ireland are offered by different agencies primarily based on the size and market; domestic, European, international. The following table (Fig. 2.2.5a) shows the agencies in Ireland who provide support to all Irish business sizes and sectors:

Agency	Services/ Responsibilities
IDA Ireland	Responsible for overseas investment.
Enterprise Ireland	Responsible for the growth and development if Irish enterprises (of minimum 10 employees) in world markets Assists start-ups from outside Ireland
Local Enterprise Offices	Supports small businesses (of 10 employees or less) by providing grants and assistance.

Fig. 2.2.5a Business Support Agencies in Ireland. (Adapted from IDA Ireland available at http://www.idaireland.com/help)

As illustrated, the most appropriate support agency for the majority of businesses in the tourism sector, which are small or micro in size, is the network of Local Enterprise Offices. There is at least one in each county of Ireland, 35 in total. “These supports and services are designed to encourage entrepreneurship, increase the rates of business start-up and expansion and increase competitiveness, sustainability, innovation and technological adaptation by micro-enterprise,” (SERA, 2007, p. 1). Fig. 2.2.6b shows an array of supporting infrastructure for tourism business’ innovation in Ireland according to Fáilte Ireland.

These supports are in place at the time of writing, though there have been developments and commitments since 2012 that are currently being implemented including, Back to Work Enterprise Allowance , Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 including LEADER funding of €250million (DAFM, 2014, p.10) and Fáilte Ireland (2014) investment of €4million in festivals and events.

Training support is offered in a range of forms by the Enterprise Boards, as above, Fás training facilities, PLC and third level institutions and by other relevant authorities such as Fáilte Ireland and the National Governing Bodies of the respective adventure activities. In an effort to provide direct training for small tourism businesses Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) developed a Bachelor of Science programme in Small Enterprise Management (Lynch et al., 2013).

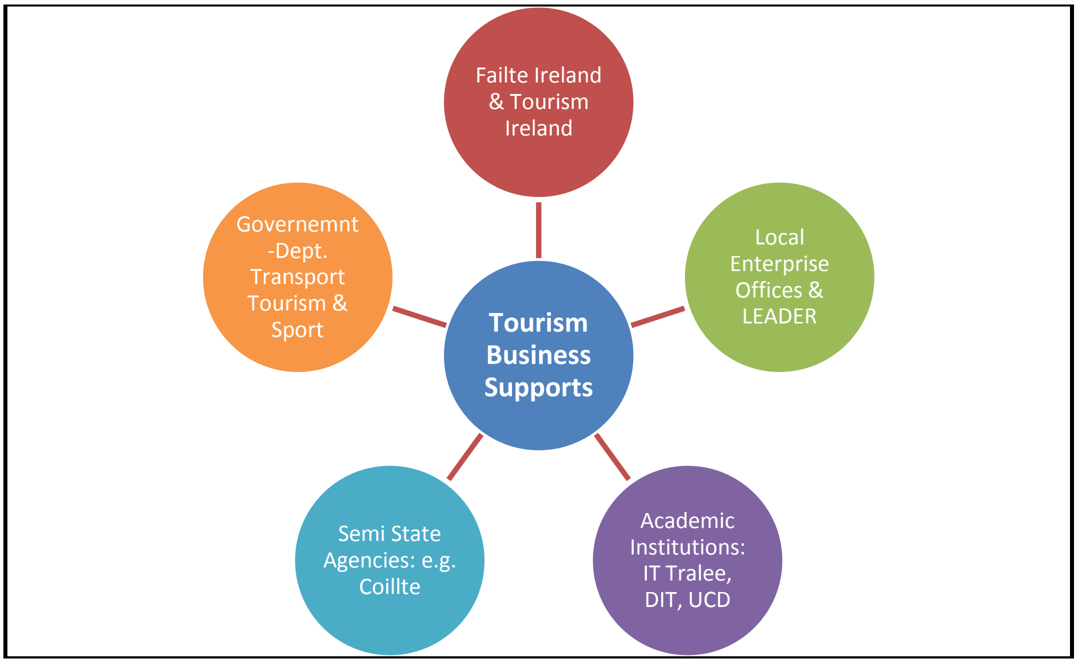


Fig. 2.2.5b Business Innovation Supporting Infrastructure. (Adapted from Fáilte Ireland, 2009, p. 8)

This degree course was designed, with consultation from Fáilte Ireland, specifically for people wishing to manage small and micro tourism businesses. There is some evidence to suggest however, that for small businesses, the most appropriate strategy towards training provision is not to prescribe the training but to create the opportunity for learning as an ongoing process which involves flexibility (Deakins and Freel, 1998; Lean, 1998; DeFaoite et al., 2003). Skills development of the entrepreneur through mentoring (Cope and Watts, 2000) is enhanced through encouraging business owners to construct knowledge that is beneficial to them (Smith and Patton, 2011). Rigg and O'Dwyer (2012) described how mentors also provide learning around identity and social capital.

During the 1990s a support initiative for rural businesses called the LEADER programme was introduced in Ireland. This programme provided funding and grants to businesses involved in outdoor recreation. The purpose of the programme was to boost the rural economy and promote partnerships between businesses (O'Leary and Deegan, 2003). Horizontal and vertical networking was encouraged in order for business owners to create links with other businesses that were similar in size, activity and location but also businesses in different sectors and locations to maximise potential for partnerships.

Though these supports aim to benefit the tourism industry and small business owners, ITIC (2006) recognises that the tourism industry is primarily populated by small enterprises and that there are some structures in place that may present more difficulties than solutions, “The burden [of regulation] is proportionately greater on small and medium enterprises than on large enterprises which tend to have substantial administrative systems and personnel,” (p.5). A difficulty arises for small tourism businesses where increased regulation requires increased internal monitoring, thereby bringing about more financial and administrative pressure.

2.2.6 Adventure Hubs

Fáilte Ireland began the concept of adventure hub creation in Ireland in 2007 with the ‘Get Out There!’ Project. Adventure hubs were piloted in Bantry and Killarney where all local adventure tourism providers were encouraged to network in order to create an exciting and fun experience for tourists to have an adventure filled holiday. The project was subsequently rolled out to other adventure hubs along the western seaboard including; Dingle, Connemara, Westport, Achill and Sligo.

> “Research which was conducted in 2007 determined a hub to be an area ranging from 35-45 kilometres in diameter, which would have a wide variety of activities available and the appropriate supporting infrastructure. Developing an area with diverse activities, adventure friendly accommodation and supporting infrastructure has been identified, by Fáilte Ireland, as a priority in order to meet the needs and wants of adventure tourists.”
>
> (Fáilte Ireland 2009, p. 7)

Fáilte Ireland devised a Development Agenda (Murphy, 2013) that it hoped would build the tourism experience by providing layers of enrichment through; “vibrant towns, adventure in natural wonders, traditional and contemporary culture, ancient heritage, award winning Irish food, and in connecting with locals,” (ibid., p.9). Most of these experiences are to be found in initiatives like the ‘Anglers’ Welcome’ and the ‘Wild Atlantic Way’. Through these initiatives and with the purpose of building an improved tourism experience, partnership and collaboration between all stakeholders involved is highly emphasised.

Ireland has a growing adventure tourism industry that is equipped with an abundance of natural resources; lakes, rivers, mountains, and surrounded by a dramatic coastline. There is huge scope for the industry to develop as Ireland attracts European and international adventurers as well as delighting domestic thrill seekers and stays are enhanced by the experience for the tourist. The way in which tourism businesses operate in Ireland gives rise to the genuineness of the experience. If the highly effective operation of these businesses enables them to survive an economic recession, innovate in austerity and deliver high quality products and services, then the way in which these small and micro firms do business is a potentially valuable resource for the industry. As the rest of this chapter will examine, networking is part of doing business on an everyday basis. This research is focused on uncovering any method, structure or innovative practice in networking that works well for adventure tourism businesses and to find out what is required to maximise the benefits of it.

2.3 Networking

The following chapter sections will examine the literature around business networking. The broad definitions of networking are presented and the focus will funnel towards the application of networking activities and network formation related to the characteristics associated with adventure tourism businesses as set out in the early sections of this chapter. Several networking relationship types are presented and discussed and the benefits and challenges associated with business networking in current literature are shown. The chapter concludes with an overview of the aspects of social media and online networking in current literature.

The delimitations of the literature review on networking are such that it will present some literature on online networking but is mainly focused on traditional networking between businesses. There is a depth of literature on networking that extends to scientific analyses of network structures, this depth will not be explored here but simple network analysis will be presented in chapter 3 Methodology, in relation to the use of a network analysis tool, the sociogram.

2.3.1 Networking Definition

Networking is a tool used for marketing (Gilmore et al., 2001) most commonly by small and medium enterprises (SMEs) where a company or person links with another in order to gain mutual benefit. Networking is “the process used by members of the network to mobilise relationships and learn from each other,” (Lynch and Morrison, 2007, p. 43). There are a number of terms used to refer to the type of networking activity in place; coalition, forum, alliance, task force, partnership, collaboration. All of these and any others used come under the topic of networking and are used according to the specific circumstances of the networking type; the context of the activity gives rise to the name of the activity (Bailey, 2005).

There are numerous stakeholders in a networking relationship who stand to gain from successful networks; the consumer, individual companies, the greater community and the industry. The interaction between these stakeholders is known as 'the tourism stakeholders system' (Weaver and Oppermann, 2000). In general terms, networking activities aim at aligning stakeholders towards a common goal while convening the capabilities and skills of different organisations to make improvements (Delporte-Vermeiren et al., 2004). In relation to new technologies and keeping up with the increasing pace of technological development, networking provides a major part of the innovation system because it enables broader communication throughout the system (de la Mothe and Paguet, 1998). Innovation is said to be behavioural rather than technological (Sundbo, 1998; Drejer, 2004). For successful networking to take place, as will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter, there must be a 'strategic fit' between stakeholders (Porter, 1996).

Networking has been recognized as providing a learning opportunity for business stakeholders. The opportunity to learn from networking opportunities helps small businesses to survive and grow. Hannon et al. (2000) and Wheelock and Chell (1997) found that networking activity is higher in growing businesses. This is due to the momentum of the start up phase, energy input from owners and staff as well as optimism for future potential of the business.

2.3.2 Network Definition

A network can be simply defined as "a firm's set of relationships with other organisations," (Perez and Sanchez, 2002, p. 261). Given the vast number of network types and the complex nature of many, the definition of a network must remain broad. The word 'network' was originally used to describe the existence of a relationship between people or businesses, however, with the introduction of network analysis, a method of quantifying the people [also termed nodes or actors] and their relationships [also termed ties] (Mitchell, 1969) the concept of a network has somewhat become more scientific (Brunetto and Farr-Wharton, 2007).

A definition like Gamm's (1981) where a network is described as a system or a field comprised of organisations and inter-organisational relationships or Nohria and Eccles' (1992) as the structure of ties among the actors in a social system, can be applied to any situation in business according to the context. "...members of business networks must have agreed to cooperate in some way to achieve specific business objectives that are likely to result in enhanced competitive advantage and/or mutual financial gain," (Intertrade Ireland, 2005, p. 5).

2.3.3 Network Relationship Types

There are numerous network relationship types referred to across networking literature (partnerships, alliances, clusters, cooperation, collaboration, coopetition) and a range of terms are used to refer to networking activity as illustrated in Fig. 2.3.3a below. The list of terms described here is not exhaustive but the main networking structures are described later in this chapter.

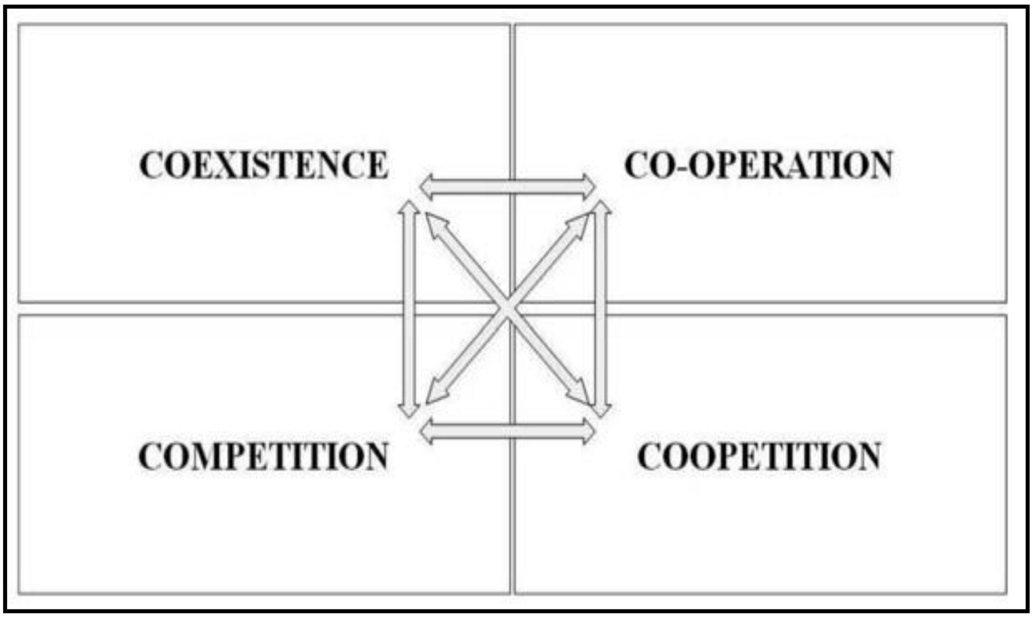


Fig. 2.3.3a Forms of networking relationships. (From Czakon, 2007, p. 22)

One of the more frequently used terms in the current literature on networking relationships is 'strategic alliance'. A strategic alliance refers to any kind of networking relationship and appears to be an umbrella term for any such relationship as they can develop and change though the alliance remains. Businesses, increasingly, seek out alliances in order to gain new skills or knowledge (Kogut, 1988; Khanna et al., 1998) or to improve their strategic position (Porter and Fuller, 1986; Kogut, 1988). Particularly with reference to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as are most common in the adventure tourism industry (Buhalis and Cooper, 1998), some form of alliance is often necessary for the survival of the industry. The optimum position for any SME in the tourism sector then is within some sort of strategic alliance. "Strategic management theory highlights strategic choice and the importance of both strategic and cultural fit between partners if an alliance between firms is to be successful," (Child et al., 2005, p.15). The structure of alliances varies according to the strengths, weaknesses, needs and expectations of the individual partners.

Whether an alliance is undertaken between providers of the same product or service, or between complementary ones is irrelevant; according to Cater (2006) " the most successful adventure destinations, therefore, will be those that blend adventure activities with a host of more traditional tourism pursuits," (p.442). In addition, this blending may contribute to destination tourism that may "give the place its special atmosphere and character," (Buhalis and Cooper, 1998, p. 428). These alliances may also be known as networks.

Clustering

Clustering is informal networking that is loosely based around the proximity of businesses to each other. Cluster theory is concerned with the effects on competitiveness of geographic location (Porter, 2000). Networks need not rely on matching location or industry specifically (Rosenfeld, 1995; 2001), though this is not uncommon as networks usually become apparent to potential stakeholders rather than deliberately seeking out partners. A cluster usually forms when individuals or firms become grouped together by location or proximity to each other and sometimes share an interest in the same sectoral focus. Clusters occur where each person or group involved becomes interdependent with the others in the cluster, each part of the cluster is involved in the functioning of the group (Martin and Sunley, 2003) therefore clusters are at once cooperative and competitive, see Fig. 2.3.4 (Forsman and Solitander, 2003; Deuchar, 2012). Klijn (2008) maintains this by saying, “networks are also generally considered as an organisational form in itself instead of a loosely coupled set of relations between the actors,” (p. 517). There are examples of successfully innovative clusters all over the world where the agents involved in the cluster work together to exchange information; share market and product knowledge, such as Silicon Valley in California, USA and Emilia-Romagna, Italy.

A cluster may exist without there being any contract or relationship for mutual gain, for example a cluster may consist of a number of businesses close together but functioning independently. Businesses operating in a cluster may need to share resources, knowledge and access specialists as seen in a case study on wine micro-clusters in Australia (Grimstad and Burgess, 2014). If there are no businesses nearby, there is no opportunity to belong to a cluster (Porter, 2000). It is clear that businesses who share proximity, sector or target market with one another, as in a cluster, will invariably be in competition with one another. Competitive strategy is defined by, firstly the success of profit making through a traditional core structure suitable to the industry and secondly the advantage a business gains by delivering a unique and valuable product or service (Porter, 1980; 1985). It is important to outline here that competition is not necessarily a solitary pursuit and it does not become lost where alliances or collaborations are entered into. In fact, coopetition, as will be elaborated on below, maintains competition as a core value. “...destination stakeholders should be encouraged to form clusters and to both compete and cooperate in order to exchange knowledge and hence raise the overall competitiveness of a destination,” (Baggio et al., 2010, p. 821).

While clustering is often an informal grouping of proximal businesses it can be confused with destination networking which is also characterised by the grouped location of businesses. Clustering becomes destination networking when proximal businesses work together towards promoting the destination with the aim of attracting clients to the general area. Destination networking is often seen in the tourism industry where the objective is to bring a shared market to the local area by developing the product of the entire destination through collective effort. Destination tourism will therefore both draw from and benefit each contributing stakeholder. Destination tourism also requires commitment for infrastructure and community supports, as evidenced in the Dingle Peninsula (KCC, 2007) where a local area plan was developed to support sustainable tourism and a website (www.dingle-peninsula.ie) and mobile app designed to showcase the area.

Cooperation, Collaboration and Coopetition

Cooperation in networking exists when stakeholders agree to work together towards a mutually beneficial end. Cooperation is described as a 'vital behavioural skill' (Witte, 2014) that is missing from business education. Cooperation may be as simple as parties involved contributing their share but not necessarily becoming intertwined in the process. Cooperation is defined by Palmer et al. (2000) as "groups of independent businesses which recognise the advantage of developing markets jointly rather than in isolation but may be unable to directly appropriate the benefits of co-operative activities,"(p. 274). The links between these businesses remains loose according to Palmer (2002).

Collaboration occurs when businesses develop joint strategies for shared purposes. It "involves exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose," (Huxham, 1996, p. 28). In collaboration the businesses work closely together throughout the process particularly towards long-term advantage. The contribution and information contributed progresses and becomes a blended effort. Businesses can achieve ground breaking innovative processes and products when collaborative efforts are successful. Inter-agency collaboration towards policy development is an effort that is more commonly seen in Ireland recently; not necessarily meaning that policy is successful but it is clear that attempts are being made to be inclusive and transparent regarding decision making. Tourism and agricultural agencies (DEFRA, 2002) have collaborated to create a sustainable food tourism industry and activity destinations, such as at Ballyhoura, Co. Limerick, and sustainable resource management company (Coillte) joined forces to develop a rural activity hub. Easto and Warburton (2010) recognised 'significant opportunities' for collaboration within and outside the adventure tourism industry for providers which could potentially bring benefits of cost efficiency, improved distribution and greater profitability. The best way that positive relationships can be established is if other business owners understand the product that adventure providers offer; this understanding comes from experiencing the product on offer.

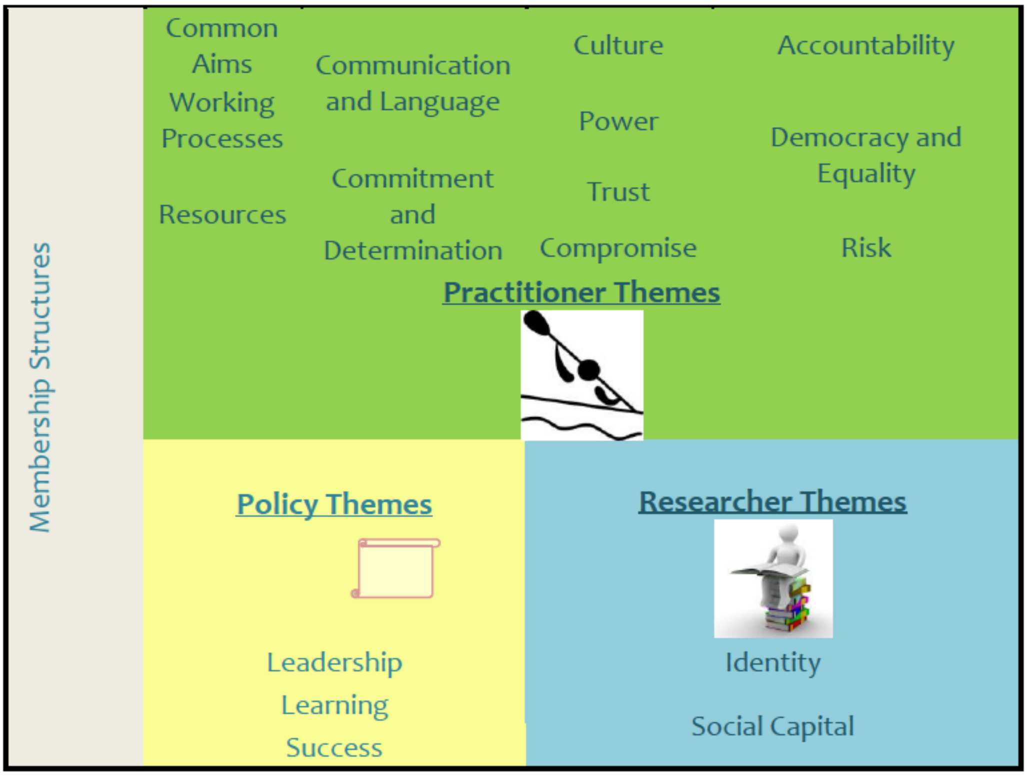


Fig. 2.3.3b The Theory of Collaborative Advantage. (Adapted from Huxham and Vangen, 2005, p. 38)

Huxham and Vangen (2005) are major contributors to the general literature on collaboration. They coined the term 'collaborative advantage', "when something unusually creative is produced – perhaps an objective is met – which no organisation could have produced on its own and when each organisation, through the collaboration, is able to achieve its own objectives better than it could alone," (p.23). As shown in Fig. 2.3.3b above, collaborative advantage also must consider themes from various contributors. Collaborative advantage draws themes not only from the business stakeholders but from research and policy too, suggesting that there are more advantages to collaborative efforts than financial prosperity. The, sometimes prolonged, effort and difficult progression towards success through collaboration is known as 'collaborative inertia', another term created by Huxham and Vangen. Collaborative inertia alludes to the idea that partnerships, alliances, collaborations; any form of networking is a slow process requiring commitment and resilience. Outcomes of collaboration can vary in success across; collaborative effectiveness, commitment, coordination, interdependence, communication quality, information sharing, participation, joint problem solving (Mohr and Spekman, 1994).

Coopetition, a blend of competition and cooperation, is a new approach that literally combines a mix of competition and cooperation. Simmie (2004) refers to a mix of competition and cooperation of local actors. Coopetition has become a buzzword for this activity and is seen to be the preferred structure for business networking because it encapsulates the idea that businesses can cooperate with each other without yielding the element of competition. Coopetition occurs where two companies work together for a bigger purpose but still can have a competitive relationship on other projects. This relationship needs to have clear and transparent terms and boundaries attached. Here, effective networking is crucial (Porter, 1980; Morgan et al., 2000). Fig. 2.3.3c below illustrates the scale of these relationship types in relation to each other, showing that there is a difference in the level of commitment required for the relationship. Along with increased or decreased commitment there are also varying expectations and outcomes depending on the stakeholders involved.

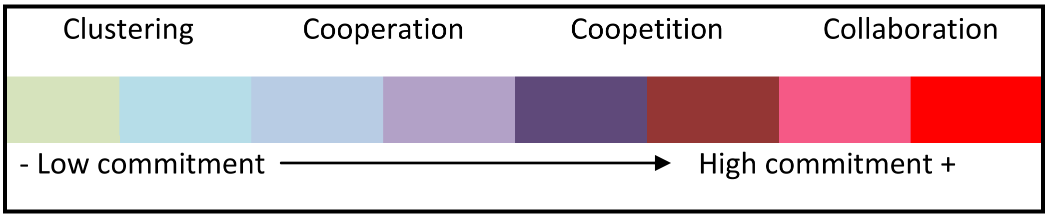


Fig. 2.3.3c Scale of Network Relationship Types

Game theory has been applied to all kinds of strategic alliances and used to examine strategies employed therein. Axelrod (1984) examined strategic alliances in terms of game theory, “game theory is concerned with the strategies adopted by the players to a game and the effects these have on a game’s outcome,” (cited in Child et al. 2005, p. 35) and it led to questioning whether cooperation is possible when humans are primarily concerned with themselves. He also questioned whether those in strategic alliances could do better than those who remain alone and which strategies are most effective. The literature is clear in concluding that where small tourism businesses are concerned, they must cooperate with their competition in order to survive (Nalebuff and Brandenburger, 1997; Tinsley and Lynch, 2007). These businesses must learn to adapt to coopetitive environments and to maximise the benefits to be reaped from such networking opportunities (Kelliher et al., 2009).

2.3.4 Network Forms

Networks, as discussed in the previous sub sections, may take various forms. The structure of a business network depends on the characteristics of the nodes or agents and the connections between them; relationships. Network science (Watts, 2004) examines how the structure of a network effects how that network functions. Network science can take one of three forms; mathematical, physicist and qualitative networks based on the social sciences “in which a network is viewed as an analogy for the interactions between individuals in a community,” (Baggio et al., 2010, p. 803). The latter of these have been applied to networks between tourism providers (ibid.) and are seen to be a representation of a constantly moving and dynamic phenomenon. There is a wealth of detailed scientific theory and in-depth analysis of network formation but this research will examine the everyday human interactions of adventure tourism providers.

This research is concerned with business networks in the tourism sector. One theorist has simply grouped networking relationships into just two categories; collaborative and complementary (Erkus-Ozturk, 2008). The former move horizontally, between stakeholders of similar size and purpose, and emphasise coopetition. The latter are based on learning networks (Keeble et al., 1999; Amin and Cohendet, 1999) and move between sectors vertically, working with stakeholders who are larger businesses and who may have broad collaborative aims. Shan et al. (1994) suggest that there is a direct relationship between the number of collaborative relationships and benefits reaped by the businesses.

2.4 Networking in Tourism

“Tourism is a networked industry where loose clusters of organisations within a destination – as well as networks of cooperative and competitive organisations linking destinations – cooperate and compete in dynamic evolution.”

(Scott et al., 2008, p. 2)

Networking and the various types of partnerships and arrangements have increasingly become a feature of tourism literature (Morrison, 1998; Augustyn and Knowles, 2000; Morrison et al., 2004; Scott et al., 2008). The tourism industry relies on the networks within it and networking activity is crucial to the survival of small tourism enterprises (Tinsley and Lynch, 2001; Shaw, 2004; Novelli et al., 2006; Soteriades, 2012) as evident in the adventure tourism industry.

Morrison (1998) wrote about co-operation in tourism and stated that it was an important strategy within the tourism industry, in particular for businesses in remote areas. She also discussed the potential results of co-operation as being very beneficial in terms of economies of scale, the development of distribution networks and new technologies as well as training supports and shared financial resources. Anderson et al. (2015) found in a study of rural tourism development in Connemara that there was an absence of networking as well as an absence of provider influence on tourism decision making.

The process of small businesses' entry into networks is under-researched and under-represented in tourism literature (Braun, 2005; Whittington et al., 2009). The tourism sector is recognised throughout the literature as firstly being highly fragmented (Palmer and Bejou, 1995; Wang and Fesenmeier, 2007) and secondly, comprised of multiple networks of varying degree, size and type (Scott et al., 2008), a fact that makes the tourism industry an ideal industry to showcase networking activities. The community in which a network is to be formed must show cohesion and integration (Tremblay, 2000) before networking activities begin and there should ideally be a balance or 'diversity' among the stakeholders in order to gain from the varied viewpoints on offer (Martinez and Aldrich, 2011). Autonomy, embeddedness and place were three factors identified by Hayden et al. (2014) that affect the way in which a network is successful and can contribute to sustainable development.

Coopetition in the tourism sector is defined by Edgell and Haenisch (1995) as the need for cooperation among tourism destinations in order to better market the tourism product effectively and meet the competition at the regional or global level. The rapid acceleration of competition in today's business markets is forcing reactions that demand speed and flexibility. This type of relationship can bring great success because the two businesses can share financial burdens and can help each other with skill sets and human resource issues, but there also comes the suspicion attached in letting a competitor inside another business. Weiermair (2004) maintains that networking, especially coopetition, is the most promising vehicle of innovation.

2.4.1 Destination Tourism

Small and medium tourism businesses are usually based around a specific destination and therefore must consider the local culture and social structure, especially in terms of networking (Grangsjo, 2003; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). Zehrer and Raich (2010) maintain that the destination plays a key part in the decision process for tourists rather than one activity or feature. Even when tourists make arrangements through one company, when they choose and visit a destination they will come into contact with a range of further local companies (Kylanen and Mariani, 2012). As well as an integrated and user friendly infrastructure, a destination must recruit the support and commitment necessary from as many local providers as possible. This will improve the quality of service provided for the entire destination. Understanding the working relationship between businesses is a 'pre-requisite' to collaborative destination marketing (Terpstra and Simonin, 1993; Wang and Krakover, 2007).

The social structure and norms of a destination can be of great benefit to the tourism industry as they can contribute to the authenticity of the tourism experience. This is a crucial element for adventure tourism and other niche industries and appeals to the 'authentiseeking' tourist (ITIC 2011). "... the quest for unspoilt locations, authentic settings and unique experiences remain among the most controversial contributors to socio-economic and environmental changes of visited localities," (Novelli and Tisch-Rottensteiner, 2012, p. 67). This seeking of authentic surroundings and experiences has also given rise to incidents of staged authenticity as reported by Novelli and Tisch-Rottensteiner (2012).

In order to clearly understand the dynamic of a tourism destination it may be useful to consult social theory; the concepts of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (Asplund, 1991; Tonnies, 1993) may be applied to the social structure of destination tourism. The former applies when a business serves the needs of the destination and the latter when the destination provides for the needs of the business. "While small businesses need to work in networks to achieve a commercial quality in their destination product, as in Gesellschaft, large companies need to work in the spirit of small businesses in order not to lose the values of Gemeinschaft," (Grangsjo, 2003, p. 444). Gemeinschaft typifies a personal relationship with traditional social rules whereas Gesellschaft is a more impersonal and often bureaucratic approach to interactions, see Fig. 2.4.1.

Dimensions	Gemeinschaft	Gesellschaft
Norms and values	Company serves the destination interest	The destination serves the company interest
Community feeling	Evolved	Planned
Relationships	Brothers and sisters	Foreigners
Co-opetition	Co-operation or competition	Competition
Network	Social network	Business network
Running a business	End in itself	Profit
Network structure	Independent	Control

Fig. 2.4.1 Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (From Grangsjo, 2003, p. 435)

While According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003) tourism destination policy is seen to be the responsibility of public bodies whose aim would be to 'create an environment that provides maximum benefit to the stakeholders of the region while minimizing negative impacts' (p.148), the development of appropriate networks between small and medium adventure tourism enterprises is shown to have a great impact on the successful development of destination tourism and therefore is the responsibility of all stakeholders; businesses, public bodies and supporting agencies. Destination tourism is a value creation network and within the literature on destination tourism there is a mass of reference to the creation of networks within the localities; specifically coopetition (Grangsjo, 2003). Wang and Krakover (2008) commented that destinations must demonstrate cooperation in order to attract visitors by showing a range of choice but once the visitors arrive cooperation turns into competition for business.

Tinsley and Lynch (2001; 2008) also discussed the development of networks within destinations, particularly with reference to the importance of participation of smaller enterprises. Kylanen and Mariani (2012) found that short term cooperation and coopetition naturally evolve into long term arrangements. This synergy becomes a feature of the destination and may attract repeat and further tourism as well as contributing to the authenticity of the destination. In addition they compared tourism destinations to large scale business environments and commented that "their evolution and destination management offer a fertile context to study coopetition," (ibid, p.63).

2.4.2 Motivations of Tourism Providers to Engage in Networking

Network formation occurs for different reasons; the most common is in order to access complementary and new technologies and markets. It is imperative to remember that with business networks there is often an element of competition underlying any alliance. According to Hall (1999), there are four main reasons why organisations tend to make contact with others and begin networking relationships. The first is adhoc; for no specific reason or in a once off capacity. The second is for exchange; often local or community based there is a voluntary and mutual benefit for all parties. Thirdly a formal agreement or contract brings interdependency. Here there tends to be a high level of contact. Finally, organisations are mandated to maintain networks for legal or statutory reasons, for example, towards quality assurance in a product or service.

It is evident that participation in networking, both in the literature and at government level, is "a key driver of competitiveness for Irish tourism companies," (Lynch et al., 2009, p. 2). "The opportunity to improve competitiveness, profitability and economic efficiencies are cited as key motivating factors for individual engagement in the majority of the literature concerning tourism SME alliances, business partnerships and networks," (Deuchar, 2012, p.230). While increased competitiveness is a featured motivation, small tourism business owners appear to be driven too by a desire to develop local economies, to open up to new markets and to increase knowledge about the wider tourism industry and business management skills. The development of relationships in order to access resources and innovations is an important reason why many SMEs engage in networking (Gulati et al., 2000; Whittington et al., 2009).

"In the tourism context, in order to provide the products and services for consumption, destinations have to effectively coordinate resources and capabilities between participating businesses, which require both cooperation and competition," (Wang and Krakover, 2008, p. 129). Scott et al. (2008) discuss the simple reason for tourism network formation as being based on the fact that it is often the case that the very thing that attracts the tourist to an area initially; beach, lake, national park, scenic area, is owned by the community of people there jointly. This means that entitlement and access to natural resources must be shared and fairly negotiated. In order to do so, businesses must interact and communicate and this is often the first step towards a networking relationship.

Deuchar's (2012) study of small tourism businesses in a rural area of New Zealand found that the providers were "more concerned with the benefits that could be brought to their community by using tourism as a tool to stimulate local economic and social activity" than financial gain (p. 231). This idea relates back to the category of lifestyle entrepreneurs whose motivation to network is not primarily to increase profit but to build a particular lifestyle for themselves, their family and the community (Marchant, 2010), see section 2.2.4 Providers' Motivations to Work in the Adventure Tourism Industry.

2.4.3 Benefits of Networking

Morrison et al. (2004) compiled a comprehensive list of the benefits that networks can bring to tourism destinations, as illustrated in Fig. 2.4.3. This very helpful list categorises networking benefits into three themes; learning and exchange, business activity and community. This list shows that there are more reasons for businesses to engage in networking than increasing customers and profits; the industry and community can also be rewarded.

Small business' involvement in networking activities has been found through the literature to combat barriers to development, namely a lack of resources. In small businesses where resources are limited, most do not have the capacity to take on external learning opportunities or carry out training themselves (Devins et al., 2005). This is why taking part in networking activities and joining a partnership benefits small businesses more than their larger counterparts. Networks create a forum for operators to access information and resources (NCEO, 2000; Witt, 2004). Supports may be required by business owners who participate in learning networks to assimilate the information into their business environment and translate knowledge into a useful strategy (Bottrup, 2005; Reinl, 2008).

Benefits of Networks to Building Profitable Tourism Destinations	
Learning and exchange	Knowledge transfer Tourism education process Communication Development of new cultural values Accelerated speed of implementation of support agency initiatives Facilitation of development stage of small enterprises
Business Activity	Co-operative activities: Marketing, purchasing, production Enhanced cross-referral Encouraging needs-based approaches; staff development, policies Increased visitor numbers Best use of small enterprise and support agency resources Extension to visitor season Increased entrepreneurial activity Inter-trading within network Enhanced product quality and visitor experience Opportunities for business development interventions More repeat business
Community	Fostering common purpose and focus Community support for destination development Increases or reinvents a sense of community Engagement of small enterprises in destination development More income staying locally

Fig. 2.4.3 Benefits Of Networks To Building Profitable Tourism Destinations.
(From Morrison et al. (2004, p.198) Adapted from Lynch et al. (2000) based on a review of Adam (1994); Buhalis (1994); Buhalis and Main (1996); Evans (1999); Hankinson (1989); Houghton and Tremblay (1995); Huang and Stewart (1996); Littlejohn et al. (1996); Lowe (1988); Lynch (2000); Morrison (1994))

Participation in networking allows businesses to cohesively work together in order to strengthen capabilities, resources and synergies (Yeung 2000, Van den Berg et al., 2001). A range of literature has proven that in both political and academic arenas that networking has proven successful and a core concept in driving the Irish tourism industry (Government of Ireland, 2007; Roper, 2001). The benefits of networking according to Morrison (1998) include economies of scale, access to professional marketing expertise, the development of technology and distribution networks, educational and training support and pooled financial resources. It is imperative that a small enterprise in particular gains access to the resources not only of the businesses with whom it networks but those businesses' other networking partners too (Gulati et al., 2000; Whittington et al., 2009). McCarthy and Leavy (2000) wrote about the difficulties small businesses face in communicating marketing strategy among staff members. Chell and Baines (2000) showed that there existed a statistical relationship between networking and positive business performance, particularly for small and micro businesses. Ahuja (2000) has shown that the cohesiveness between partners in collaboration with each other can produce far reaching benefits such as increased trust and reduced opportunism. Childs et al. (2005) emphasised the need for trust to be developed between networking partners. Stakeholder trust can be established through communication and resource sharing as well as extended social interaction between network partners (Kelliher et al., 2014). Bisk (2002) found that mentees are anxious about sharing business details even when their mentor is offering help and advice.

Networking is a recommended strategy for use by businesses; whether in a structured format like 'Ideagen' events as hosted by Enterprise Ireland, or informally; this applies especially to small businesses (Ateljevic, 2009) in order to improve various aspects for each agent involved in the networking activity. In fact, a study from Booz, Allen and Hamilton Inc. based on alliances across various US companies from 1980 found that revenue had increased eighteen-fold by 1997 and where alliances were strongest, the profitability was 70% higher than companies with the weakest alliances (Greengard, 2000).

An examination of the synergy in business networks is a vital part of this study. Synergy exists in networking where the outcomes from a business relationship are greater than the outcomes from each participating business separately. The network becomes a stronger entity with a richness of skill sets, resources, experience and input attached to one community with a similar purpose. Networking gives rise to a set of interpersonal relationships which contain the formality of partnership but also, as Putnam (1993) would attest, involves a kind of social capital.

2.4.4 The Challenges of Networking

Despite the clear advantages to collaborative alliances, many fail before even deciding their common aims according to Vangen and Huxham (2006). Sullivan and

Skelcher (2002) agree that frustrations are frequently identified. The collaborative process is one that must be carried out as a shared endeavour by all parties; it cannot be simply prescribed and followed (Ball, 1997; Peck and Juttner, 2000). Mandell and Steelman (2003) maintain that the failure of collaboration could be down to the inappropriate choice of structure relative to the expectations of its partners. The term 'collaborative frustration' arises when collaborations make slow progress or achieve very little (Huxham and Vangen, 2005).

Other issues in collaboration are to do with trust, power, language, governance, leadership and clarity of shared outcomes (Rigg and O'Mahony, 2012). The same paper found commitment, engagement, mutual trust and willingness to share information and resources were poor in institutional collaboration. The three common barriers to collaboration are shown in Fig. 2.4.4 and comprise the three Ts: time, turf and trust. Before embarking on a collaborative journey, stakeholders must consider the time, resources (turf), and trust that they are willing and able to contribute to the collaborative effort.

Three common barriers that might impede collaborative efforts of agencies are *time*, *turf* and *trust*.

Time: Collaborative efforts take time to develop. Short-term, collaboration will take more time and effort than providing services independently; however, long-term it can save time

Turf: Turf issues surface when an imbalance, perceived or real, of benefits to the collaboration partners occurs. For example, one agency might see that another agency reaps more benefits from the collaborative effort; or, one agency takes on less responsibility, or has more decision making power. Partners do not see each other as equally involved in benefiting of the collaboration.

Trust: Lack of trust becomes a barrier in collaborative efforts. Trust can be influenced by prior or current troubled working relationships, or by lack of understanding on how agencies or disciplines operate, or by personal factors such as personality or temperament of an agency representative.

Fig. 2.4.4 Barriers to Collaboration; The Three T's. (From O'Donnell, 2012, p. 8)

For many sole traders and small business entrepreneurs there is a blur of the line between personal and professional life. There is often no distinct working day and business owners are expected to be available all the time. This can have implications for networking in the sense that they are never 'switched off' from potential networking opportunities, though this has positive implications for informal networking opportunities. Ingram and Zou (2008) discuss the element of affect on business relationships. In tourism and especially activity based, experiential tourism, the product is heavily steeped in affect; the product is entwined with the service providers who create a relationship with tourists. This relationship building is echoed with other providers and networking ensues. For those providers who are in competition with each other this may be the beginning of a coopetitive relationship whereby providers are simultaneously cooperating and in competition with one another. This affect element can interfere with a purely business relationship and may bring about benefits but may also create difficulties according to Ingram and Zou (2008) whose work recommends further research on how tensions within business friendships can be managed. Coopetition is seen to be the most mutually beneficial construct for competitors (Bengtsson and Kock, 2000).

In general, networks fail due to inter-firm conflict, external disruption and lack of infrastructure (Pittaway et al., 2004). Similar factors arise when applied to regional economic strategy formation in Ireland. However, the relevance and dynamics of local governance and community groups cannot be ignored with regard to alliance formation especially in rural areas. Poor collaborative management and structuring can result in a confused sense of authority and consensus among stakeholders. This in turn, can raise questions around ownership, frustration, and paralysis (Norris-Tirrell and Clay, 2010). Marchant and Mottiar (2011) found that a number of lifestyle entrepreneurs in the surfing industry in Ireland are involved in town councils, local committees and chambers of commerce. These providers stay abreast of local developments through civic participation and have even been found to be somewhat responsible for resort rejuvenation and community development (Marchant, 2010).

Since tourism is a product that continues by its nature to be developed at source rather than one that is manufactured and prepared for sale before the consumer arrives, it is imperative that the network is fully functional at the time of arrival of visitors. Networking is dependent on its stakeholders and the functionality of their relationships; this may be a variable factor and thus, may emerge unintentionally. If it is the case that networking does not emerge effectively or in sufficient time then the stakeholders are at a disadvantage. Network dependence is another limitation in this context. If one stakeholder becomes dependent on the network to provide solutions for an ailing business, this network over-reliance can lead to disappointment for the stakeholder.

Though it is comprehensively documented and widely accepted that networking brings predominantly positive outcomes for those involved, businesses must decide if the outcome of cooperation outweighs the risk of competitive behaviour in alliances (Nalebuff and Brandenburger, 1996). Businesses may have to address and reconcile issues of trust defined as favourable expectation concerning other people's actions and intentions (Mollering, 2001), in order to enter some form of network.

2.4.5 Innovation in Networking

Eraydin and Armatli-Köroglu (2007) describe networking and innovation as the two key features of improved business competitiveness, while networking is seen as an innovative activity in itself by Pittaway et al. (2005). "Innovation is the key to changing paradigms," (Shaw and Williams, 2004, p. 88). Shan et al. (1994) suggest that the number of collaborative relationships that a firm is involved in is positively related to innovation output. In an increasingly competitive, globalised and informed society there is even greater need to innovate in order to survive. "Innovation is intrinsically linked with uncertainty, risks and instability. Hence, two key features of entrepreneurship are the abilities to innovate and to take (or manage) risk," (ibid. p.89). De Jong and Hulsink (2012) found that innovation was by far more prolific in businesses who had support or purposeful intervention of some kind towards introducing innovation.

According to Chan et al. (1988), there are three types of innovation; incremental, distinctive and breakthrough. Incremental innovation is when there is gradual development but no major breakthrough. Distinctive innovation occurs when there is a change in behaviours, for example the addition of an extra type of service in a business. Breakthrough innovation occurs when a new approach is introduced and this has an effect on behaviour, technology or a system, an example of this in the tourism industry was seen in the dramatic effect that Ryanair's new approach (Leavy, 2012) to air travel had on the industry. This breakthrough strategy of a low cost, no frills airline revolutionised the industry and changed tourist behaviour.

Tourism businesses, networks and destinations must look to become innovative in the most dynamic and best ways possible by adapting and introducing concepts and products that challenge the traditional mindset. In this way, they can stay competitive in a competitive market. “Ireland’s policy makers had a narrow view of innovation, especially, in terms of what constitutes tourism innovation,” (Harrington et al., 2010, p. 5). There have been grand efforts with little understanding or true results in terms of innovation in the tourism sector in Ireland for the past decade. Weiermair (2004) reported the views of innovation experts who agreed that the “most promising vehicle for innovation, which is co-operation, alliances and/or networks in various fields such as technology, marketing, distribution, and human resources sharing,” (p.8). A parallel may be drawn here between business networks and learning networks, such as Small Firm Learning Network (SFLN) and Fáilte Ireland’s Tourism Learning Network (TLN), in destination tourism areas in Ireland (Kelliher et al., 2008). Matthews et al., (2008) discussed the possibility of business networking morphing into a learning network through what Allan and Lewis (2006) described as cooperative and collaborative group activities.

What is needed is further enquiry into the strategic alliances formed by entrepreneurs and SMEs in destinations during this time of mid/post-recession Ireland. This endeavour echoes the sentiments of Siguaw et al. (2006) who insisted that small tourism firms in particular need to continually innovate. New research should provide a realistic insight into the current adventure tourism market, identify the strengths and weaknesses of networks or lack thereof and highlight best practice solutions as a means to encourage further growth while minimising risk. “Running a tourist enterprise in spatial fixity involves a combination of autonomy with inter-organizational interdependency. Competition has to be balanced against co-operation,” (Grangsjo, 2003, p. 432). Harrington et al (2010) contend that Ireland’s economic recovery depends on “Ireland’s attitude and open-mindedness towards strategic innovation, networking, clustering, collaboration and learning,” (p.9).

2.4.6 Social Media and Online Networking

Online resources and social media have become a staple amongst adventure travellers. An Adventure Tourism Market Study (ATTA) was completed in 2013 and showed that 69% of people use various internet resources to plan, research and book adventure travel holidays (ATTA, 2013).

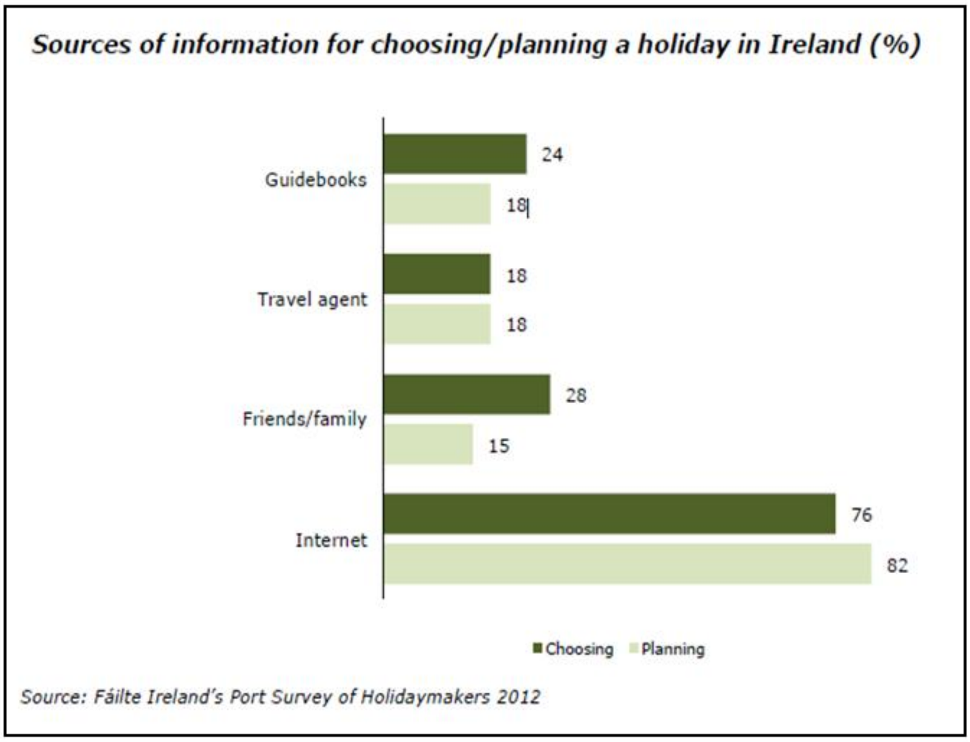


Fig. 2.4.6a Sources of Information for Choosing/ Planning a Holiday in Ireland
(From Fáilte Ireland, 2013a, p.7)

The exponential rise of the internet as a resource for tourists has made a lasting impression on the industry. The online travel market for bookings was projected to hit €251 billion in 2013 (ITIC, 2013), surpassing the pre-recession peak, and representing 70% of all bookings in mature tourism markets (ITB, 2013). As Fig. 2.4.6a illustrates above, the internet is the preferred method used by 76% of tourists choosing, and 82% of tourists planning holidays in Ireland in 2012. From destination guides to individual websites, online travel articles, recommendations through social media, discounts for internet bookings and the flexibility of tailoring holidays to each tourists' tastes, requirements and budget; the internet has had a remarkable influence on the tourism industry in recent years (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2007).

78% of adventure travellers said that they are registered Facebook users. 39% of these tourists post their experiences online after their trip and connect with providers and other travellers during and after their adventure travel experience. Social media, as well as company websites, forums, blogs and photo sharing websites, is growing exponentially (Schlegelmilch and Ollenburg, 2013), see Fig. 2.4.6b and 2.4.6c.

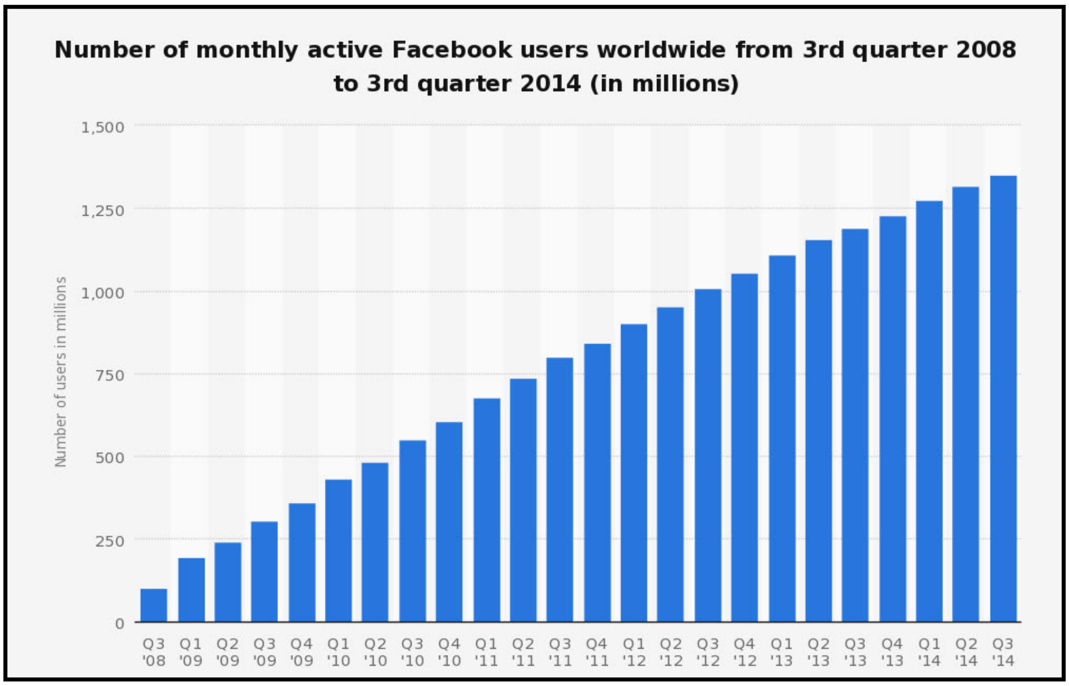


Fig. 2.4.6b Facebook Users in Millions (From Statista, 2014)

This makes it a perfect platform to launch and create awareness of a small business with little or no cost. Businesses can network with each other for free and with no time constraints and without the commitment of meetings.

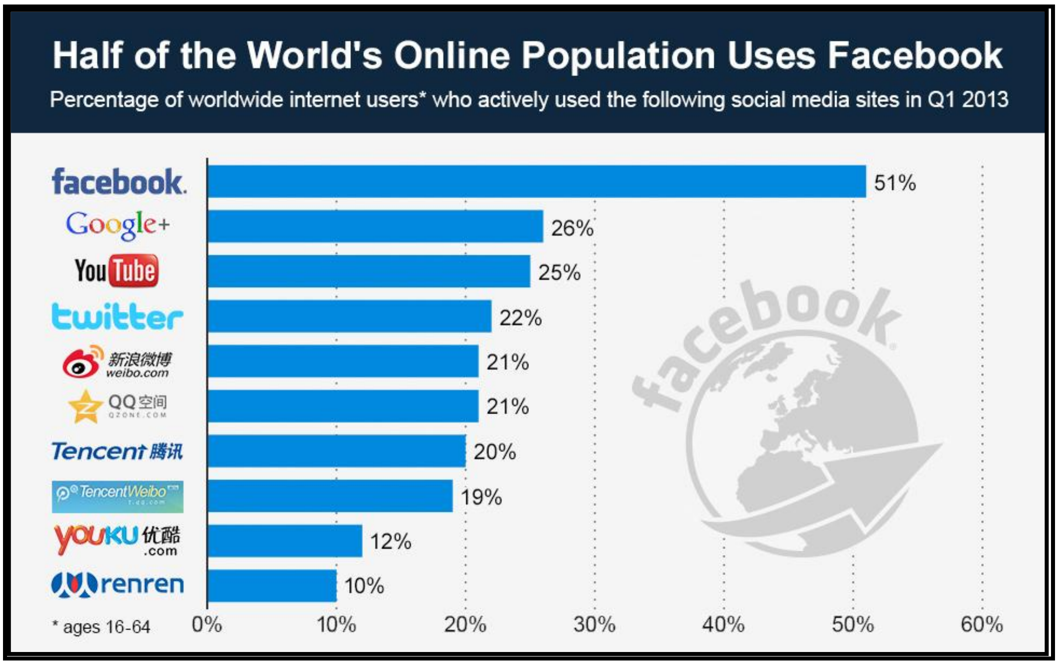


Fig. 2.4.6c Breakdown Use (%) of Social Media Sites (From Statista, 2014)

Businesses of all sizes have equal opportunity to compete and network with other businesses in the same industry or locality. The use of the internet in small rural businesses has been found in a recent study to facilitate social networks and provides improved market reach as well as showing a direct correlation with sales (Sanders et al., 2014).

Chapter Summary

The adventure tourism industry is a sector that is experiencing and forecasted to continue to experience growth. Having presented and reviewed a wealth of research throughout this chapter it may be useful to give this research a specific context. Fig. 2.5 illustrates the key texts and publications that have direct relevance to this research. While a comprehensive review of literature on the two main research topics of adventure tourism and business networking has been undertaken and presented in this chapter, the literature featured in Fig. 2.5 highlights those that are of particular interest.

The next chapter, Methodology, will describe the research aim and objectives, approach and methodology used in this research. The ethical considerations and limitations of the research will also be identified and discussed.

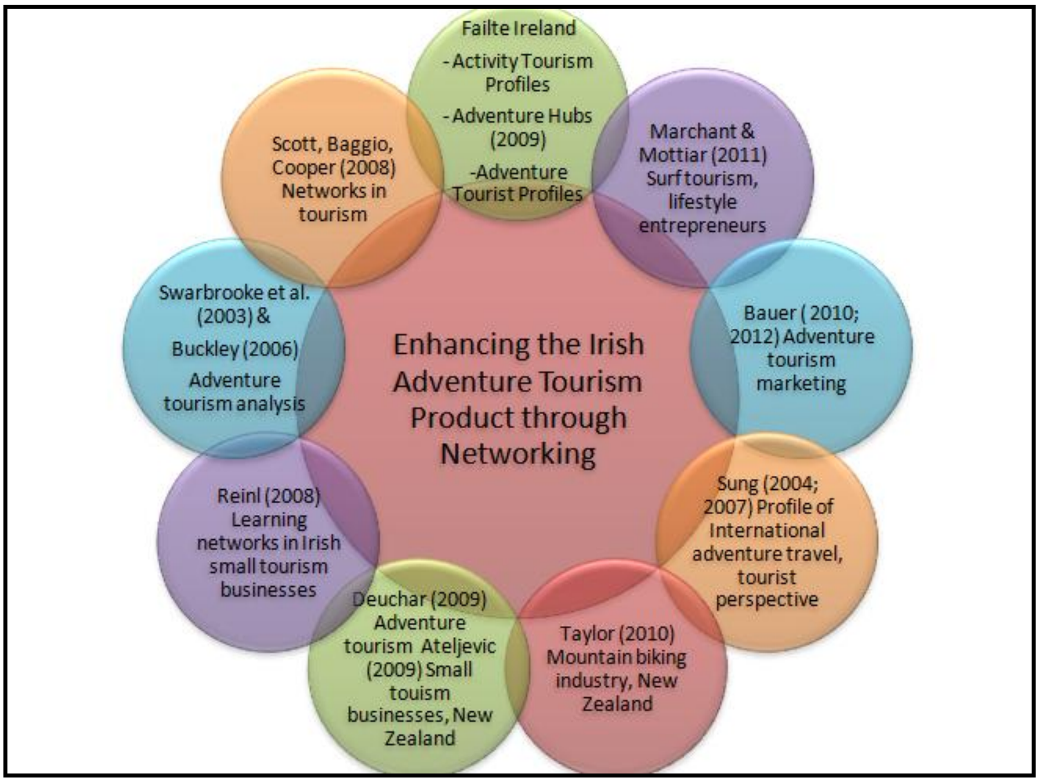


Fig. 2.5 Contextualising the Research

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research approach, design and methodologies are described, discussed and put into context. The process is explained fully and the means and methods of data collection and analysis are outlined. This chapter concludes by addressing all ethical issues and constraints that are expected to arise over the course of this research.

This research explored the adventure tourism industry in four counties in the Southwest of Ireland (4 counties; Clare, Limerick, Kerry and Cork – see Fig. 3.1) and specifically the existence, types and effectiveness of networking strategies in place between providers. These counties were selected for the following reasons; they all offer a richness of land and coastal adventure activities, they include areas deemed 'adventure hubs', they offer a range of adventure tourism businesses and they are in close proximity to the research base in Kerry.

Data was collected from providers about their involvement in adventure tourism, their experience or lack of experience in networking and partnerships and about supports and innovations that enhance the industry.

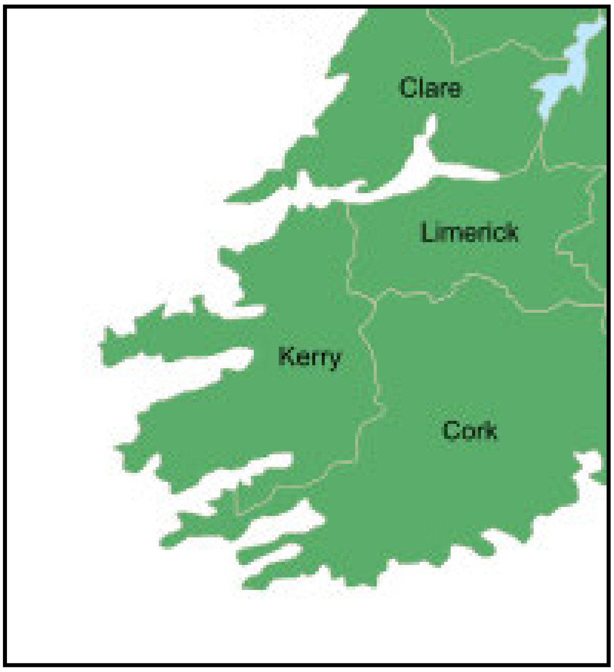


Fig. 3.1 Map of Ireland- Counties to be included in research. (From Collins Atlas)

3.2 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The main aim of this piece of research is to identify and explore various aspects of current networking activities. The research seeks to examine the current situation for adventure tourism providers in Ireland with particular attention paid to networking structures between providers and their effectiveness. By identifying the barriers against and the conditions for promotion of successful networking, this research aims to identify ways to enhance the potential of the adventure tourism industry in Ireland. The objectives of my research are as follows;

- To identify the profile of Irish adventure tourism providers.
- To identify and evaluate networking structures and practices in place currently or in the past.
- To identify the barriers to effective networking for adventure tourism providers
- To identify the supports needed by adventure tourism providers in order to maximise the potential of and overcome the barriers to networking.

In this chapter, the approach and means by which the instrument questions were designed, will be addressed:

- What is the profile of Irish adventure tourism providers?
- Why is networking so important in the Irish adventure tourism industry?
- What barriers to effective networking exist and how can they be overcome in order to maximise networking potential?
- What forms and patterns of networking exist in the Irish adventure tourism sector, and of these, which is most sector-appropriate and beneficial?

3.3 Research Approach

This research adopted a subjectivist interpretive approach to this research. This approach allows the opportunity to view the entire context for the providers during the data collection and analysis. A descriptive research approach was used and network analysis was carried out using mixed methods; qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires.

This approach allows for situational and contextual understanding; the perspective of the provider. This perspective has not yet been explored in recent literature on adventure tourism in Ireland as highlighted in chapter 2.

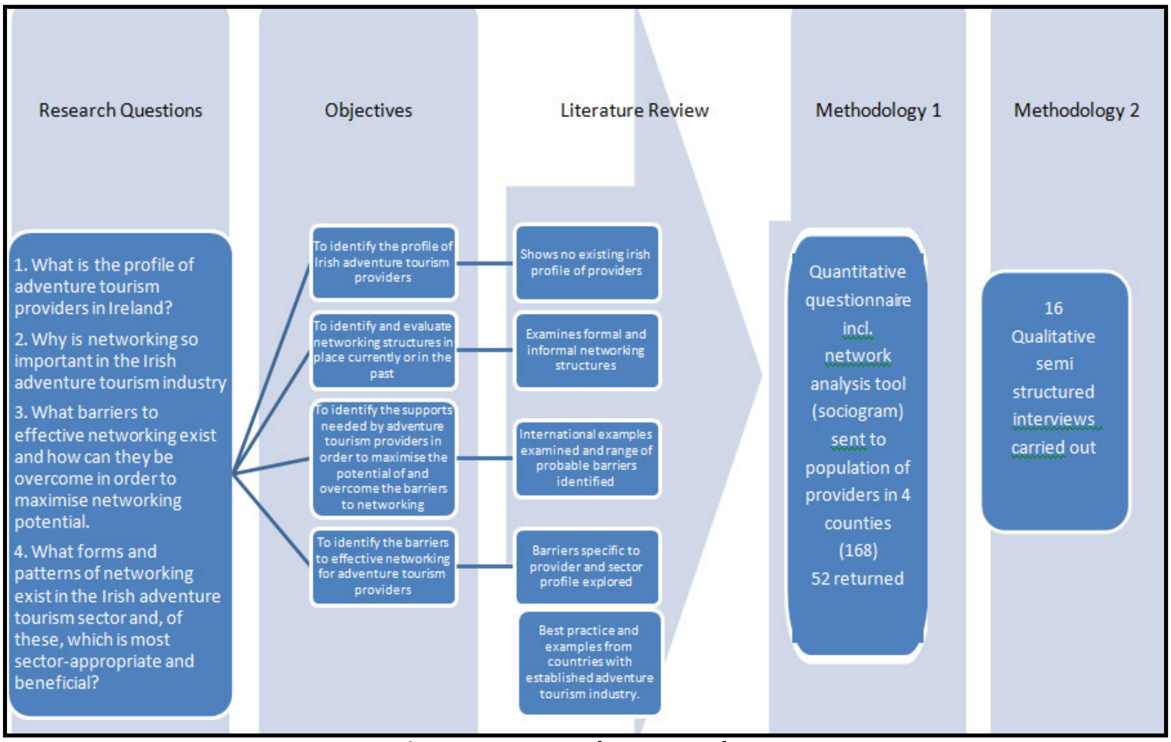


Fig. 3.3a Research Approach

In this study the providers and any relationship between providers is examined. Where it is found that no relationship exists, then the reasons are explored. This research aims to gather information and subjective and situational data from adventure tourism providers in four counties in the southwest of Ireland. As Fig. 3.3a above illustrates, this study draws on the interpretivist subjective approach and maximises the amount and depth of data from the mixed methods strategy. The data that is presented is subjective, reflecting the providers' perspective, and situational, showing the actual and current circumstances for industry providers at present.

An interpretivist approach describes the way in which the researcher gathers data and decodes it; elucidating meaning within a given context. The subjectivist approach is one whereby the researcher is entwined with the research which employs a mixed methodology to investigate the research fully and consider the data in its totality. This approach allows for situational and contextual understanding, that of the perspective of the provider. It creates an opportunity for the researcher to view the current adventure tourism industry from the point of view of the provider as illustrated in Fig. 3.3b. “Qualitative inquiries strive to understand their objects of interest,” (Lindlof 1995, p. 9), thus, participating providers will be asked to give an account of their situation including their personal, social, cultural, and economic and experiential perspective in order for the researcher to gain a better understanding of the current context.

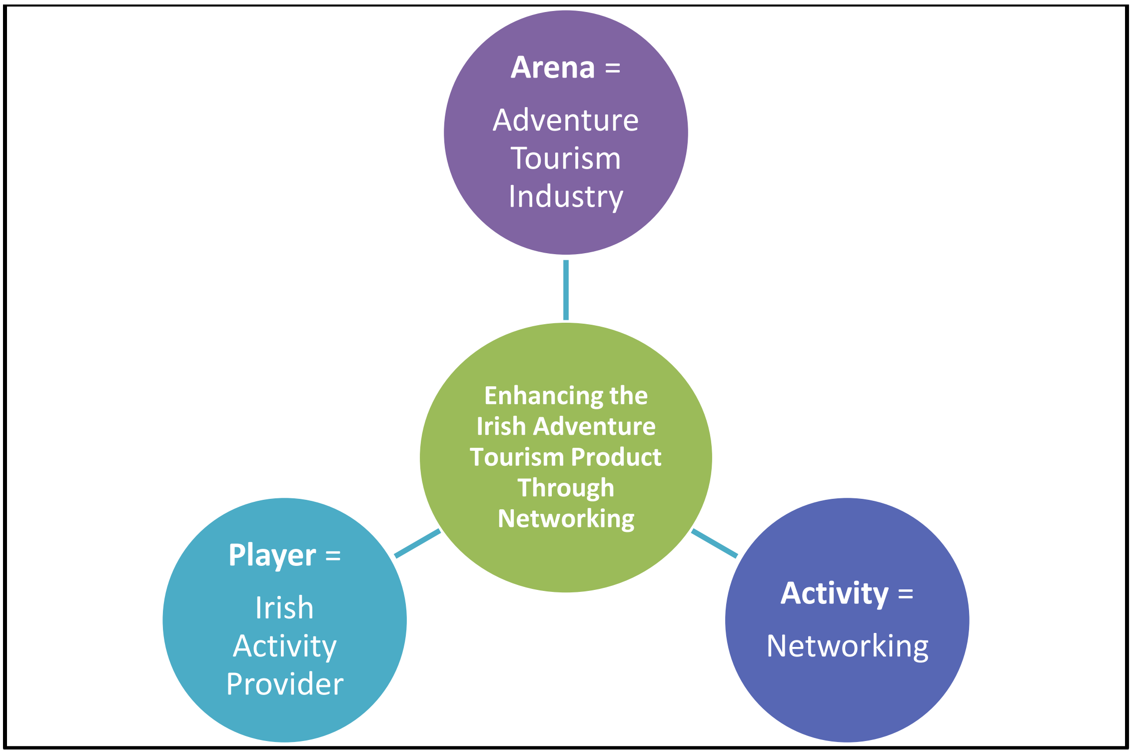


Fig. 3.3b Conceptual Framework of the Research

This research also includes a network analysis (using a sociogram, see Appendix C) of the adventure tourism sub-sector. The data collected will be naturalistic and contain real-life context.

The method employed here is that of a piece of descriptive research and network analysis with mixed methodologies. This research employed mixed methods to tackle questions about networking and innovation in the current Irish adventure tourism industry. The mixed methods approach came about in the 1970s in response to the limitations of using single methods. “Recognising that all methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralise or cancel the biases of other methods,” (Creswell, 2003, p.15). In short, using mixed methods minimises weaknesses in singular methodologies and combines the strengths of those used (Dominguez and Hollstein, 2012). Mixed methods are useful for generalising findings and obtaining detailed data. It is also useful to survey a large number of the population and then follow up with more detailed and targeted questioning. A method of triangulation between current literature, quantitative and qualitative methods ensures that either method compensates for any drawbacks of the other (Jick, 1979). The qualitative and quantitative data represents primary sources and a review of current literature represents secondary data for this research.

The research produces qualitative data. Qualitative research is based on the medium of words, oral or written, and can be enhanced by other data such as sounds and images or gestures (Veal, 2011). A richness of situational data was sought both in terms of geographic location and economic context. The purpose of quantitative data collection is threefold; to provide up-to-date statistical information on the state of the adventure tourism industry, to identify prospective participants for further qualitative inquiry and to support the findings of qualitative data. Quantitative data gives a snapshot of the industry and provides suitable prospective participants for further qualitative enquiry.

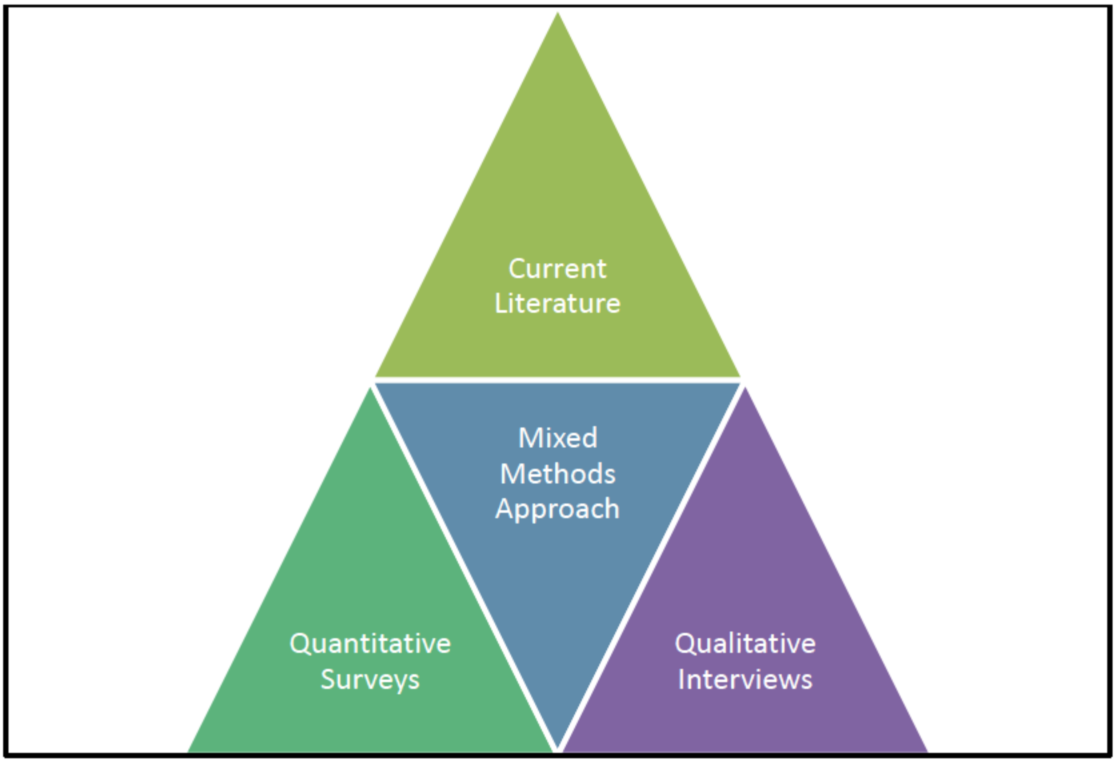


Fig. 3.3c Triangulation of Data Sources

In examining a phenomenon, it is preferable to consider all aspects of that phenomenon together to give a clearer picture of the true situation, "...qualitative and quantitative, natural and social are not in conflict but they should be treated in symbiosis," (Gummesson, 2007, p. 246). The structure of mixed methods allows for more specific and relevant data gathering. The use of quantitative questionnaires followed by qualitative interviews was chosen in order to make best use of the time available. Typically, adventure activity providers are busiest in summer, the time available for data collection, and often work an atypical schedule. The research needed to take into account the possible limitations regarding respondents' seasonal work commitments and availability.

Quantitative research is based on numbers and figures from which analyses may be drawn (Veal, 2011). Quantitative research was carried out through questionnaires and was also used to support the findings of qualitative methods. Adventure tourism is often centred on destinations and providers tend to be small and micro enterprises; including lifestyle entrepreneurs (Holden et al., 2010). The networking literature in Chapter 2 highlights some of the issues commonly found where network breakdown occurs, for example a lack of understanding of the stakeholders involved and their needs (Pittaway et al., 2004).

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach in context-specific settings, where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate but lifts the veil from the ultimate truth (Golafashani, 2003). A descriptive mixed-methods research approach such as this relies on the collation of evidence of the empirical data, both observed and self-reported by the participant providers themselves. A richness of situational data was sought both in terms of geographic location and economic context. The use of qualitative data collection techniques such as interviews helps to identify the causes and effects of such breakdowns where they exist. Where no networking yet exists, potential risks and barriers were identified.

3.4 Designing the Research Instruments

A quantitative questionnaire, see Appendix C, including a network analysis diagram was constructed along with qualitative interview questions of a semi structured nature. These instruments were carefully constructed to reflect the research questions as set out in chapter 1 and to gather a breadth (quantitative) and depth (qualitative) of information about which key findings and relevant conclusions could be drawn subsequently.

3.4.1 Quantitative

The first section of the questionnaire sought to establish a profile of the participating adventure tourism providers. The questionnaire was the first research instrument to be distributed and was used to gather key statistical information about adventure tourism providers, satisfying the first aim of the research. The results of these questions were cross tabulated with other networking based questions to give a more detailed insight. This research is focused on investigating the networking activities of adventure tourism providers and, as a review of key literature suggests, approaches to networking are most effective when they are matched with the needs and capabilities of the business. This study therefore sought to find out who the providers were and how they engage in networking. By gathering a detailed profile of them it allowed for more specific and appropriate analysis of networking within the industry. It was crucial to establish a profile initially and section A of the questionnaire was designed to do so.

Section B of the questionnaire was based on training and supports and sought information on these topics as well as finding out about engagement with agencies, networking relationship types and adventure hubs. Section B addressed the first research question by exploring why networking might be important in the adventure tourism industry. Section C corresponds to the second and third research questions by asking about barriers and about complementary business sectors for adventure tourism. A sociogram was included at the end of the questionnaire to establish the habitual networking patterns of the participating providers. The purpose of the sociogram was twofold; to get a visual representation of the actual networking activities of adventure tourism providers and to provide more detailed data for the third research question, namely, what forms and patterns of networking exist in the Irish adventure tourism sector, and of these, which is most sector-appropriate and beneficial?

The quantitative data gained from the questionnaire and sociogram was bolstered by the evidence from qualitative semi-structured interviews as a similar study carried out by Marchant and Mottiar (2011) with surf providers in Ireland recommends. They found that qualitative data alone, whilst desirable, would result in vast volumes of information that would be difficult to analyse. They also found that qualitative data gathering alone would not take into account the diversity of businesses in the surf tourism industry.

The questionnaire included a sociogram in order to generate a series of networking patterns from the participants. The sociogram is used for visualisation of data (Moreno and Jennings, 1938). Sociograms can be simple or complex and can illustrate networks between agents and give certain information about the relationship. In this research, the sociogram was used to illustrate a simple set of relationships between the provider and their close, moderate and distant networks. Since this sociogram was in addition to a questionnaire and precedes a one-to-one interview for some of the providers, the data sought here was kept to a minimum. Providers were asked to simply identify and classify their networking relationships into level 1, 2 or 3 to signify a close, moderate or distant relationship.

The sociogram shows a one-dimensional relationship between the provider participant and their perceived network. It is a snapshot of a particular network at a particular time and serves only to illustrate an example of a provider's view. In one sense, this shows a very accurate account of the providers' networks though it was not specified (intentionally by the researcher) whether the provider should name the agent in the network or whether they should generalise. The sample given showed both a named provider "Butler's Hotel" and a category of provider "Youth Hostel" in order to elicit as much data as possible.

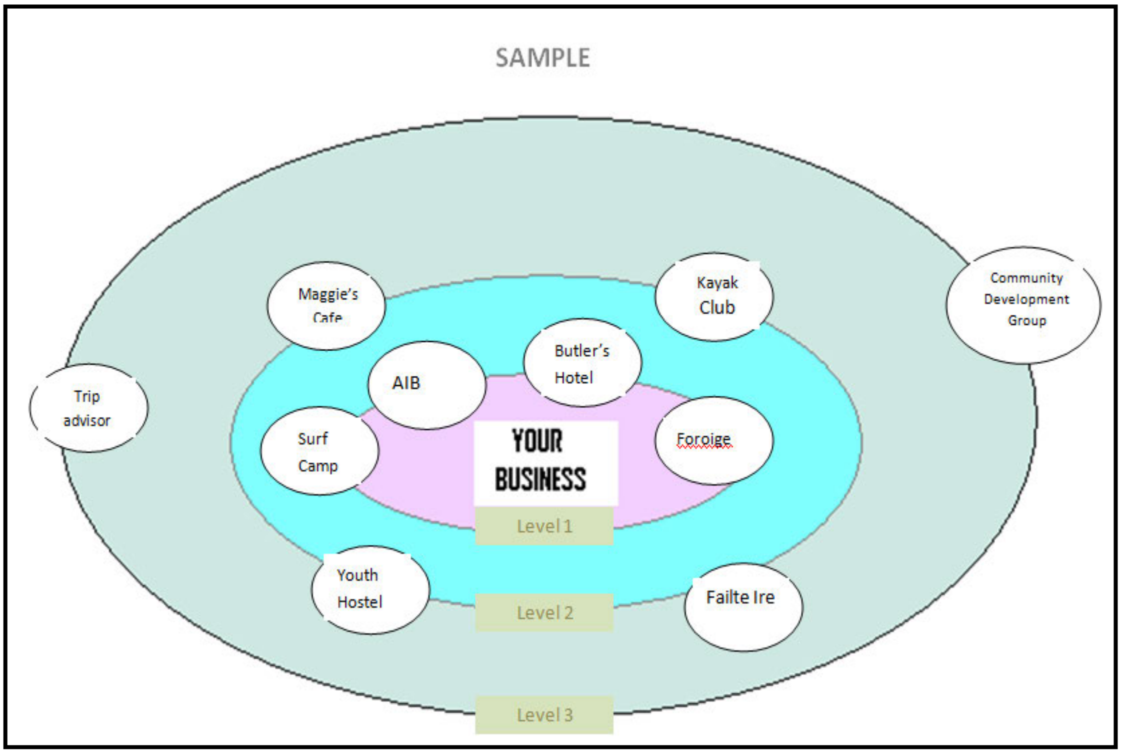


Fig. 3.4.1 Networking Sociogram – Sample

3.4.2 Qualitative

The interview questions were designed to mirror the questionnaire and to be semi-structured so as to open up a dialogue between the interviewer and the participants about networking related topics. The interviewer could use the questions as a guideline to direct the interviews along specific topics and simultaneously flexible to allow for a richness of data to be explored. The questions were open ended and allowed for participants to freely interpret them as they wished. The interviews, in all cases, were carried out after participants had completed questionnaires and given consent to be contacted so the purpose of the questions was to follow on and add to the quantitative data asking for examples and exploring discussion points. The questions were put in such a way so as to be informal and generate discussion. This descriptive research engages the interview dynamic to explore the vast spectrum of experiences hinging on networking experiences of the providers; a combination that has never been done in an Irish context before. There is no existing groundwork in adventure tourism networking in Ireland to inform these questions, so the content of these interviews is significant.

The interviewees were contacted prior to the recorded interviews and asked to confirm that they would be willing to take part. They were not given the questions beforehand but informed about the content of the research so that their consent would be fully informed. The interviewer is known in the adventure tourism industry, through I.T. Tralee and from over 20 years of experience in personal adventure pursuits, and the interviewer's identity was not obscured in any way. This incurred possible benefits and drawbacks which are outlined in the Constraints and Limitations of the research, see section 3.10.

3.5 Pilot Study

A dual stage pilot study was carried out to identify any issues with the design and implementation of the research instruments. This allowed for necessary modifications before the research questionnaires were dispatched and interviews were carried out (Arain et al., 2010). The pilot study would assess the effectiveness of the strategy to maximise engagement with the study and responses to the questionnaires. It would also highlight any issues with the format and layout of the questionnaire and potential barriers against the ease of understanding and completion of the instructions and questions therein.

The pilot study was aimed specifically at providers from the full population who represented different activities and geographical areas to simulate the full study. The pilot questionnaire was sent to 10 of the 168 provider population (6%). The return rate was excellent, 6 out of 10 responded and two offered to take part in the pilot interviews. Feedback from the pilot indicated that the specified date of completion for the deadline to return the questionnaire was deemed too short considering it was high season for the providers and the full study questionnaire deadline was extended as a result. The categories of a small number of tick box answers were modified and on two questions the pilot questionnaire provided a blank space for the answer but it became clear that structured tick boxes with a range of possible answers was preferable. A detailed edit of the document was carried out and some questions instructions were also clarified and/ or extended as required. The pilot questionnaire also revealed that return rates were vastly improved when reminder emails or follow up calls were used close to the deadline. This was incorporated into the strategy for the full study and reminder emails were sent one week before the deadline for return.

Two pilot interviews were carried out as a result of offers from providers who took part in the pilot questionnaire. The interviews were semi-structured in nature using a list of pre designed questions. Since the interviews allowed for flexibility there were no issues found during the pilot and the full interviews proceeded without modification.

When the pilot study was complete, the responses to both the questionnaires and interviews were deemed to be admissible because the content was the same as that which was expected to arise in the full study. In the case of the interviews, it was particularly important to retain the valuable depth of information from the respondents. The structure of the data collection phase is illustrated below in Fig. 3.5

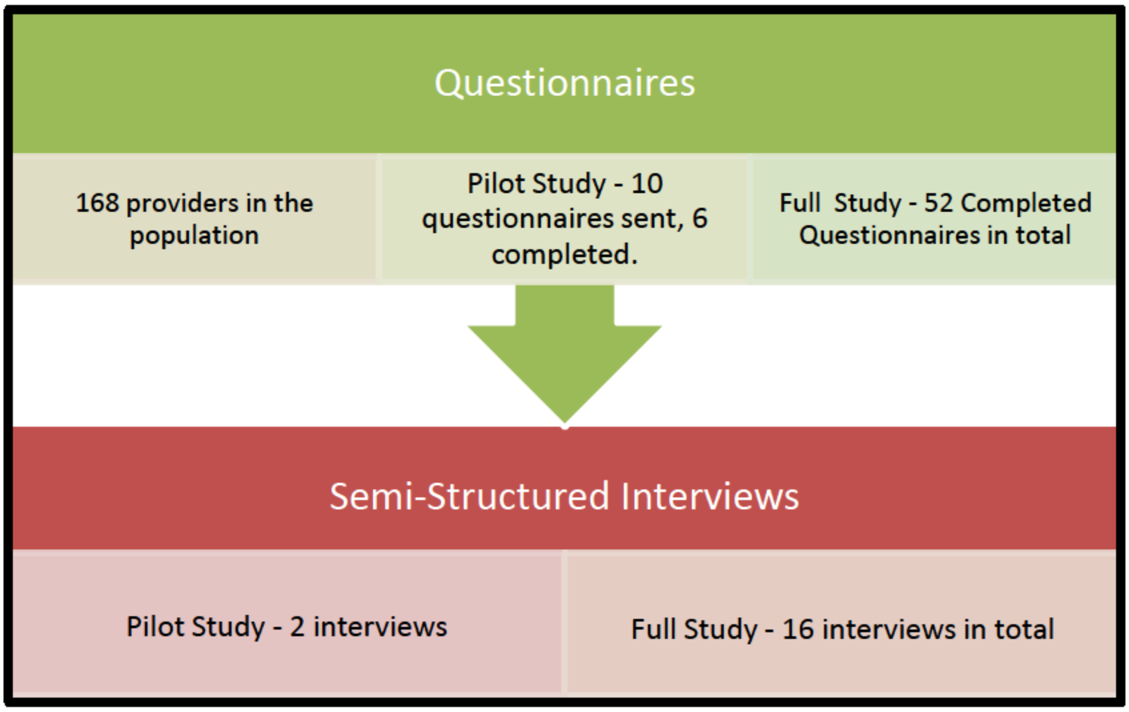


Fig. 3.5 Data Collection Structure

3.6 Sampling

3.6.1 Quantitative

Total population census was used for the questionnaires. The population was generated based on three characteristics. They must be adventure tourism providers, be based in one of the four research counties, and be registered with Fáilte Ireland. Following the pilot study, questionnaires were sent to the entire population of adventure tourism providers throughout the four counties of Clare, Limerick, Kerry and Cork. There were a number of reasons for this selection; throughout the four counties, according to Discover Ireland's online database of adventure activity providers (see Fig. 3.6.1), there are currently 168 providers listed as adventure tourism providers, therefore they represent an adventure hub in Ireland; a high concentration of suitable providers within the location. The geographical location was also appropriate and accessible for the researcher. The individual counties have different and independent support structures e.g. local enterprise boards, and they contain a high concentration of adventure tourism providers.

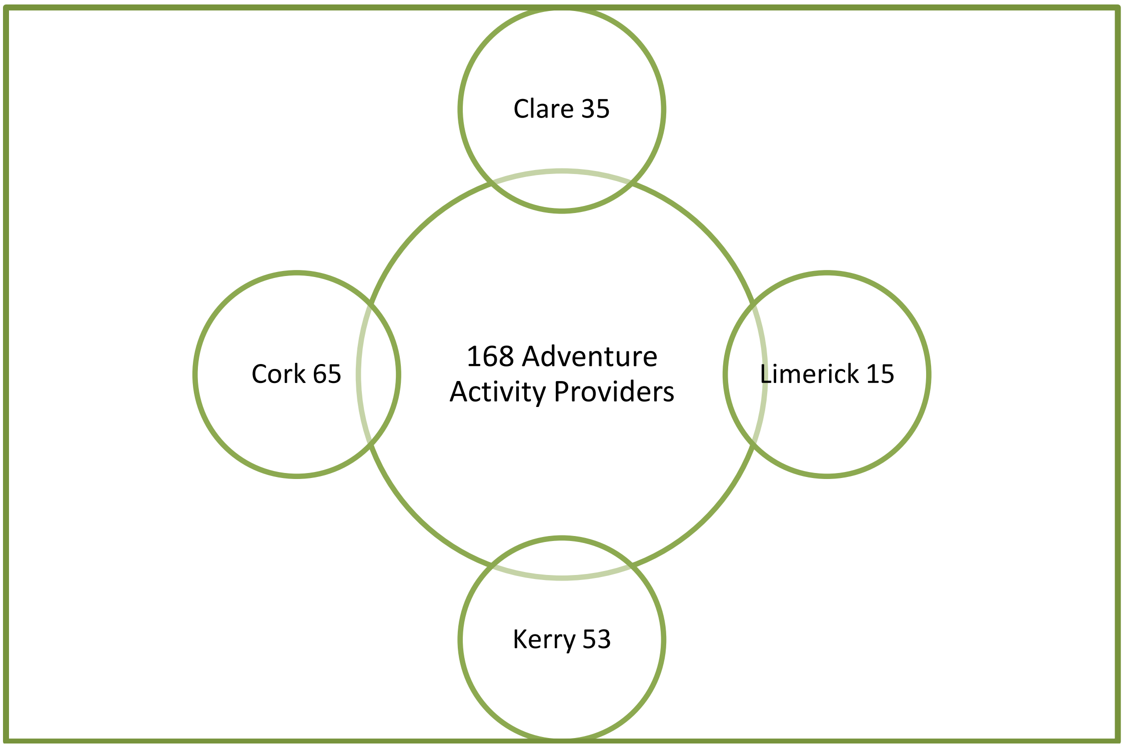


Fig. 3.6.1 Breakdown of current adventure tourism providers in the research target counties. (Adapted from Discover Ireland, available at http://www.discoverireland.ie/Things-To-Do/Activities-and-Adventure)

The initial selection of participants was in the quantitative phase where 100% of the population was targeted and sent a hard-copy questionnaire and sociogram via post. There was no way to predict the sample size until questionnaires were returned completed. Every effort was made to achieve as high a response rate as possible, (see 3.5 Pilot Study and 3.7 Data Collection).

As outlined in the preceding chapters, adventure tourism is often centred on destinations and providers tend to be small and micro enterprises; including lifestyle entrepreneurs (Goulding et. al., 2004) and home-based providers (Cloutier, 2003; Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Bauer, 2010). These providers formed the research population. This was done by gathering contact details through NGBs (Irish Canoe Union ICU, Professional Association of Diving Instructors PADI, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Surfing Association ISA etc.), Enterprise Boards, Internet Research and Tourism Offices. The population of 168 adventure tourism providers were sent questionnaires of which 52 were returned completed. It was established that these 52 were representative of the various subgroups, i.e. different locations and activities. There were a further 7 questionnaires returned which were deemed incomplete and not containing sufficient data to be included. The sample size deemed acceptable (Yamane, 1967; Israel, 2008) for the population of this research is between 61 and 64 responses +/- 10%. In total there were 59 responses, out of which 52 were used for data analysis. This figure conforms to that expected and recommended. An overall profile of the providers who responded to the questionnaires is given in section 4.2.2 'Adventure Tourism Providers'.

3.6.2 Qualitative

All providers contacted for the questionnaire (See section 3.4.1) were coded according to location to ensure the greatest efficiency on return of the data. The data was collated and from the results of this quantitative survey, purposive sampling ensured an appropriate and even sample for qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews. Data was collected until theoretical saturation (Dey, 2007) occurred since it is the quality of information sought and not a high volume of responses that supplied the necessary data.

Expert purposive sampling was used, which is appropriate for use in qualitative research. Purposive sampling is especially useful when a particular type of population is targeted and specific data is gleaned (Punch, 2005). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to ensure that a selection of participants is involved who represents a range of locations and activities provided. Providers were asked in the questionnaire if they consented to being contacted regarding participation in a related interview. Those who were selected for interview would represent a range of locations and activity types within the four counties.

While the location of the respondents, within the four counties, could not be accurately predicted, it was expected that the majority of respondents should represent coastal destinations since all four counties have a considerable coastline and adventure tourism activities are often based around water sports. Participants who were asked to take part in interviews were be briefed again on the purpose and aims of the research to ensure full disclosure, see Appendix B. A brief profile of the interviewed providers is given in Appendix F Interview Records.

3.7 Data Collection

3.7.1 Quantitative

The data collection phase of the research began with the launch of a pilot study and this is described in detail in section 3.3 Pilot Study. Questionnaires were distributed to adventure tourism providers by post. Postal questionnaires involve increased credibility (Smith, 2010); a logo was used to show the researcher's involvement in the third level institution. Full colour printing on high quality paper was used to entice responses. The questionnaire facilitated an easy reply and therefore higher response rate by supplying a stamped addressed envelope, full contact details for the researcher and a cover letter.

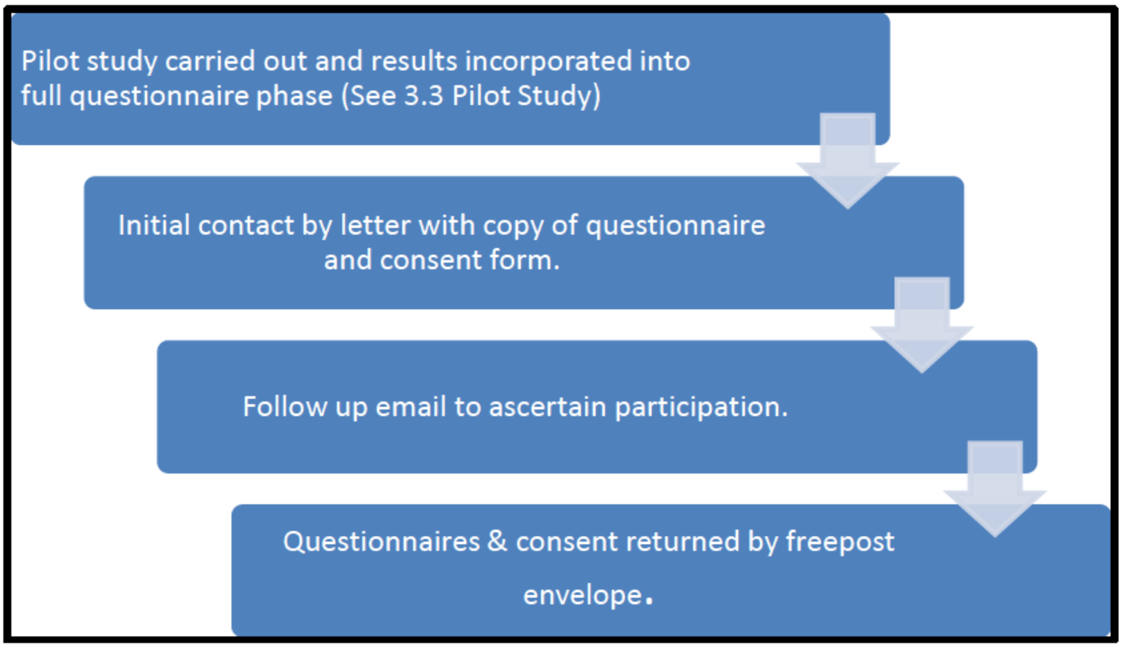


Fig. 3.7.1 Conducting the Questionnaire

The cover letter explained that, by way of incentive, the research aims to enhance the industry in which the providers work and that providers could avail of a copy of the research by supplying their email address, see Appendices A and B.

In addition to the feedback from the pilot study, Veal (2011) suggests maximising the chances of a higher response rate by taking a number of actions by providing; a letter of explanation, ethical statement, hard copy questionnaire, and stamped addressed envelope for return was sent to each provider.

3.7.2 Qualitative Research

Once providers and locations were established, semi structured individual interviews were carried out. The research questionnaire that was circulated earlier in the study asked providers to consider opting in to the interviews. Providers were asked to give email addresses or phone numbers by way of consent to be contacted about taking part in interviews in the next stage of the research. Because the interviewed providers were sourced from the questionnaires, they contributed to both phases of the research. The presentation of findings in the next chapter will, for that reason, make the distinction between questionnaire respondents and interviewed respondents to maintain the integrity of the data and avoid double counting. The type of data nonetheless differs, qualitative and quantitative, and the interviews are designed to follow up the questionnaire so it is not expected to find overlaps.

Four interviews were held with providers in each of the four counties represented in the research, giving a total of 16. The open-ended questions and flexibility of semi-structured interviews were seen as a vehicle or gateway to learn about communities, or in this case, niche markets (Russell and Harshbarger, 2003). The structure and informality of this interview method also encouraged a flow of informal data from the participants. Thrift (1996) suggested that firms can interact with each other in both formal and informal ways; it may be useful to approach questioning about inter-firm relations in a casual manner in order to elicit data regarding less formal network structures.

These individual provider interviews had their responses audio recorded to allow for later analysis and to support limited note taking during the interviews. Recordings were transcribed fully and then summarised, see Appendix F. Participants were fully informed of the recording and ensured that they would not be identified in the final document.

The semi structured nature of the interviews in this research allowed for participants to elaborate on their responses as necessary while keeping the interviews relevant, "This approach also helped to create an informal setting and atmosphere allowing for greater ease of expression from the respondents," (Tinsley and Lynch, 2001, p. 376). The interview questions were designed based on the research questions and objectives. They were open ended in order to elicit as much data as possible following the initial questionnaire and allowed for a semi structured interview that is flexible. The interviewer used discretion during the interview to add or amend questions as appropriate. The trustworthiness of the qualitative element was ensured by the recording of data through transcripts.

3.8 Data Analysis

3.8.1 Quantitative

The quantitative data yielded from the questionnaires was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) tool. SPSS is specifically designed to analyse quantitative data and allows for responses to each question to be analysed independently (known as frequencies) and for cross referencing of responses according to those selected by the researcher (cross-tabulations, or cross-tabs) (Muijs, 2010). By carrying out cross-tabs, the researcher can look for an emergence of meaningful data within a research instrument (Miller and Acton, 2009). This research examined data from providers in four counties and the data was analysed, using cross-tabs, by location to look for evidence of indications of unique behaviours in networking activity, for example. A limitation of using cross-tabs is in not selecting enough or the correct data and they can also produce a large mass of output that can be hard to interpret or identify as meaningful (Argyrous, 2000). In analysing the data from the questionnaires in this research, a large number of crosstabs were carried out using mainly location, business size and gender. Those that were deemed to be meaningful on closer examination were included in Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion where they are interpreted alongside the findings from the literature review. Raw data from these cross-tabs may be found in Appendix E.

The questionnaire was designed to allow for frequency and cross-tabulation analysis as outlined above, but it also generated a set of topics that would inform predetermined codes for the analysis of the qualitative interviews. Fig. 3.8.1 below outlines the initial set of predetermined codes that were generated from the questionnaire sections that in turn, originated from the research questions.

Section	Research Question	Predetermined Codes
A	**What is the profile of Irish adventure tourism providers?**	Size, type, location, activities, motivation
B	**Why is networking so important in the Irish adventure tourism industry?**	Past experience, promotion, marketing, sharing, niche, strategy, trends
C	**What barriers to effective networking exist and how can they be overcome in order to maximise networking potential?**	Financial supports, training deficits, lack of coordination of networking, lack of trust, needs, time, local initiatives, support from bigger industry, local banks, credit unions, Enterprise board, events, training, improved communication, innovation, media, social media
D	**What forms and patterns of networking exist in the Irish adventure tourism sector, and of these, which is most sector-appropriate and beneficial?**	Collaboration, competition, cooperation, clustering, partnerships, networking with other adventure providers, other non-adventure providers, formal, informal, past, present

Fig. 3.8.1 Research Questions and Questionnaire Design

The sociogram analysis is twofold. Firstly the sociogram is a visualisation tool to represent a network so the collective sociograms will be analysed in a basic visual form to report on the density and shape of the completed diagrams from providers. Providers were asked to place their associates in levels 1, 2 or 3 based on the perceived strength of the relationship. In order to further illustrate the strength of the networks named and ranked it may be useful to assign a scoring system to the data which enhances the value of the data. A placement at level 1 is given the highest score (10), level 2 is given a medium score (5) and level 3 is given the lowest score (3). This allows for the categories to be placed in order and for the most and least influential networking categories to be identified. Neither the frequency nor the level individually determines the rank of any category; rather both frequency and level impact upon the score.

3.8.2 Qualitative

The interviews, 16 in total, were coded both with predetermined (see Fig. 3.8.2 below) and emergent codes (see interview records, Appendix F), during the process of transcription and analysis. For greater control, the coding system was employed by the researcher using simple word processing tools.

In order to analyse the interviews a coding framework was used whereby codes were predetermined based on a number of sources including; research questions, literature review, industry themes and trends, and objectives. It was hoped and expected that emergent codes would be added after the individual interviews were been completed.

1. Networking	Clusters/ competition/ cooperation/ coopetition/ collaboration/ motivation/ benefits/ positive past experience/ negative past experience
2. Barriers	Financial supports/ training deficits/ lack of coordination of networking/ lack of trust/ social/ political/ cultural/ economic
3. Supports	Local initiatives/ support from industry/ Fáilte Ireland/ financial/ mentor/ local enterprise board/ events/ training
4. Communication	Strategy/ guidelines
5. Adventure Tourism	Trends/ development/ innovation/ market/ seasonality
6. Marketing	Print media/ trade shows/ social media/online resources

Fig. 3.8.2 Predetermined interview codes

3.9 Ethics

According to Veal (2011), there are a number of factors to consider in the ethics of the process of research and each of these relate to one or more stages of the research. Firstly, any research to be carried out, particularly involving human participants, should involve beneficence; be generally beneficial to society. In order to preserve the validity and integrity of the research, the researcher must be qualified and competent as well as being appropriately supervised at all stages. Figure 3.9 below outlines Veal's structure of ethics in the research process. This graph explains the stages of research where particular ethical issues are relevant. All participants in the research contributed of their own free will. Participation was voluntary and those who chose to contribute were informed that they may withdraw from the research at any time. Since this research involved quantitative and qualitative data collection in the form of questionnaire and, for some, interview, the choice to participate voluntarily and the right to withdraw are particularly relevant.

Ethical Issue	Design/ Organisation	Collection	Analysis/ Interpretation	Storing data during project	Reporting	Storing data after project
Social benefit	✓					
Researcher competence	✓					
Subjects' freedom of choice		✓				
Subjects' informed consent		✓				
Risk of harm to subjects – anonymous		✓				
Risk of harm to subjects – identifiable		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Honesty/ rigour in analysis/ interpretation			✓			
Honesty/ rigour in reporting					✓	

Fig. 3.9 Ethics in the Research Process. (From Veal, 2011, p. 104)

Participants may have, for example, chosen to complete the questionnaire but to decline participation in an interview.

Although this research is not experimental and is low risk in terms of physical or psychological harm for the participants, informed consent is generally imperative in all research with the exception of purely observational research strategies whereby consent would hinder the quality of data collected. By completing questionnaires regarding the nature of their adventure activity business and about whether and how they participate in networking activities, the research subjects were made aware of the nature of the data collection, collation, information storage and reporting and publishing of results. Participants will not be named but their activity and county are used to specify information in the data. The location and/ or activity may be relevant to the findings and also ensures relative anonymity. Informed consent was made absolutely clear to all stakeholders by asking participants to read and sign a written document with full disclosure of the purpose and structure of the research as well as the potential contribution expected of the participant.

In addition to the concept of beneficence in research, it was expected that no harm was inflicted by the researcher, the methodologies employed, and the construction of findings and subsequent publication of the research. The role of the researcher is critical. He/ she must perform all stages of the research with honesty and in a rigorous manner. This is especially important in the interpretation and reporting of findings.

In order to fulfil the ethical issues described above, the following steps were followed:

- In the structure and design of research questions and data gathering techniques all forms and contact details were coded by location and adventure activity provided.
- Participants were provided with and asked to sign a consent form containing an ethical statement and describing the purpose of the research and what is required of participants should they choose to be involved.
- Data was carefully gathered and stored to ensure confidentiality. In reporting findings, the researcher does not use names to identify individuals but may refer to types of providers or activity providers in specific locations.

3.10 Constraints and Limitations

In using a mixed methods approach there is a constraint in the way each method carries different and conflicting views of data. Incommensurability may arise where the consistency of research assumptions and clarity of knowledge differ (Feyerabend, 1993). There are also practical limitations to consider. Time constraints and resource limitations were two factors considered in designing this research. The following constraints and limitations were envisaged, recognised and managed:

- An issue may have arisen if there were too few respondents or if respondents didn't represent different types of providers equally, for example if there was an overwhelming majority of surf providers only. The population of the entire adventure tourism industry in the 4 counties selected was difficult to ascertain accurately because of seasonality and the transient nature of some providers' businesses.
- Issues may have arisen where respondents represent only coastal destinations. It was preferable, even though all 4 counties selected have a coastline, that providers would represent areas throughout the region.
- Seasonality in the adventure tourism industry may have meant that providers were unavailable within the timeframe allocated for data collection. Coordinating interviews between providers could have been made difficult if providers could not commit to specific dates and times.
- Estimating the population was not a precise endeavour. A database was gathered through the providers listed on the Discover Ireland (Fáilte Ireland) website and these are mainly linked with National Governing Bodies (NGBs). Some transient providers may not be actively registered so there was margin for error on the actual population. The adventure tourism industry is not currently regulated or governed by a body so generating a comprehensive list of approved providers is an impossible ambition.

Interviewer bias may be a limitation for the research. The interviewers' industry knowledge, in fact, benefits the data collection process in terms of the interviews. The qualitative interviews are semi-structured to allow for richness of data to be collected but there are specific question topics that are planned, see Appendix D.

3.11 Reliability and Validity of the Research

Reliability is most relevant in quantitative research where the data produced must be tested in order to determine if it is a true representation of the outcome of the enquiry. Something that is reliable will perform in the future as it has in the past (Salkind and Salkind, 1997). A reliable test can measure the same phenomenon repeatedly and will result in the same outcome. Validity in quantitative research requires that the means of measurement are accurate and whether they are actually measuring what they are intended to measure (ibid). Some researchers view the quantitative context of reliability and validity as also relevant and sufficient for the qualitative context but this is not across the board (Golafashani, 2003).

Reliability and validity in qualitative research, according to Bashir et al., (2008) depends on the integrity of the researcher. Qualitative research is naturalistic and often requires the researcher to record data in the participants' own setting. The researcher is responsible for recording and interpreting the data accurately and communicating the results of the data collection with credibility. Validity in research is specified in the quantitative but confusing in the qualitative context. Quantitative data can be validated by using statistical testing, see Appendix E. Qualitative research is said to be valid if it can be generalised (Golafashani, 2003). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) maintain that 'validity' is the congruence between the way the data describes an event and the realities of the world. In qualitative research, validity is concerned with description and explanation.

> "The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable".
>
> (Joppe 2000 p.1)

In order to ameliorate the impact of the possible constraints listed above, the researcher was directly involved in every aspect of the research from design to delivery. Audio recordings were made and, crucially, were transcribed by the researcher to maintain accuracy of interpretation. The researcher personally made and maintained contact with all participants of the research and facilitated the interviews. Researcher bias is an undeniable possibility, though it is acknowledged and efforts to eliminate bias were consistently taken. "Researcher bias can be minimized if the researcher spends enough time in the field and employ multiple data collection strategies to corroborate the findings," (Bashir et al., 2008).

One way to ensure that validity and reliability of research are ensured, including the elimination of researcher bias, is to adopt a strategy of triangulation. "Recognizing that all methods have limitations, researchers felt that biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods," (Creswell, 2013, p. 15). Many researchers (Jick, 1979; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stenbacka, 2001; Seale et al., 2004; McMillan and Schumacher, 2006) agreed that using more than one method of data collection, particularly triangulation of methods, ensures the optimum balance of variety and validity. This research employed a triangulation of; a review of the current literature, qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires.

Group interviews were considered as a possibility for this research but individual interviews were preferable in order to avoid the public nature of group interviews and any limitations that may ensue. Individual interviews are the more appropriate option considering the fact that interviewees will be asked to comment on the effectiveness or otherwise of networking activities in their areas.

Chapter Summary

The research design was derived from the aims and objectives of the research. This descriptive research seeks to understand the true and current situation for providers in order to extrapolate innovative solutions with positive and practical results. The methodology deemed most appropriate for the research was that of a mixed method approach; a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods informed by the preceding literature review. A pilot study of 20 questionnaires and 3 interviews was carried out and the results informed the subsequent full study. Questionnaires with sociograms and semi structured one-to-one interview were used to collect data and ensure validity and reliability of the research. Ethical considerations and limitations of the research were acknowledged and considered in the research design. This methodology provides the structure for the research data to be presented in the next chapter, Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion.

Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a structured presentation and discussion of the findings. There is a large volume of information and discussion contained in this chapter; as a result it will be split into three distinct sections. The first section, 4.1 The Adventure Tourism Industry, presents detailed information on the structure, development and external factors that currently influence the industry. The second section, 4.2 Adventure Tourism Providers, presents a profile of the providers and their businesses. The third section, 4.3 Networking and the Adventure Tourism Industry details the findings related to the providers' networking activities; experiences, motivations, innovations, barriers, supports and patterns.

The sections will be divided into subsections where the quantitative and qualitative findings will be presented. The findings will be discussed guided by the literature review, as described in the previous chapter. The research results were generated in response to the research objectives;

- To identify the profile of Irish adventure tourism providers.
- To identify and evaluate networking structures and practices in place currently or in the past.
- To identify the barriers to effective networking for adventure tourism providers.
- To identify the supports needed by adventure tourism providers in order to maximise the potential of and overcome the barriers to networking.

Chapter 5, Conclusion, will address specifically where these objectives have been addressed across the research.

4.2 Adventure Tourism in Ireland

The adventure tourism industry is the focus of this research. As shown in Fig. 4.2a below, the player, the arena and the networking activity work together to enhance the industry. It is the arena in which the adventure tourism provider operates their business, in which it develops and where networking activity may take place. The industry profile addresses; the economy in which the industry functions, the infrastructure that the industry utilises, the health and safety aspects, the development of the industry up to now and the future trends that are forecasted to emerge. When the Irish definition from the providers is analysed and when the product on offer is looked at, we can get a clearer image of the adventure tourism industry. With the profile of providers, products and the industry examined we can fully look at how the industry is evolving and developing. This leads us on to how networking activity can enhance the industry. The next step is to examine networking in the industry and select structures and approaches that best enhance the industry.

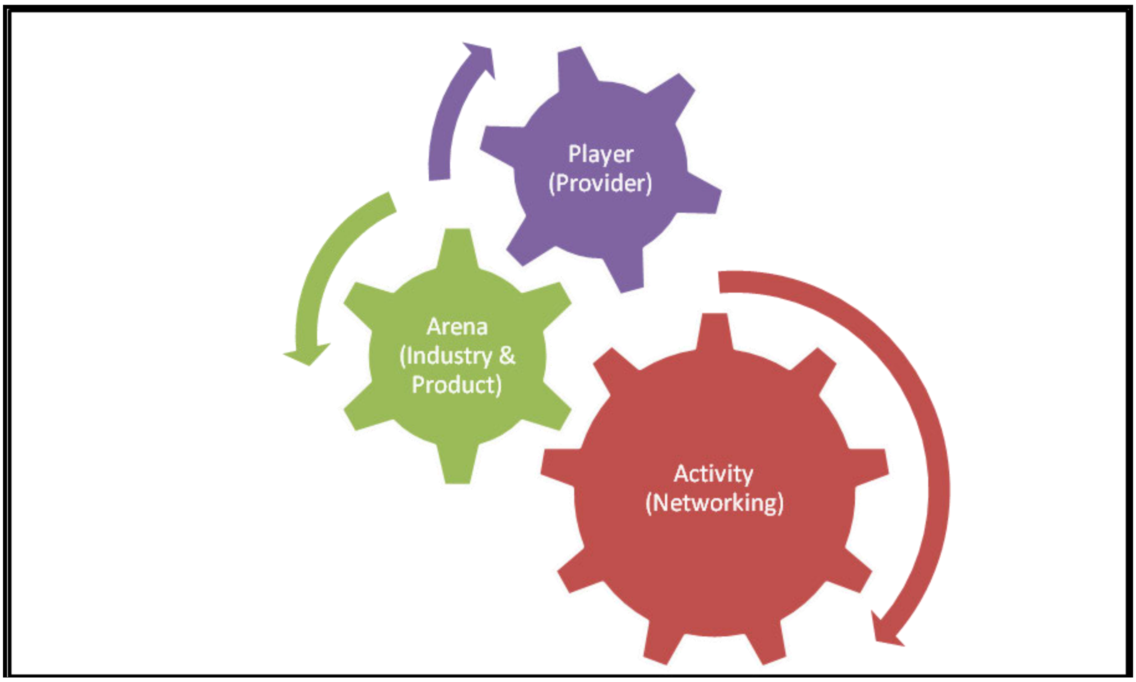


Fig. 4.2a Enhancing the Irish Adventure Tourism Product Through Networking.

The context of the industry is important here. Micro and small businesses, largely in rural areas make up the Irish adventure tourism industry. Various aspects of networking activities within the industry will be explored in the next section.

It is important to define the adventure tourism product to understand what is involved in the delivery of high quality adventure tourism. The providers who took part in the research interviews were asked to submit their definitions to identify what their understanding of the industry is. Providers were asked to define what 'adventure tourism' was for them. The term 'adventure tourism' was a newly coined buzz word, according to some providers, that is being used to promote an industry that has been developing, but in existence, for a number of years already. Adventure tourism, according to the providers, is about an experience; of an activity, an area, a community. The providers' definitions are more of a concept of adventure tourism than the descriptive definitions found in current literature (Darst and Armstrong, 1980; Bentley et al., 2001; Swarbrooke et al., 2003; Buckley, 2006; ATTA et al., 2010b; ATDI, 2012).

> "It's about using the natural resources that a country or location has to entice people to stay and spend money." (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 17)

> "Ireland is kind of a playground for everything adventure tourism related." (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 18)

> "Adventure tourism for me is doing everything I did as a child but now I'm an adult." (Mountain biking provider A, Limerick, Quote 19)

> "You go to work in the waves and the rivers, that's my definition." (Diving provider, Clare, Quote 20).

> "Adventure tourism for me is when someone gets to sample the outdoors in an exciting way by either kayaking,, surfing, or diving and when they get to enjoy the hospitality and warmth of our community then I think this is the essence of adventure tourism." (Kayaking provider A, Cork, Quote 21)

> "Adventure tourism is having contact with nature, people or activities while doing something that is exciting and it can be as individual as the person taking part." (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 22)

> "Freedom, letting go, a break from the mundane while enjoying the thrill of the outdoors." (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 23)

> "Adventure tourism is being immersed in nature, culture, or adventure activities with an element of risk or excitement." (Kayaking provider B, Cork, Quote 24)

The providers offered descriptions of the adventure tourism concept rather than definitions of the product or the conditions required. Providers referred to their memories and experiences of outdoor environments, their appreciation of nature and the variety of offerings available in adventure tourism. The providers collectively demonstrate their appreciation and passion for the adventure tourism industry and promote the products on offer. "Recognition of the value of the emotional appeal of adventure tourism is perhaps the sector's greatest strengths," (Easto and Warburton, 2010, p. 17). The providers show an innate understanding of the outcomes and benefits of adventure activity and adventure tourism which are described by Swarbrooke (2003), Beedie (2003), Hakkarainen (2010) and Morson (2011). While the products offered by adventure tourism providers do not appear to define the industry, they are an important component.

The adventure tourism industry is developing and growing quickly so it is vital that providers monitor developments. Overall, 61.5% of providers claim to stay abreast of developments in the adventure tourism industry. Though still more than half in each county, providers in Kerry and Cork remain under 60% and those in Limerick and Clare hover above 70%.

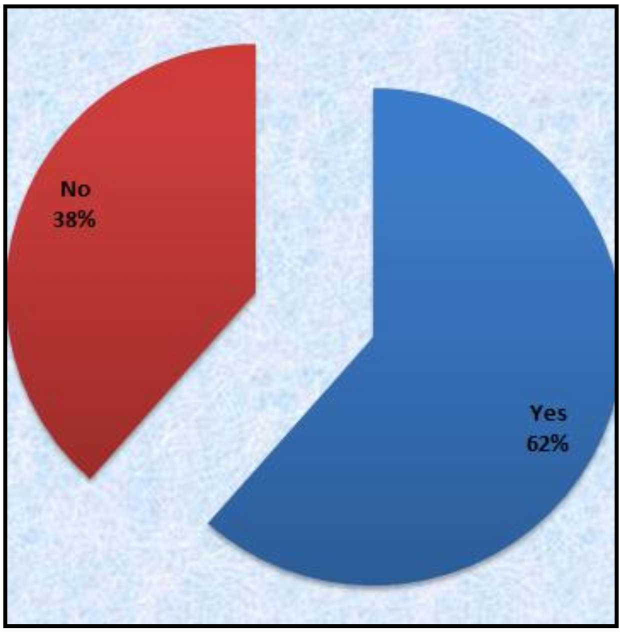


Fig. 4.2b Provider monitoring of developments in the adventure tourism industry

In terms of external factors, "people expect everything to be cheaper now," (Diving and Surfing provider, Kerry, Quote 33). Running costs have increased and it's harder to make a profit. Technology and equipment are better which make for more exciting activity experiences. "There's a real sense of adventure in the clients," (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 34).

4.2.1 The Adventure Tourism Product

The adventure tourism product involves not only the activity offered but the conditions, location and manner in which it is delivered. Nonetheless there are core adventure activities that make up the vast amount of the product in Ireland. Fig. 4.2.1 shows a visual representation of the adventure tourism product. This diagram is informed by the adventure providers' interpretation of the elements that comprise the products that they offer. Each adventure experience is different and unique to the setting and conditions at the time. The adventure tourism product is a combination of the elements in Fig. 4.2.1. The variation and intensity of each element will contribute to the enrichment of the adventure experience. Each provider brings an ethos to the activity they offer, for example they may be pure thrill-seekers or eco-conscious. This ethos is likely to influence the adventure experience and is in line with Fáilte Ireland's Development Agenda (Murphy, 2013) that promotes the provision of enriched and high quality tourism experiences of Ireland.

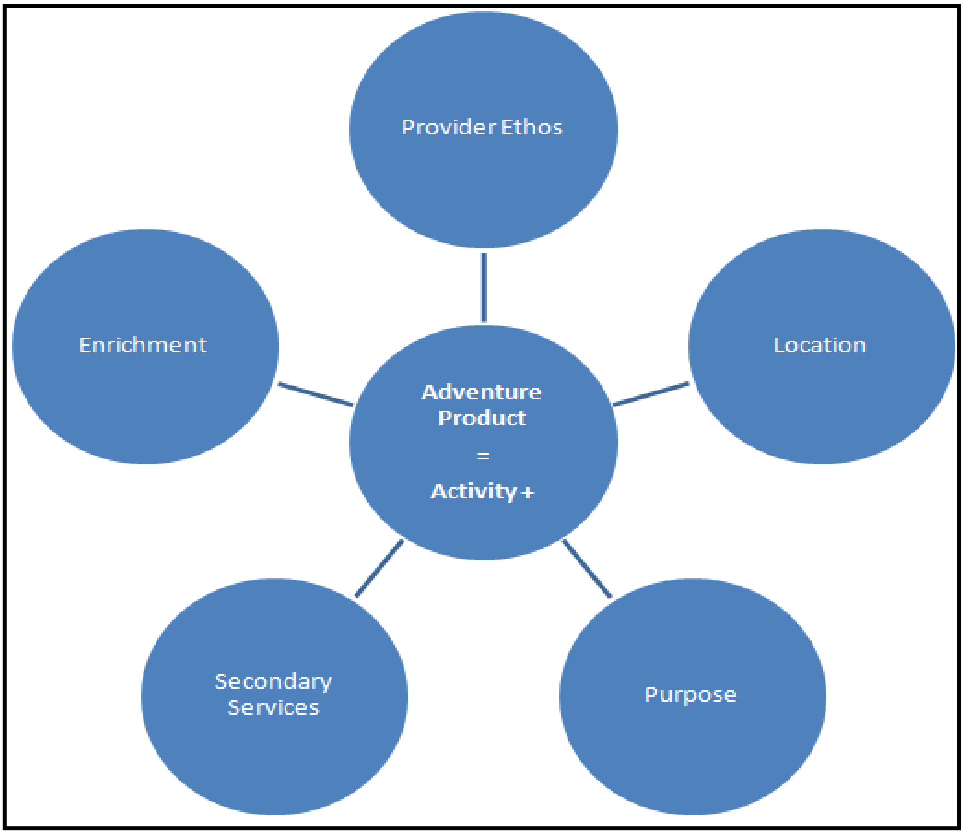


Fig. 4.2.1 The Adventure Product

The location or setting plays a vital part in adventure tourism. The activities require water or land locations, but the view and surroundings also contribute to the atmosphere. The activities at the core of the adventure product range widely. Surfing, kayaking, scuba diving, hill walking, climbing and mountain biking are some core adventure tourism activities, and are the main activities mentioned in the findings of this research. This is not an exhaustive list however, other activities can be included as long as they satisfy the elements of adventure tourism which are; outdoor environment, exploration and risk.

Providers referred to the adventure experience and spoke about bringing their personal interests in local history and Irish culture into the adventure product. The adventure tourism product is not always for the sole purpose of pursuing an activity, the purpose of the activity might be to learn new skills or techniques or to explore an area in an unusual way through guiding. Other purposes may be to learn about the heritage, history or landscape in which the activity takes place; this in turn contributes towards the authenticity of the tourism experience (Olsen, 2002; ITIC, 2009; Novelli and Tisch – Rottensteiner, 2012; Week, 2012; WTO, 2014). Opportunities to blend with other niche markets and secondary services; accommodation, transport and food, may be offered by a provider or in the local area. The adventure product may be enhanced with the addition of cultural, social, historical or holistic enrichment.

4.2.2 Adventure Tourism Providers

The adventure tourism industry is analysed regularly from the tourist perspective, not the provider, in tourism agency literature (Fáilte Ireland, 2009; Tourism Ireland, 2009; ITIC, 2011; ATDI, 2011; ATTA et al., 2010a; 2013). Understanding the demographic, motivations and needs of the tourist (Sung, 2004; 2007; Deuchar, 2009; Bauer, 2010) are also to be found in current literature. A profile of Irish adventure tourism providers has not been found in the current literature, though there are studies on some closely related areas. Bauer (2013) described some aspects of the adventure tourism providers in her analysis of the delivery of quality in the industry. She found that soft adventure providers in Kerry and west Cork identify as lifestyle entrepreneurs and that the businesses are almost exclusively micro in size, mirroring the findings in this research. Mottiar (2007) examined relationships between lifestyle entrepreneurs and other businesses in Westport, Co. Mayo. This included but was not limited to some adventure and activity providers and mainly discussed the importance of understanding the uniqueness of lifestyle entrepreneurs. This research also emphasises the traits of adventure tourism providers and the impact they have on networking potential. Further Irish studies examined lifestyle entrepreneurship motivations, specifically of surf tourism providers (Marchant, 2010; Marchant and Mottiar, 2011), both of which showed that lifestyle entrepreneurs are key players in regional rejuvenation because they attract and engage tourists to an area. The participants' past experiences and motivations to become lifestyle entrepreneurs are explored qualitatively and similar findings are echoed in this research, that personal experience is important and that motivations change over time. Lundberg and Fredman (2012) found similarly that lifestyle entrepreneurs feel dominated by external constraints despite their relaxed approach to business and that their motivations are influenced over time by these constraints. This research corroborates their assertions. Rural tourism entrepreneurship development barriers, including aspects of networking, are presented by Price (2010). Lack of time, coordination at regional level and lack of interest are cited as significant barriers to networking, the first two are echoed in this research but there is no evidence in this research to suggest that there is a lack of interest in networking for adventure tourism providers, see section 4.3.3 Barriers to Networking.

Activity tourism is referred to by Fáilte Ireland but it is the tourist profile that is explored briefly rather than the provider. The importance of examining the providers who make up the industry meets the first objective of this research. This research is centred on the networking activities of adventure tourism providers; an industry that has unique characteristics and a particular structure. The people who comprise the industry must be understood in order to gain insight into network formation and structure. The profile of the adventure tourism providers in Ireland has not been examined fully in current literature and this research will show that it is a sector of the tourism industry that operates and networks in a particular way.

Out of 52 respondents, 39 were male and 13 were female. Over a third (36.5%) were between 25 and 39 years old. There were no respondents under the age of 25. The largest age group was between 40 and 59 years old, 48.1% of the sample were in this age bracket. This profile is similar to that of Irish rural tourism entrepreneurs profiled by Price (2010) where 73% were over 45 years old but the rural entrepreneurs were mainly female unlike the respondents here. Adventure operators from all four counties responded to and returned the questionnaire. Kerry was represented by 18 providers, Cork by 15, Clare by 11 and Limerick by 8, see Fig. 4.2.2a. There were 16 interviews following the questionnaire and the proportionate breakdown was similar, as illustrated in Fig. 4.2.2b. These figures are generally proportionate to the population of adventure tourism providers contacted initially in each county.

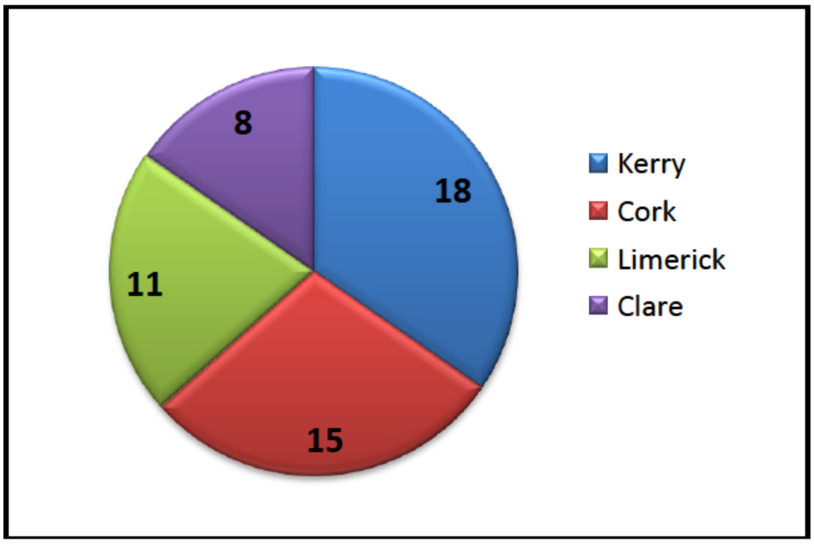


Fig. 4.2.2a Breakdown of Participating Providers – Questionnaire

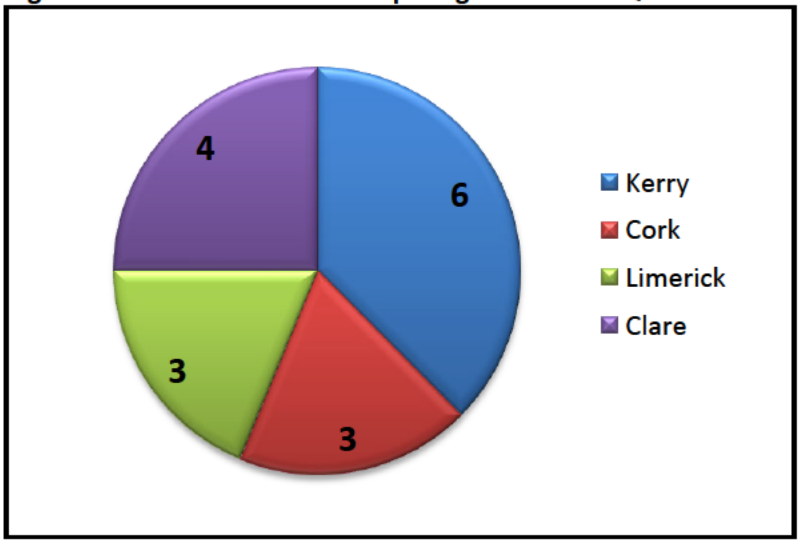


Fig. 4.2.2b Breakdown of Participating Providers – Interviews

The respondents were asked to identify the size of their business. Definitions for business size were not provided; providers identified their business size based on their own judgement. Micro firms, often simply labelled 'small', are the most common business size in the Irish tourism industry (Fáilte Ireland, 2004) and make up over 90% of all business sizes in the European economy (European Commission, 2011; Bauer, 2013). The questionnaires showed that 92.3% identified their business as 'small'. The remaining 7.7% said that the business was 'medium' sized and there were no 'large' businesses in the sample. The adventure tourism providers in this research represent the same proportion of businesses sizes across Europe and as such, the characteristics and needs of small tourism businesses set them apart from larger firms and should be considered, as discussed later in this chapter. The majority of respondents (73.1%) were owners of the adventure tourism business. A further 19.2% identified themselves as managers and the remainder (7.7%) were lead instructors. None of the respondents identified themselves as marketing staff, though this role may have been within the responsibilities of the other labels. The sharing and blending of roles within small businesses is common and expected (Deuchar, 2012). Bauer (2013) found that operators provide a high quality service but can be lacking in administrative and communicative aspects.

The respondents were asked to identify the main activities of their business. 20 out of the 52 providers (38.5%) said that they ran a multi activity centre. In a subsequent question, the providers were asked to identify their main activity. The main activities identified were water based (surfing 19.2% and sailing 15.4%), this is unsurprising as the four counties all boast considerable coastlines and/ or rivers. As shown in Fig. 4.2.2c below, surfing and sailing were the biggest primary activity types from the sample at 16 and 9 providers respectively. The other providers' activities were mountain biking (6), horse riding (5), rock climbing (4), and hill walking (4).

Kayaking, windsurfing, kitesurfing and scuba diving were not primary activities but accompanied those mentioned above in multi activity centres; they were not stand alone activities.

Primary Activity	Number	% of total
Surfing	16	30.7%
Sailing	9	17%
Mountain biking	6	11.5%
Horse riding	5	9.6%
Rock Climbing	4	7.7%
Hill walking	4	7.7%
Scuba diving	2	3.8%
Kitesurfing	2	3.8%
Windsurfing	2	3.8%
Kayaking	2	3.8%

Fig. 4.2.2c Primary Activities of Providers

Providers were asked whether they provided extra services in addition to adventure activities. It was not specified whether they provide these services themselves or whether they combine their product with another provider in order to offer extra services. The majority (50%) said that they offer accommodation. 30.6% offer only the adventure activity. Food and transport were offered by 11.5% and 7.7% respectively, see Fig. 4.2.2d below.

Secondary service offered		Number	Percent
	Accommodation	26	50%
	Food/meals	6	11.5%
	Transport	4	7.7%
	None	16	30.8%
	Total	52	100%

Fig. 4.2.2d Secondary Services Offered by Providers

On further enquiry into why so few providers offer meals, particularly considering 50% offer accommodation, they appear to be able to provide self catering or hostel style rooms to rent or perhaps bed and breakfast facilities but 'food' here refers to lunch and dinner. These would require much more regulation, investment and staffing and the providers prefer to stay flexible and recommend local food providers than attempt to compete on another platform.

Providers' Motivations

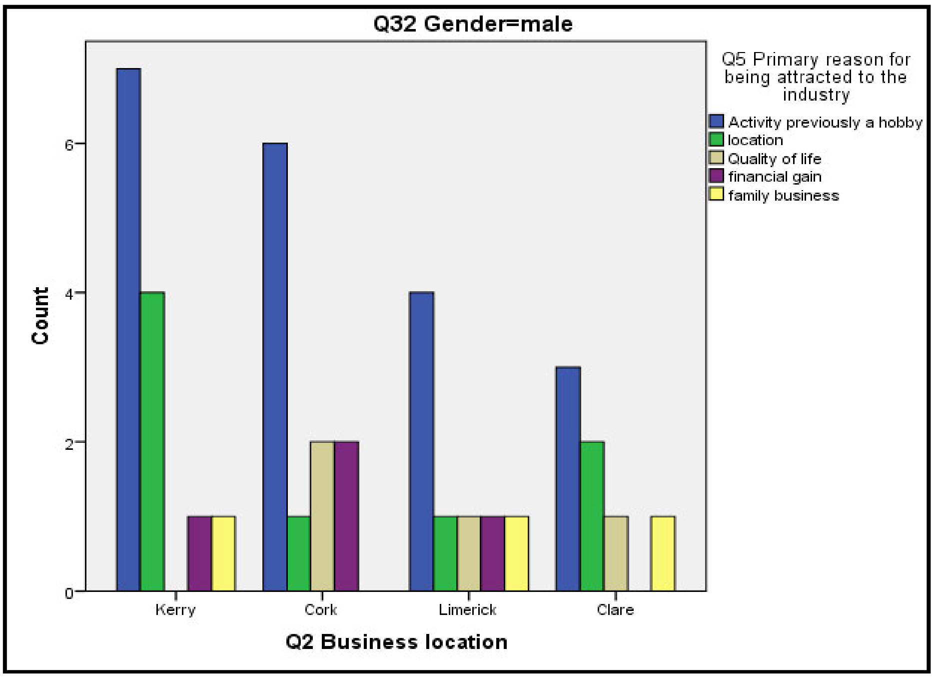
The providers were asked in the questionnaires to specify the primary reason for their attraction to work in the adventure tourism industry. 58% of providers said that their motivations included the fact that their activity had previously been a hobby. This was a primary motivation for 26.6% of providers. Quality of life (44%) and location of the business (42%) were also strong factors, followed by the attraction of becoming self employed (36%). Financial gain, in 16% of cases, was the least motivating factor for the providers. These figures are shown in the table below, Fig. 4.2.2e.

Focussing on the highest and lowest rated motivations; 58% of providers said that they were motivated to work in an industry that was also their hobby and financial gain was the least important motivation at 16%, suggests that the type of business owners in the Irish adventure tourism industry may be called 'lifestyle entrepreneurs' (Heelas and Morris, 1992; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000; Mottiar, 2007).

Motivation	Primary motivation	Selected as one of the providers' motivations, (% of cases)
Activity previously a hobby	26.6%	58%
Quality of life	20.2%	44%
Location	19.3%	42%
Self employment	16.5%	36%
Family business	10.1%	22%
Financial gain	7.3%	16%

Fig. 4.2.2e Activity Providers' Motivations

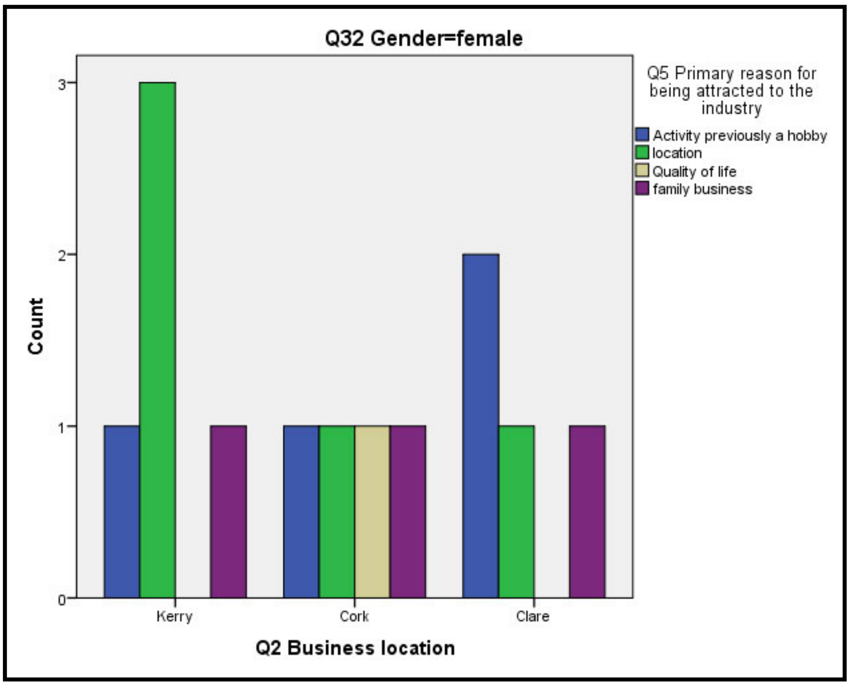
O'Farrell (1986) characterised the Irish entrepreneur as being in one of three following categories; the graduate entrepreneur, the opportunist entrepreneur, or the craftsman entrepreneur. The findings indicate that in the past; adventure providers came from the 'craftsman entrepreneur' category, where the adventure activity was seen to be the 'craft', and increasingly from the 'opportunist entrepreneur' category where a change in circumstance and a long held desire to start an adventure based business is fulfilled.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 0.235. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.2.2f Attraction to adventure tourism industry by location; male

The results of the primary reason for being attracted to the adventure tourism industry, as seen below, was cross referenced with location and gender to see if there was a variation in either factor.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 0.235. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

4.2.2g Attraction to adventure tourism industry by location; female

There is a marked difference in the gender; Fig. 4.2.2f shows that the males' attraction to the adventure tourism industry is predominantly based on the activity having previously been a hobby. The female providers' main motivations are quite evenly spread with location clearly in front, 60%, for Kerry providers, see Fig. 4.2.2g.

In Kerry, activity being a previous hobby and location are the overwhelming primary reasons for the providers entering the adventure tourism industry, while no providers from Kerry consider quality of life as preferable. In Cork and Limerick, activity a previous hobby was the clear primary motivation with all other motivations relatively evenly spread. While in Clare the same primary motivation prevails but financial gain does not feature at all.

The quantitative results reflect the simple reasons for choosing adventure tourism as a career, however the qualitative findings express the depth of knowledge and passion that many providers have for their business and their activities. The opportunity to become a lifestyle entrepreneur, for economic reasons, was mentioned during the interviews and contradicted much of the literature. Although lifestyle is a motivation to work in adventure tourism (Heelas and Morris, 1992; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000; Gray, 2002; Mottiar, 2007 and Rimmington et al., 2012), so too is the need to pursue a career and grow the business for these providers. The lifestyle element of the providers' motivations seems to become diluted over time because of more immediate business concerns but the passion for the activities remains strong and this suggests that the entrepreneurs display characteristics of 'hybrid entrepreneurship' over time (Thorgren et al., 2014).

When asked specifically what attracted them to the adventure tourism industry all the interviewed providers said that they were adventure enthusiasts or had a love of the outdoors before venturing into the adventure tourism sector. 19% of providers mentioned the fact that they had been working in other industries before coming into adventure tourism but that they were hobby surfers, divers and climbers respectively. When the economic conditions changed in Ireland and their former work dried up they had an opportunity to turn to a new discipline; adventure tourism and make a hobby into a career.

> "My office now is the sea and the mountains. It's a lovely view!" (Rock climbing and Kayaking provider, Clare, Quote 1)

Nine, over half of the providers interviewed alluded to the idea that their primary motivation was to be immersed in the outdoor and adventure environment as well as to pass on a deep appreciation and respect for nature and all it has to offer. Ireland was described by one provider as nature's playground referring to the vast and exciting options on offer,

> "Ireland is kind of a playground for everything adventure tourism related you know," (Surf provider, Kerry, Quote 2).

The same provider said that he had seen how a surf school was set up in Australia and decided to do the same on his return to Ireland from extended travel. The pursuit of a career in the adventure tourism industry was seen to be primarily out of a genuine love and passion for the providers' respective activities and a responsibility to introduce clients to positive experiences.

Providers were asked in the interviews to describe the positive aspects of working in the adventure tourism industry. Job satisfaction was the leading response. The providers spoke fondly of the 'buzz' of teaching a new skills, facilitating exciting activity sessions and providing satisfying experiences for clients, especially children and those from abroad

> “When somebody comes back and says ‘Oh that was great day, I really enjoyed that.’ To me that’s a really successful day,” (Kayaking provider B, Cork, Quote 3).

> “...even tourists who’ve come to Ireland and never expected to surf here so that’s a real buzz you get out of it,” (Surf provider, Kerry, Quote 4).

Other positive aspects mentioned were; working in a fun industry, getting paid for work that is so enjoyable, meeting other enthusiastic providers and the flexibility of working for oneself (where applicable).

The providers discussed taking advantage of nature’s amenities and being out in the fresh air, no traffic, culture, work doing something that is a personal passion, meeting nice new people every day, creating employment, supporting a family, doing something that is really a hobby, and freedom to dictate time and schedule.

To truly understand what motivates the providers in the adventure tourism industry it is important to also consider possible demotivating factors. During the interviews the providers were asked to describe any negative aspects of working in the tourism industry. Overall the providers said that they enjoyed their work but some of the negative aspects that eroded motivation were; financial strain, long hours and early starts, time consuming and costly preparation work, being undercut by voucher deals and unqualified providers, over competitiveness of some providers, no regulation within the industry, high running costs and health and safety obligations, unpredictable weather, no financial safety net as an entrepreneur, difficulty in predicting the season ahead for planning purposes. They described how other providers caused upset and generally tainted the industry. Participants expressed their frustration at the reluctance of other businesses to reciprocate efforts to promote each other’s businesses.

> “They don’t see the bigger picture about how they’re going to benefit by giving out a flyer for kayaking,” (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 5).

4.2.3 Business Performance and Differentiation

In the questionnaire, the providers were asked to agree or disagree with statements in relation to the recent economic downturn in Ireland. Concerning the economy, a huge majority (80.6%) of providers agreed that the economic downturn has negatively impacted their business. This is linked to, but does not necessarily correspond with a decrease in client numbers; 61.3% said there was a reduction in domestic clients but only 25.8% said that international client numbers were down. This correlates to reduced visitor numbers, in international but far more domestically, as reported by Fáilte Ireland and ITIC. This could also suggest that the client spend and frequency of return visits is reduced which would still affect the negative downturn.

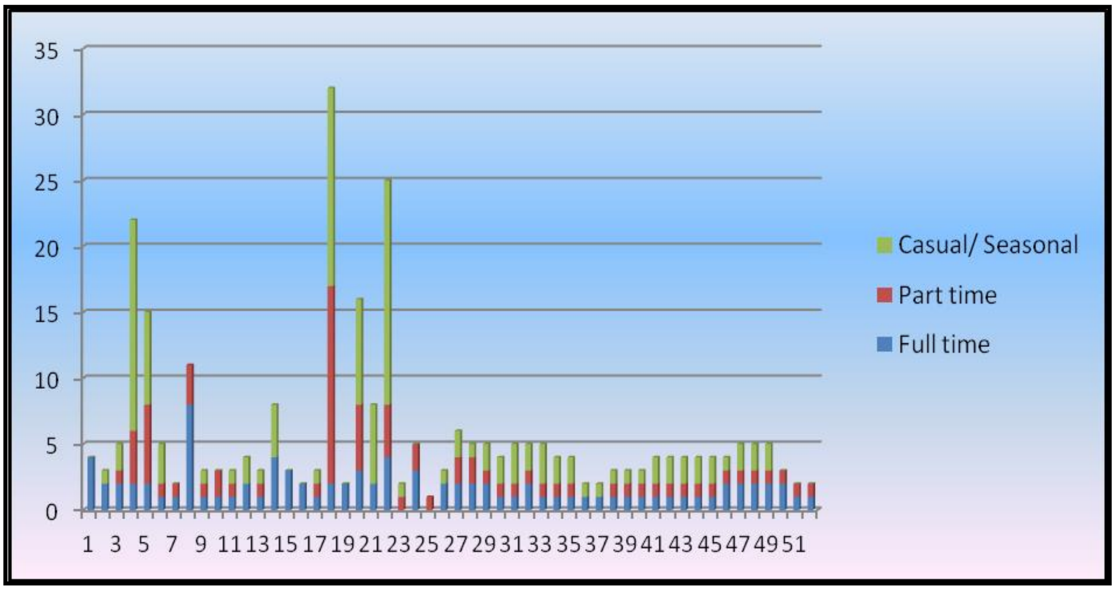


Fig. 4.2.3a Breakdown of Staff Levels by Adventure Tourism Provider

Higher running costs, insurance and the availability of credit may also have had an economic affect on the businesses though the latter two were not addressed in this section. 88.5% of respondents said that operating costs was a barrier of medium to high impact. One major operating cost identified during the interviews is maintaining staff levels, particularly in high season and where safety ratios are required. Irish tourism businesses are estimated to provide employment for 180,000 people in Ireland (ITIC, 2011). Fig. 4.2.3a shows the breakdown of staff types per provider according to the questionnaire data. The horizontal axis shows the 52 providers and the vertical axis shows the number of staff employed, including the owner themselves.

This diagram (Fig. 4.2.3a) shows that the majority of adventure tourism businesses among the research population operate with low levels of full time staff (less than 5) and that part time and casual staff are used to supplement the business as required. The adventure tourism providers may consider associated costs as a barrier to their business but in terms of local and rural development, even modest job creation is beneficial and serves to boost communities (Deuchar, 2012). Hall (1999) considers this a reason for small businesses to engage in networking.

The majority (55.8%) of providers said that their marketing budget had reduced as a result of the economic downturn. 75% said that they needed to innovate in order to attract clients. The use of social media and online marketing strategies are increasingly considered to be crucial for adventure tourism providers (Bauer, 2012) as they are more cost and time efficient than traditional marketing methods and can be used to reflect a visual and exciting business ethos efficiently. The research findings show that the economic impact on businesses has not driven the adventure providers to reduce the amount of activities on offer, as shown below in Fig. 4.2.3b.

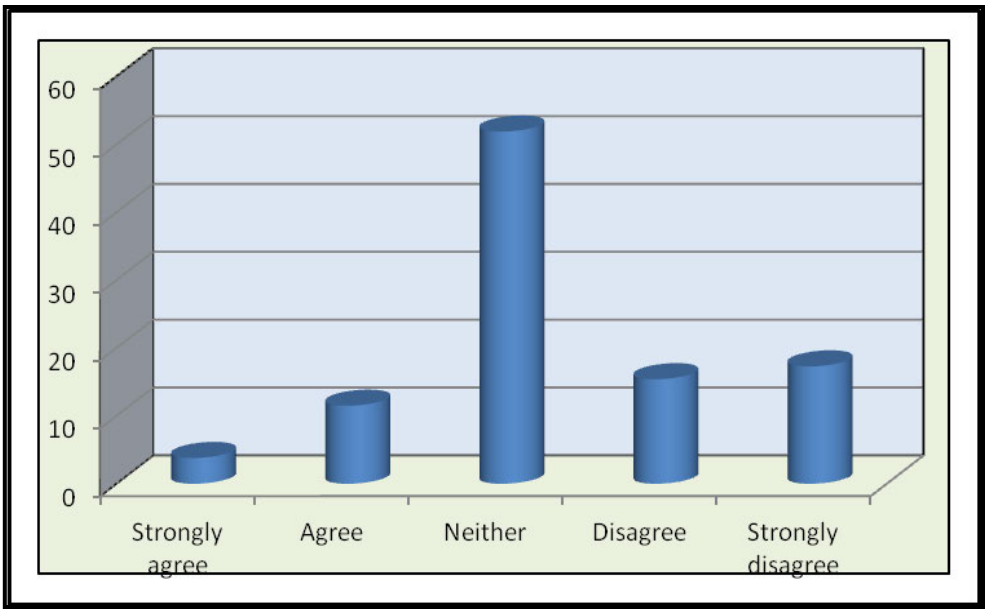


Fig. 4.2.3b Reduced activities as a result of economic downturn

During the interviews the providers spoke about innovation in their businesses and expanding and developing the adventure product was one way that the providers became innovative in response to changing economic climates. One provider spoke about expanding his business by adding Stand Up Paddleboarding to his product and another nine spoke about building the product around the client by working with other providers to deliver multiple activities.

Finally only 6.5% of providers agreed that there had been no change in their business; suggesting that a large proportion of providers had experienced some change in their business due to the impact of the economic downturn in Ireland. 71.2% of providers agreed or strongly agreed that the economic downturn negatively affected their business. Interestingly there remain 28.8% of providers who disagreed with that statement. This may indicate that some of the respondent businesses are new to the market or that the changing economic conditions provided an opportunity to innovate and develop the business. During the interviews, when asked to respond to questions about developments, innovation, changes and barriers in the industry all providers spoke about these topics in terms of before and after the economic downturn.

> "It's hard to make money now; people expect everything to be cheaper. Running costs have gone up and money coming in is lower, it's harder to make a living with a small profit margin." (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 25)

The Irish economy relies heavily on the tourism spend, up to €10 billion per annum (ITIC, 2013) from both domestic and international sources. The hosting of events like the Adventure Travel World Summit, taking place in Killarney in 2014, is extremely valuable first of all in terms of revenue, the event is estimated to be worth over €1million to the Irish economy, and secondly, it validates Ireland as a real player on the international adventure tourism stage. While Ireland's reputation and image suffered a blow as a result of the economic crisis that began in 2008 it appears that it is recovering from being considered an expensive country to visit (DPC, 2011).

Tourism adds to the economy in many ways; the direct, indirect and induced tourism spend and the positive impact on employment in tourism and related industries such as retail and agriculture. The adventure tourism sector is worth €1.1bn per annum to the Irish economy and the adventure tourist spends 33% more than the average tourist (Fáilte Ireland, 2009). Tourism is a key employer in Ireland with one in ten jobs in the tourism sector. The tourism industry in Ireland needs to be competitive in order to survive and it is important to get the pricing strategy right so as not to alienate international and domestic tourists who are reported to have had perceptions about the lack of value for money to be found in Ireland in recent times.

Overall, the research findings point to cash flow issues for providers, partly influenced by seasonality of the industry, and rising operating costs. For most adventure providers, especially for soft adventure activities, the high season is recognised as being from May to September, “If we don’t make enough in the summer we go hungry for the winter,” (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 26). Kerry County Development Plan 2015-2021 is even looking to develop alternative or all-weather facilities to counterbalance potentially disappointing high season weather. Fuel, transport, maintenance and insurance premium costs were mentioned by the providers as being on the rise and collectively making the running of small business difficult. Following adverse weather during the winter months the providers spoke about additional costs incurred relating to clean up and equipment replacement as well as having an impact on insurance.

In challenging economic times there appear to be three options available to small businesses. First of all the business owners could continue to operate the business in an independent capacity and wait for improved market conditions. This option lacks innovation and business sense particularly since the findings of the research suggest that rising costs are more of a threat than reduced income. A second option would be for the providers to source funding to plug into various aspects of the business like marketing for example. In the current climate this option is possible through grants and small business loans but may not be easily secured and may also be misdirected. A third option is to consider networking.

Providers can make contact with others in the industry and brainstorm potential opportunities to tap into new markets and share resources, amongst other benefits. This option is one that the literature suggests to be most beneficial (Morrison, 1998; Lynch et al., 2009; Deuchar, 2012) with tangible results and is shown throughout the rest of this chapter to be the preferred means for business survival and growth. To give a brief description; the findings and literature suggests that networking and collaboration are vital for small tourism businesses (Ateljevic, 2009) and even more so for those in rural locations (Roper, 2001; Deuchar, 2012). The financial burden can be spread out, various resources can be shared and the client can be offered a more inclusive package and product (Yeung, 2000; Van den Berg et al., 2001). If a collaborative effort is successful it should enable the provider to potentially open up to a bigger share of the market and with the extra resources and products on offer, the adventure tourism client gets exactly what they need and the industry survives and flourishes. The interview findings tell us that providers recognise the need to be innovative and creative in linking with other providers in order to survive and stay in business.

Wheelock and Chell (1997) and Hannon et al (2000) suggest that networking activity is higher in new and growing businesses but this research suggests that networking is also sought out in challenging times when there is a need to innovate.

Providers were asked in the questionnaire to specify what they felt distinguished their product from others. High quality service and location were clearly the top results at 32.7% and 28.8% respectively. In Limerick though, location was not considered to be an important distinguishing feature. Location will be discussed further in section 4.2.5. In Cork location scored above the quality of service as the unique feature.

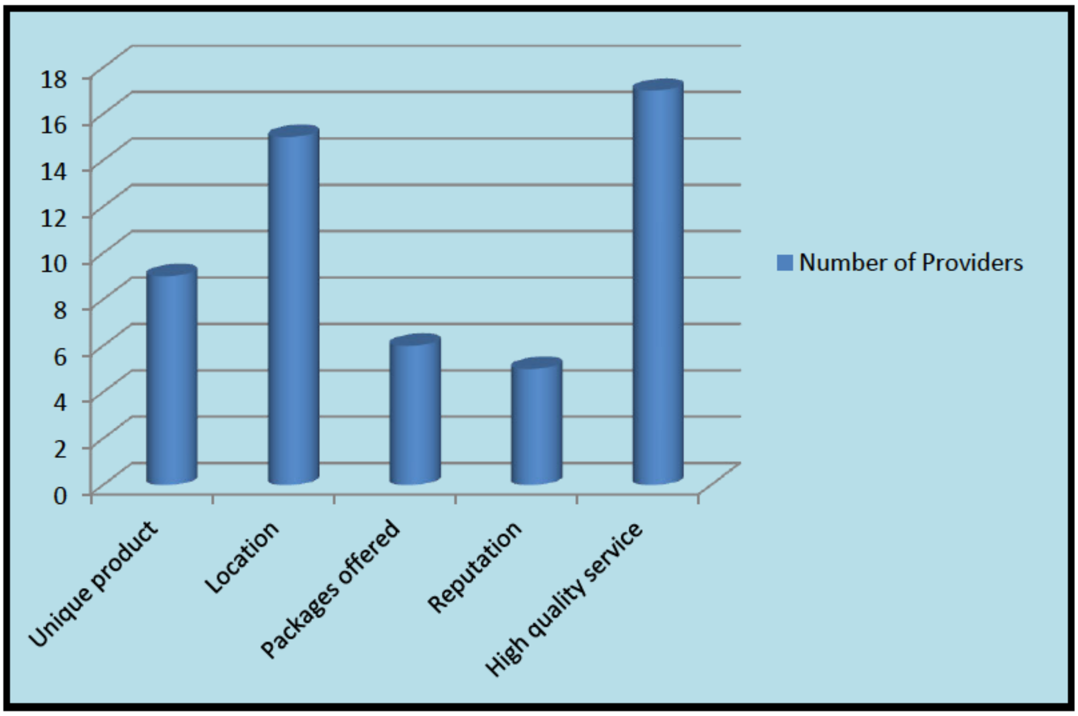


Fig. 4.2.3c What Sets Your Adventure Tourism Business Apart?

The interviewees were also asked what they felt set their business apart from others in the industry. Three words were key in the responses here; quality (50% of providers), passion (62.5% of providers) and location (44% of providers). These responses indicate a keen awareness by providers to build a quality product that appeals to tourists to Ireland (DTTS, 2014). A unique and genuine experience is a necessary part of the adventure product (ATTA et al., 2010b). Providers spoke about how they approach all aspects of their service with a genuine passion for the work,

> "In the industry I have a very deep passion for it and I do my very best to pass that on so I suppose quality of service," (Mountain biking provider B, Limerick, Quote 6).

They also mentioned their belief in the importance of delivering a high quality service to each client; this included providing "a balance of safety and fun, it has to be fun," (Kayaking provider B, Cork, Quote 7). The importance of generating repeat custom relating to the quality of service was a feature for six providers. The uniqueness of the product in the sense of the provision of a tailored package to suit clients was an important selling point for the majority (80%) of providers. A Clare surf provider specified that he provides free transport and brings clients to a range of surfing beaches.

The advantage of running a small business appears to be the flexibility to tailor the product and create the package required for the customer, "with my business, with a small group they generally tend to have an idea of what they want to do and they're reasonably specific," (Mountain biking provider A, Limerick, Quote 8). The providers who tailor packages to their clients (9 providers) also referred to the fact that they twin their product with others within the industry and in the wider tourism industry. In addition, one provider, (Rock climbing and kayaking provider, Clare) said that if a customer wants a product that he does not provide then he readily recommends another provider in the locality. He emphasised that this awareness of sharing custom is beneficial to the industry as a whole and "it [the custom] comes back to you in the end".

The providers showed that they are acutely aware of their selling points and what is necessary to build their business. In choosing unique and picturesque locations as backdrops and by creating a high quality product and service, the providers showed that they do not operate on an ad hoc basis, that they are committed to the success of their businesses and that they have analysed, in some way, the strengths and weaknesses of their business.

The results showed that providers don't rely on the reputation of their business but that delivering a high quality service is what sets them apart. This suggests that they purposely provide a high level of customer service giving rise to repeat custom and positive feedback. The interviews, again, provided important qualitative feedback on the unique selling points of the adventure tourism businesses. 80% of the interviewed providers spoke about tailoring a package to customers' needs, offering flexibility and specialised products.

The opportunity and reason for providers to engage in networking arose here; providers spoke about engaging with other providers and building product packages around customers' needs. This is in line with Porter's (1996) concept of strategic fit. This suggests that the main catalyst for adventure tourism providers to network is out of a demand by clients for a tailored package of either multiple activities or for activity holidays including accommodation, transport or other services, see section 4.3.4 Providers' Networking Experiences.

Some of the providers said that they could offer a specific level within their activity and that the specialised nature of their product was a unique selling point. This suggests that these providers cater for the 'hard adventure' enthusiast (Martin and Priest, 1986; Bentley et al., 2001) by offering the opportunity to indulge in higher levels of skill, endurance or risk in a chosen activity.

4.2.4 Barriers to Adventure Tourism Business Success

Providers were asked in the questionnaire to specify what barriers, if any, they felt existed in the success and/or development of their business. Providers were asked to select as many or few from a list of 9 given barriers. The two finance related options were selected jointly as the highest barriers; Operating costs and financial support (lack of) both with 71.4% of providers' selections. Ateljevic (2009) studied small tourism businesses in New Zealand and found that limited access to financial support and infrastructural regulations were two of the barriers to business success. Accessibility and geographic isolation were seen to have the least impact against the business (19% each), contradicting Atejevic's findings but supporting the idea that isolation and unique locations of adventure activities tend to enhance the experience for tourists rather than spoil it. This is reflected in the dichotomy between location acting as both advantage and disadvantage as discussed further in section 4.2.5.

Seasonality was also selected by more than half the respondents (66.7%), the impact of seasonality is discussed further in section 4.3.3.

The economy was seen to be a factor in hindering successful development of business. Simply put, there is less business to be spread around and the current economic climate has drastically affected the industry. During the interviews, the providers had the opportunity to discuss barriers to the development of the industry and spoke about; the economic outlook (especially internationally), weather, finance and cash flow issues, lack of a business plan and business training, running costs, lack of qualified and experienced staff, marketing and training supports, taxes and VAT, lack of suitable networks and mistrust.

Those who were self employed mentioned the long hours involved in some activities,

> "I can spend 2 hours in the car, 6 to 8 on the hills then I've to drive home then I've to basically do all my networking, banking and my business and all the other things that go on," (Mountain biking provider A, Limerick, Quote 9).

These findings echo the literature which shows that small tourism firms come up against the same issues as small firms in other sectors (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004) such as lack of financial resources and management skills and that they may also contend with limited access to expertise in core business disciplines. Although adventure tourism providers may be motivated by lifestyle factors, these may not be sustained long term (Buhalis 1999; Morrison et al., 1999; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2002).

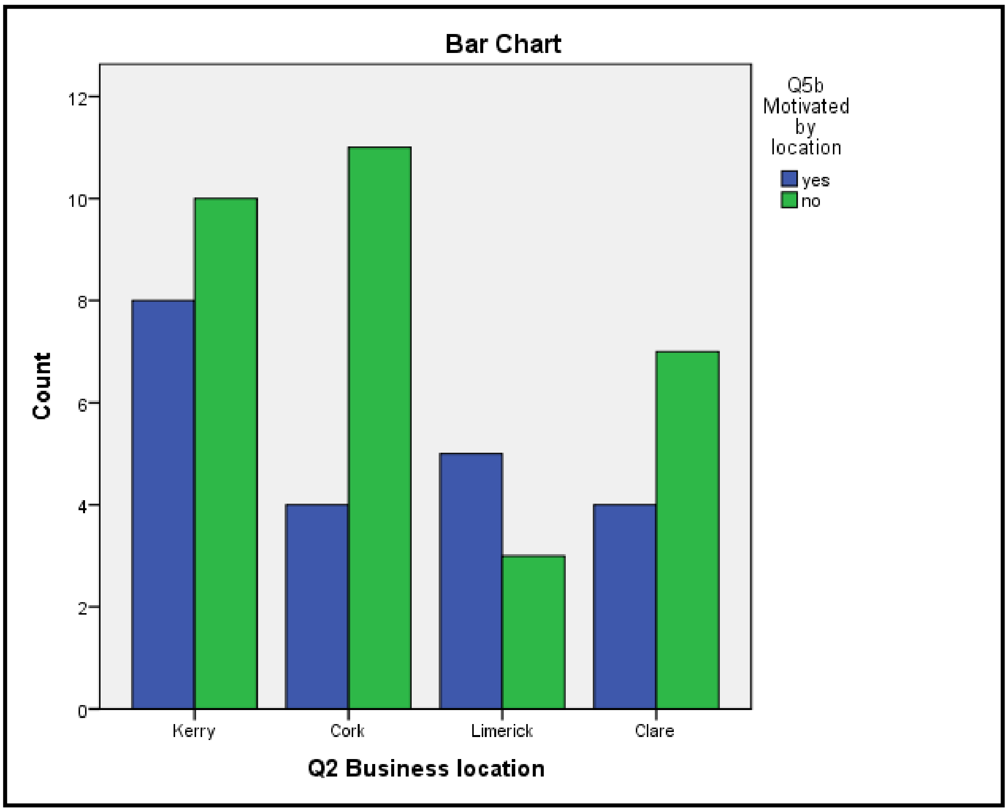
Barriers	Main barrier	Selected as one of the barriers, (% of cases)
Operating costs	18.1%	71.4%
Financial supports (lack of)	18.1%	71.4%
Seasonality	16.9%	66.7%
Marketing	10.8%	42.9%
Tourism Infrastructure	9.6%	38.1%
Networking supports (lack of)	9.6%	38.1%
Government	7.2%	28.6%
Geographic isolation	4.8%	19.0%
Accessibility	4.8%	19.0%

Fig. 4.2.4 Barriers to Business Success/ Development - Questionnaire

The characteristics that make small tourism businesses dynamic and responsive also limit the business in many ways (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004; Siemens, 2007) and the findings of this research show that small tourism businesses are increasingly under pressure with emerging issues such as competing with voucher deals and maintaining quality of product. Adventure tourism providers are even further strained by weather issues, safety concerns and time consuming preparation involved in many adventure pursuits.

4.2.5 Location

The questionnaire revealed that almost half the total respondents (46.2%) across all counties consider location as a barrier to their business to be low impact. In fact location was seen by over 40% of respondents to be a motivation to work in adventure tourism rather than a barrier to the development of the business.



An exact contingency table was generated, *p* = 0.418. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.2.5 Location cross referenced with 'motivated by location'

Location is a major marketing selling point for many of the providers. The interviews were carried out with providers ranging across four counties; Kerry (6), Limerick (3), Cork (3) and Clare (4), as in Fig. 4.2.5. In those who represented County Kerry, location was discussed at length as a strong selling point. All the Kerry providers operate in remote areas of natural beauty and they felt that they offered exceptional service in an extraordinary setting. Location, however, was seen to simultaneously impact their businesses both positively and negatively; on the plus side it was a unique selling point and attracted customers who sought a more natural setting. The location of their businesses was problematic in the sense that there was very little passing trade and most bookings were arranged well in advance. This made planning easier for the providers but made marketing more difficult and costly.

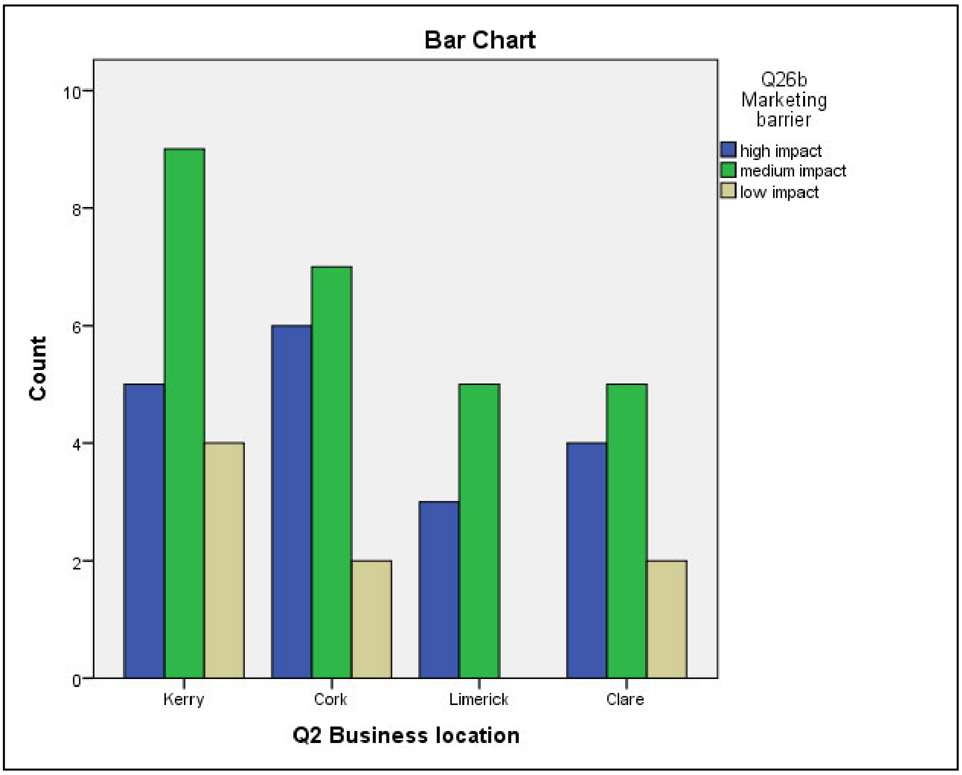
4.2.6 Marketing Adventure Tourism

In the questionnaires, providers were first asked if they had a marketing plan for their adventure tourism business; 71.2% claimed to have one but only 17.3% of the total providers have a formal, written marketing plan. 28.8% of providers have no marketing plan. Providers were asked to specify which forms of marketing they use, regardless of a marketing plan. They could select as many as appropriate, results are illustrated in Fig. 4.2.6a. Social media had the highest percent of users with 88.5% of providers using social media for marketing purposes. This was closely followed by flyers with 76.9% of providers using them. The least used marketing method was TV and radio advertising with just 11.5% of cases.

Marketing Method	% of cases
Social media	88.5%
Flyers	76.9%
Newspaper and magazine ads	53.8%
Posters	50%
Trade shows and Conventions	34.6%
Online resources (other)	17.3%
TV/ Radio ads	11.5%

4.2.6a Marketing methods used by providers

Providers were later asked about marketing as a barrier to their business. It was not specified what aspect of marketing but qualitative feedback refers to cost, ineffectiveness of certain methods and the amount of time consumed in marketing activities. Difficulties with marketing were seen by the providers to have a mainly medium to high impact (84.6% cumulatively). The providers seemed to lack confidence in staying abreast of marketing strategies and planning. As described below, the providers highlighted some issues with developing marketing plans for their businesses and with the use of technology, especially social media as marketing tools. This pattern was consistent throughout the four counties as illustrated in the chart below.



An exact contingency table was generated, $p = 0.900$. Since $p > 0.05$, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.2.6b Impact of marketing barriers, by county

One provider specified that the most effective marketing tool in the business was the vehicle in use. It is wrapped with logos and company information and the provider said that it draws the most customers to the business. Another provider recognised the value of the local school so implemented an innovative reward scheme whereby the school would benefit each time a family booked his activity.

> "The most important thing we did was to work with a marketing company who understood our sector and got a marketing plan done up professionally," (Rock climbing provider A, Kerry, Quote 11).

The most notable point made with reference to marketing during the interviews was the need for training and support for small business marketing. Enhancing the opportunity to engage in marketing and develop marketing ideas was seen to be one of the main reasons for small businesses to network with each other, see 4.3.2 Motivations to Network. Traditional marketing methods are costly and providers are looking for innovative ways to generate interest in their product.

All the interviewed providers spoke about the influence of social media and the positive impact the internet has had on their business. A Kerry provider who networks with a hotel in Killarney spoke about the impact of one golfer's captioned twitter picture taken from the hotel room, he said that the photo reached hundreds of thousands of his followers and was featured on the tournament television coverage. This exposure was invaluable for the hotel and could not be replicated nor afforded through a marketing campaign.

> "Even with the likes of TripAdvisor, we find it a great resource because it has feedback in the form of reviews so if your product and service is good you really do benefit because people go with good reviews for any business; hotels, restaurants, activities...you can't pay for that kind of advertising!" (Surfing provider, Kerry, Quote 12).

It was clear that the majority of providers were confident about managing basic business social media pages and responding to emails, however in terms of using all online resources to maximise advertising and marketing potential the providers expressed a need for further training and ongoing support. One business described how they are using full time activity staff to maintain and develop the administrative side of the business, mainly online, and that this was taking those staff away from the adventure side of the business. This provider had to employ part time staff to make up the hours lost.

The results of the research showed that 28.8% of providers have no marketing plan. Hussey et al. (2008) maintained that small tourism businesses don't properly strategise and plan which leaves these businesses vulnerable to reacting as situations arise rather than planning for what lies ahead. The issue of lacking communication of marketing strategy among staff members within small businesses is a problem (McCarthy and Leavy, 2000). If a clear marketing plan is not developed by the business owner then it cannot be clearly communicated to staff nor can it be used to plan and strategise in networking opportunities that may arise.

Costs and time incurred through marketing activities combined with effectiveness of some methods are barriers for 84.6% of the providers surveyed. Marketing is an important area for adventure tourism providers and developing a strategy is the key to saving time, effort and money. Innovation was discussed in terms of marketing too. Providers must find innovative, exciting, energetic ways to capture the attention of customers. Recent developments in social and mobile media have enabled companies and tourism boards to use more visual marketing campaigns to get their message across. Apps, websites and tools such as Pinterest, Instagram, Vine and Youtube are being used to communicate highly visual messages to an audience of millions at a time. It is clear that visuals are the new language of marketing since they are low cost, highly effective and reach further than any other method has the potential to reach. In 2013 the South African tourism board launched an Instagram campaign (#meetsouthafrica) using pictures and geo-coding alone to showcase South Africa and attract tourism interest. Fáilte Ireland are also capitalising on this marketing trend by developing videos to showcase their latest initiative the Wild Atlantic Way, showing images of the route and various points of interest along the way. This initiative is accompanied by a mobile app that allows tourists to track progress, virtually explore and plan their route as well as see what activities are on offer along the (2500km) longest coastal driving route in the world (Fáilte Ireland, 2013a). The Wild Atlantic Way initiative is an opportunity for adventure providers to align themselves with the project and make use of the offer of free trademark logos and marketing materials offered by Fáilte Ireland. If providers opt for inclusion in the Wild Atlantic Way then their online profile will improve by association as the initiative is an international one and is open to all tourism providers along the route.

In summation, business owners should consult the 7 Ps of marketing mix to analyse their business in terms of marketing; product, price, place, promotion, people, processes and physical evidence. The findings of this research suggest that providers are confident in the delivery of a quality product and that place (location) is a key aspect for their businesses, which they are also happy with. The two remaining elements; price and promotion present issues. First of all, during the interviews, providers discussed issues around pricing in terms of one off special deals such as Living Social and Groupon deals which are used to draw new customers to businesses by offering huge discounts on specific products or services. These types of deals can be beneficial but can also lead to unreasonable customer expectations. Competition between providers can also lead to pricing strategies that damage the industry by under-pricing and undervaluing the product. Promotion is a difficult one in the current economic climate. Promotional campaigns can be expensive and as seen above, the traditional methods of advertising and promotion are being replaced by online methods and innovations. It appears that some adventure tourism businesses, without formal written plans, are promoting their businesses in an ad hoc or scattergun fashion. This means that they do not monitor the effectiveness of various methods and therefore are not equipped with accurate information to develop an effective marketing strategy.

People, processes and physical evidence are the additional Ps for services marketing. The people who drive the business and comprise the staff team are integral to the development of the business. It is clear from these findings that the people involved in these adventure tourism businesses are dedicated and continually look to improve the products and service on offer. Similarly the process of what is on offer, the service, is the main priority of most of the participating businesses, see section 4.1.3 Business Differentiation. Finally the physical evidence, likely in the form of activity gear, safety equipment and marketing materials must be of the highest standard as these are the physical evidence that give an impression to the customer.

4.2.7 Infrastructure for Adventure Tourism

Providers were asked what impact on their business they felt that tourism infrastructure had. Tourism infrastructure referred to access, amenities, supporting services and other related businesses. Overall the providers considered a lack of tourism infrastructure to be a medium barrier (53.8%). 30.8% considered tourism infrastructure a high barrier; this includes a wide range from 16.7% in Kerry to 54.5% in Clare, suggesting that tourism infrastructure may be of a poor quality in Clare. Overall, 15.4% considered it low impact.

Accessibility, similar to location and tourism infrastructure, reflected similar findings with only 15.4% of providers considering accessibility a high impact barrier to their business. All providers interviewed made reference to the tourism infrastructure locally in saying that it affects their business; the topics discussed were relating to the availability of secondary services (accommodation, food, transport), access and support. The Kerry providers mentioned that Kerry airport as an access point for tourists has opened up their business to overseas clients, particularly from the U.K. and Europe. Six providers mentioned that the availability of cheap flights into Ireland has opened their businesses to weekend activity seekers. These clients stay for a shorter period, 2-3 days, but their spend is higher and tends to stay in the local area.

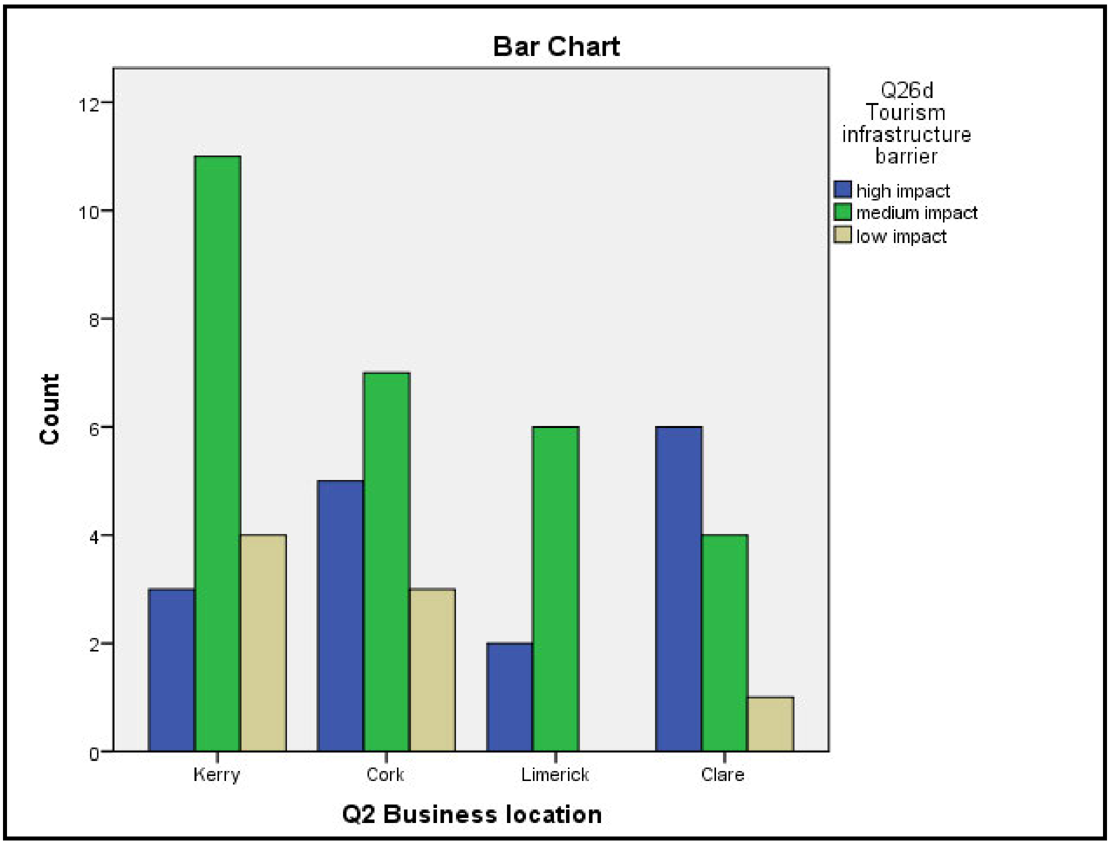


Fig. 4.2.7 Impact of tourism infrastructure as a barrier, by county

Three providers mentioned that the availability of good local accommodation and restaurants, regardless of whether they engaged in networking, was crucial to supporting their products and in keeping clients within the area for the duration of their stay. Two Cork providers recognised the importance of supporting non adventure tourism products such as local museums and parks in order to appeal to a range of interests, for example in families and large groups. This was said to appeal to a wider tourism market.

As discussed in section 4.2.5 Location, the lack of tourism infrastructure for those providers who operate in rural and remote locations was evident. Providers who operate in remote areas said that they have less support and clients do not generally stay in the area, they stay in nearby towns and cities then travel for the adventure product. One other point made relating to rural areas was the issue of road quality and signage. Particularly where passing trade is a barrier for remotely located providers, some roads and signage make areas difficult to navigate and therefore discourage tourists from exploring. Two providers did mention that the quality of national roads and most regional roads "has improved for the most part," (Surf provider B, Clare, Quote 27). These sentiments echo those of Hall et al. (2005) and Bauer (2013) who asserted that it may be difficult to create tourism opportunities in some rural locations because of prohibitive infrastructure and local traditions. Commercial development of an area brings change and this can affect social and cultural habits (Shaw and Williams, 1998). The local culture and social structure of a destination must be taken into account for networking to be successful (Grangsjo, 2003; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

Two providers specified in the interviews that their client base are mainly international as opposed to domestic and that the marketing and promotion of Ireland and adventure activities in Ireland would help small businesses. Fáilte Ireland was credited by the providers for producing research based on surveys and markets but there was a mixed reaction to the effectiveness and accessibility of the information.

If an area's infrastructure is weak or not established, development will be curtailed. Many of the providers recognised the importance of Ireland's infrastructure and of the government's role in providing necessary funding to support and develop infrastructure. This is a crucial element of successful tourism destinations, however it must also be balanced with the need to preserve the landscape that provides the backdrop for adventure (KCC, 2013).

A lot of progress has been made in the development of a walking trails scheme which has established over 40 new walking routes with over 1500 km of scenic trails.

Currently the flagship campaign, the Wild Atlantic Way, is being developed to support the various tourism products along the 2500km route as it's one of the longest coastal driving routes in the world. Adventure destinations thrive when a balanced mix of adventure tourism and other traditional tourism businesses operate together (Cater, 2006) and initiatives like the Wild Atlantic Way provide a perfect opportunity to create a tourism focus with a strong adventure element.

All providers made reference to the tourism infrastructure, whether the infrastructure was hard or soft (ATDI, 2011), saying that it had an effect on their businesses. Examples of hard infrastructure are; roads, bridges, trails, accommodation and airports. These allow tourist access to the adventure product. Soft infrastructure enhances the product, examples are; trail maps, heritage and culture information, tourism training and support. The providers are fully aware that the lack of infrastructure limits them in what they can offer their clients and also limits the amounts of clients that they can practically cater for. Without a network of infrastructural supports, for example; sufficient road and rail networks, accommodation and parking, difficulties would arise for small isolated tourism businesses in attracting large numbers of tourists to participate in their adventure activities. Tourists are increasingly making their own plans and planning their tours around Ireland, moving freely between attractions and activities. "This requires an integration of tourism transportation and land use policies," (KCC, 2014, p.62). The demand on tourism infrastructure, both hard and soft, increases in proportion to tourists who travel independently.

Every tourism provider understands the reality that their business has its limitations and that they need supporting infrastructure and secondary tourism products so that they can offer the full exclusive package that the adventure tourism client demands. There is also a balance to be considered in developing tourism infrastructure and that is to be cautious and, in consultation with appropriate agencies, to avoid over development and risk damage or erosion of the natural landscape. Collaboration between agencies and stakeholders is vital in this respect.

The providers all understand that effective local tourism infrastructure and support services are crucial in order to enhance the destination. An adventure activity may bring tourists to a rural area for example, but they may not necessarily stay in local accommodation or eat and drink there. Ideally, tourism destinations will have sufficient and appropriate infrastructure and secondary tourism products to entice clients to stay and play locally.

Every provider interviewed went as far to say that it is crucial that the road signs and trails are clearly marked so that the clients can access them and full take advantage of what is on offer.

When tourists have everything they need in a local area they will be more likely to fully engage in the visit, therefore the tourism spends stays local. This brings a number of advantages for the tourism providers, the local economy, the regional image and should generate repeat custom. Good value is created for the tourist when their needs are met within a location, clustering in this way is highly advantageous (Wang and Krakover, 2008; March and Wilkinson, 2009). Local confidence among tourism providers and the wider community will increase and with that comes an enhanced sense of worth and investment of energy and time for the following season. An area can then move from survival mode to sustainable development, enhancing the overall adventure tourism industry. Infrastructure, entrepreneurship, development policy and Ireland's image internationally are four areas of development that appear to be gaining some focus and activity in business and tourism strategy. These are four of the ten ADTI pillars of competitiveness (ATTA et al., 2012) that, if significant improvements take place, can improve Ireland's standing in the ADTI rankings.

4.3 Networking in Adventure Tourism

Now that the contextual information is in place, this section presents the research findings and discussion related to the remaining research questions focusing on the networking activities of adventure tourism providers. The adventure tourism industry and a profile of the provider were explored and presented in previous sections. In this section, the findings and discussion of results relating to the networking activities of adventure tourism providers are explored in detail. A sociogram was devised as part of the questionnaire to provide an opportunity to analyse the providers' networks in detail, the results of which are incorporated with those of the questionnaire and interviews to reveal a comprehensive picture of the networking activities of the participants. This section, therefore, sheds light on the intricacies of networking in the adventure tourism industry and provides new and crucial insight into a growth market in the tourism industry.

4.3.1 Definitions of Networking in Adventure Tourism

When bringing together theoretical and practical applications of the same concept, networking, there is an undeniable difference in the language and approach. The literature tells us that networking is “the process used by members of the network to mobilise relationships and learn from each other,” (Lynch and Morrison, 2007, p. 43) and that participation in networking allows businesses to cohesively work together in order to strengthen capabilities, resources and synergies (Yeung, 2000; Van den Berg et al., 2001). But what does this mean for those who practice networking and who engage with business relationships every day? The providers who took part in the research interviews were asked to describe what networking means to them. Since networking forms the basis of this research, it is important to establish what providers understand about networking so that, later in this chapter, the effects that networking may have on their business and the adventure tourism industry overall can be determined within this context.

When attempting to find out how providers define the term and concept of networking, the responses were mostly similar. They mentioned; a common goal, working together, mutual benefits and advantage.

> “Well it’s all about communication, exchange of ideas and trying to work with people who, more than likely, you can be in competition with. But that you end up networking to the advantage of all people involved,” (Surfing provider A, Clare, Quote 36).

> “Networking is simply talking to people, it’s the most natural thing in the world,” (Kayaking provider B, Cork, Quote 37).

> “My idea of networking is when people in business get together and talk. You can spend a lot of effort and time into trying to push an idea alone but using supports from other businesses can help you to develop and get there quicker.” (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 38)

> “Networking is just one element of my day. I do it without calling it networking. I think it’s the connection I make with my clients and other businesses. It’s not formal, it’s like a friendship.” (Rock climbing provider B, Kerry, Quote 39)

> “Networking is essential to surviving. It’s sharing ideas and costs to keep the business afloat. It’s how I keep the doors open.” (Hill walking provider, Cork, Quote 40)

The providers’ definitions of networking reflect a conceptual understanding of networking. Rather than describe a formal arrangement or the various structures and purposes of networking (Gilmore et al, 2001), as much of the literature does, the providers spoke about communicating with others and implied an almost organic move towards networking that begins with simply talking and connecting with others, even competitors.

> “Networking for me and my business is something I like the sound of and I know it’s a buzz word but I don’t have the time at the moment.” (Surfing provider, Kerry, Quote 41)

> “Networking is a luxury I don’t have time for. I’ve tried it in the past. A lot of talking but no action, that’s the problem.” (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 42)

Small tourism businesses must cooperate with their competition in order to survive. (Nalebuff and Brandenburger, 1997; Tinsley and Lynch, 2007). These businesses must learn to adapt to coopetitive environments and to maximise the benefits to be reaped from such networking opportunities (Kelliher et al, 2009). It is clear from the interview data that some of the providers have a negative impression of networking from past experience and are somewhat dismissive of the proposition of networking.

4.3.2 Motivations to Network

The providers were asked about their motivations to network with other providers, either in the past or potentially in the future. The providers’ most and least important motivations have been identified in the tables below. There were two clear motivations out of the five presented; the highest motivation to network was for potential financial gain at 34.6%, this is in contrast to Deuchar’s (2012) and Marchant and Mottiar’s (2011) studies that indicate that motivations of adventure tourism providers, in alignment with lifestyle entrepreneurs, are motivated more by social capital than financial gain. When the response of financial gain was addressed in the interviews, it became clear that making money and high profits were not what was meant; rather maintaining cash flow and ensuring continued survival of the business. The providers elaborated on the motivational themes as seen below, see Fig. 4.3.2a. Providers said that financial gain was the least motivating factor to work in the adventure tourism industry (16% of cases), yet financial gain becomes the biggest reason for businesses to network. The findings show that lifestyle factors (hobby business, quality of life, preferred location) motivated people to start adventure tourism businesses but once the business is up and running, there are more practical concerns such as cash flow and controlling operating costs that require action, in this case networking with other businesses.

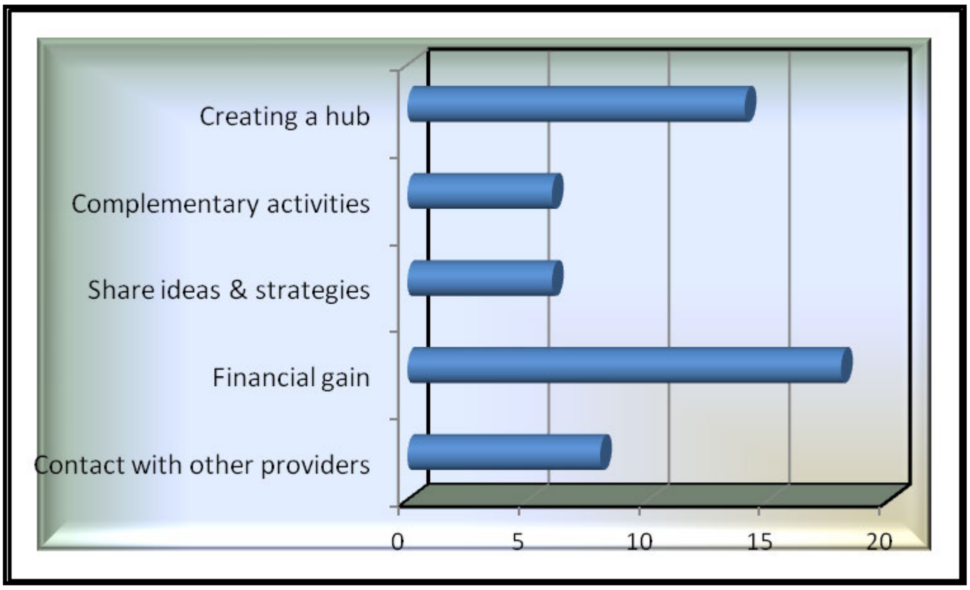


Fig. 4.3.2a Motivations 'most important' to providers

The second highest motivation was to create an adventure tourism hub in the local area. This was followed by the need for contact with other providers (15.4%) and jointly in last position of importance were the motivations to share ideas and strategies and to secure complementary activities (both 11.5%).

During the interviews the providers spoke about their motivations to network, whether in the past, currently or in the future. They were strikingly similar to the benefits of networks in Fig. 2.4.3 presented in Chapter 2 and the benefits that were listed by the providers as motivations below have been highlighted to show. As shown in Fig. 2.4.3 below, the majority of benefits are highlighted and the remaining benefits have all been discussed in other areas of this chapter.

Benefits of Networks to Building Profitable Tourism Destinations	
Learning and exchange	Knowledge transfer Tourism education process Communication Development of new cultural values Accelerated speed of implementation of support agency initiatives Facilitation of development stage of small enterprises
Business Activity	Co-operative activities: Marketing, purchasing, production Enhanced cross-referral Encouraging needs-based approaches; staff development, policies Increased visitor numbers Best use of small enterprise and support agency resources Extension to visitor season Increased entrepreneurial activity Inter-trading within network Enhanced product quality and visitor experience Opportunities for business development interventions More repeat business
Community	Fostering common purpose and focus Community support for destination development Increases or reinvents a sense of community Engagement of small enterprises in destination development More income staying locally

Fig. 2.4.3 Benefits Of Networks To Building Profitable Tourism Destinations.

(From Morrison et al. (2004, p.198) Adapted from Lynch et al. (2000) based on a review of Adam (1994); Buhalis (1994); Buhalis and Main (1996); Evans (1999); Hankinson (1989); Houghton and Tremblay (1995); Huang and Stewart (1996); Littlejohn et al. (1996); Lowe (1988); Lynch (2000); Morrison (1994))

An extensive list of motivational themes emerged from the interview data (See Fig. 4.3.2b).

<u>Growth of the business</u> – by linking with other providers and creating increased or improved products, the businesses can grow. This was not a motivation for all the providers interviewed; four of the interviewed providers felt that their business was a manageable size and did not necessarily want to grow it further in terms of size but more in terms of development of the product and service. The questionnaire revealed that 'financial gain' was the leading motivation for providers but the interview data suggests that growth and development of the business may be more accurate. Lundberg and Fredman (2012) found that lifestyle entrepreneurs become influenced by external constraints over time and their motivations change from the

desire to maintain a particular lifestyle to the need to stabilise the business (Marchant and Mottiar, 2011) .

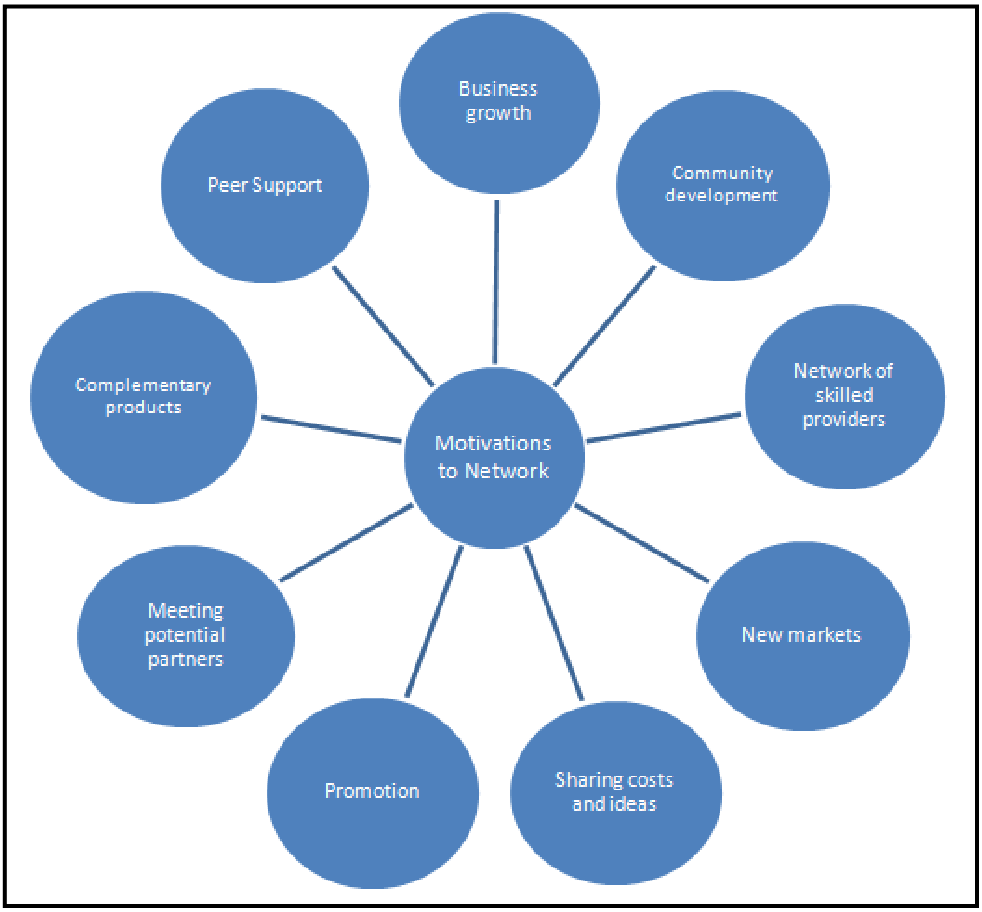


Fig. 4.3.2b Motivations to Network, interview findings

Community and rural development – the development of the local areas in which the providers work was of great importance.

> "If you can bring people to the locality, it's good for everyone here and there's a sense of pride in being one of 'the places to go' for tourists." (Surfing provider B, Clare, Quote 43).

Creating a hub was the second highest motivation indicated by the questionnaire results and this can be related to the idea of community, or destination, development. Marchant (2010) asserts that lifestyle entrepreneurs attract tourists to destinations and therefore are responsible, in part, for resort rejuvenation and community development. This requires significant networking activity and collaboration between not just tourism businesses but other local enterprise and agencies (Shaw and Williams, 1998; Kylanen and Mariani, 2012).

Big skill net of like minded people and sharing of industry knowledge – by networking with a variety of people who have similar interests, motivations and lifestyle as adventure activity providers, a pool of skills and potential for innovation is created and available to all involved in the networking structure. The development of relationships in order to access resources and innovations is an important reason why many SMEs engage in networking (Gulati et al., 2000; Whittington et al, 2009).

> “Myself and the local restaurant manager and another provider got together and got a few ideas going as to how we could drum up a bit of business in the area. It worked well but it took a lot of energy and time from us all. In the end we reaped the rewards in the high season so it was worth it but you would want everyone involved to be as dedicated as you are when you’re giving up your family time to do extra things like that,” (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 48).

<u>Access to new markets and rotation of the existing clients</u> – This motivation was clear among all the providers interviewed. Networking activities towards this purpose appeared to be casual, informal and based on trust that the other providers would be forthcoming,

> “Whether it’s reciprocated by other people? It’s hard to say...You just try to keep in touch with everyone,” (Surfing provider, Kerry, Quote 44).

Social media appears to have taken some of the secrecy away from client lists,

> “Client lists used to be a lot more secretive in the past but now you nearly know a client list by going on to facebook, nearly all their clients are followers anyway,” (Rock climbing provider A, Kerry, Quote 45).

There is more emphasis on offering the best product in order to retain clients and this appears to contribute towards higher competitiveness, perhaps even mistrust, between adventure tourism providers. The sharing of client lists and providing pathways for access to markets is a path that must be managed fairly in this sector. Coopetition is the structure that must be implemented for this motivation to be addressed primarily and an understanding between stakeholders must be agreed in order to establish trust (Ahuja, 2000; Bengtsson and Kock, 2000; Rigg and O’Mahony, 2012).

<u>Marketing and sharing cost of advertising</u> – traditional advertising (printed flyers and posters, magazine and radio ads) is seen to be expensive by many activity providers and in recent years the business’ budgets for marketing have reduced. The internet (Google Ads and TripAdvisor especially) and specifically social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) are cheaper means of marketing the activities in a highly effective way; through photos and videos, blogs, reviews, promotional deals, and sharing links

and pages. The use of the internet to network with other providers is discussed later in section 4.3.11 but the motivation to network with other businesses for marketing purposes is very clearly influenced by the rise of the internet in general.

> "I can link with other businesses in my area and also around the world in watersports. I can, and I often do, share articles and videos from online sources showing different aspects of watersports. It means that my customers and followers are kept interested and my name and my business becomes more familiar and so on. If you know what you're doing, you can use it to your advantage," Quote 49 (Surfing provider A, Clare).

Promotion of the adventure activities – this is most obvious where there are a number of water activities or land activities together. In locations where there are options between providers of the same activity then the activity is promoted generally and it appears that the customer chooses their preferred provider based on additional factors of price, convenience, location, transport and reputation.

> "People know this is an area for surfing and windsurfing so customers can just get here and decide then who they'll go with; some providers offer a cheaper lesson or better equipment or whatever," (Surfing provider, Kerry, Quote 46).

This motivation inherently requires an alliance between providers as they would already be in agreement to serve the greater purpose of promoting the destination or activities over their individual interests, for individual and collective advantage. Destination coopetition is promoted by Baggio et al. (2010) as a means to improve the destination's competitiveness for all stakeholders.

Learning about potential networking partners - the reputations of potential networking partners were important to the interviewees. They emphasised the need to ensure that they provide as high a level of service as they do. By networking with, and therefore getting to know other providers, the decision to work together is more informed and less risky.

> "You'd have to be sure that if you're recommending someone that they'll perform to your standards, or higher!" (Hill walking provider, Cork, Quote 47).

Complementary products – networking with other providers means that the providers can 'twin' their products with complementary ones. Fennell (1999; 2001) advised twinning activities in order to attract a broader spectrum of clients and Buckley (2006) highlighted the advantages of blending tourism niches and blending markets. Twinning, in turn, helps to expose both providers to new client markets and encourages the tourist to consider additional activities.

Support from other people in a similar role – Providers spoke about isolation in terms of location but also of seasonality and in some cases in being self employed. By networking with other similar business people an element of support is created. The community in which a network is to be formed must show cohesion and integration (Tremblay, 2000) before networking activities begin and there should ideally be a balance or 'diversity' among the stakeholders in order to gain from the varied viewpoints on offer (Martinez and Aldrich, 2011). Contact with other providers was the third highest motivation for providers according to the questionnaire, see Fig. 4.3.2a above.

Before engaging in networking activities the providers have core motivations, such as financial gain or sharing ideas, as discussed above. These motivations are preconceived and are held strongly enough to push the provider into networking in order to achieve them. Once networking is established and has been experienced, other benefits, that were not preconceived, may emerge and help the provider or their business in some way. The literature around reasons and motivations to network puts forward and discusses similar ideas to those given in the findings but they are presented in a more formal way. Current literature shows that the development of relationships (networking) comes about to address a need to access resources and innovations and the opportunity to improve competitiveness, profitability and economic efficiencies (improved finances, shared ideas and new markets) are important reasons why many SMEs engage in networking (Gulati et al., 2000; Whittington et al., 2009; Deuchar, 2012).

Access to and sharing of natural resources (Scott et al., 2008) and stimulating the local economy and social capital (Deuchar, 2012) are also cited to be motivations for small tourism businesses to work together. Businesses and destinations must strengthen strategic alliances to stay ahead of tourist demands (Kylanen and Mariani, 2012). This is reflected in the findings of the research which shows that adventure tourism providers are interested in creating hubs and growing networks of support since individual businesses already have to share valuable natural resources. As described throughout the literature on networking the providers' motivations to engage in networking are directly linked to the benefits derived from experiences of previous networking activities.

4.3.3 Barriers to Networking

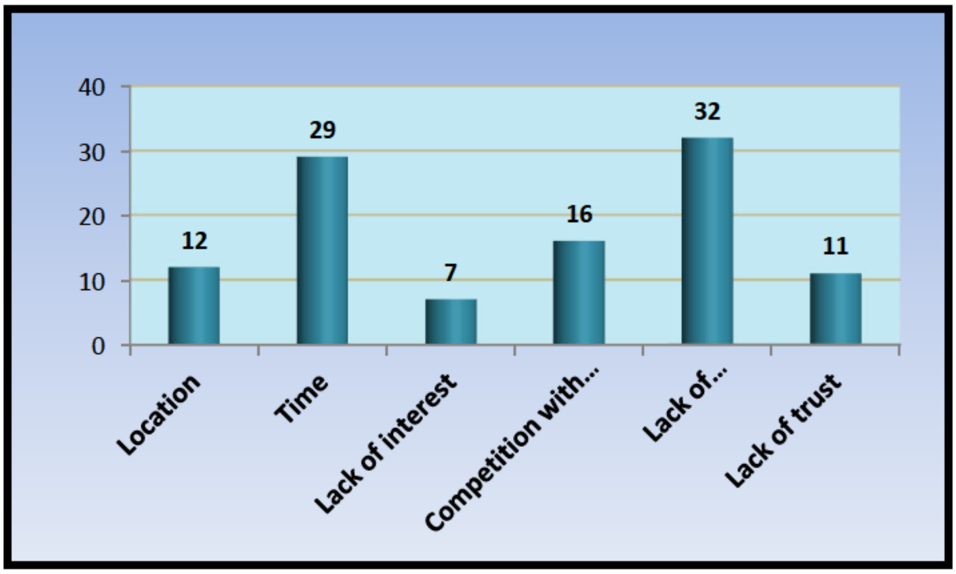


Fig. 4.3.3a Barriers to Networking

A list of common barriers to networking was gleaned from the literature review of the topic and posed to the providers. Providers were asked in the questionnaire to respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to each potential barrier therefore they were not restricted to choosing one. Lack of coordination was the biggest barrier to networking selected by the providers (66.7%). Pittaway et al., (2004) found that one of the reasons that networks fail is due to lack of infrastructure and coordination. Norris-Tirrell and Clay (2010) said that poor collaborative management and structuring can create confusion resulting in frustration among stakeholders and paralysis of the network.

Time was also a major barrier to networking with 60.4% of providers agreeing. During the interviews the providers expressed that, while they operate micro businesses and many are just one-person operations, there are very few staff and the amount of spare time to dedicate to networking activities is limited. This is particularly the case where providers have families and children. Wasting time and money researching new products and innovations, where the competition could undercut them and reap the rewards without investment, was also a concern. This in turn limits the providers’ willingness to be innovative.

Seasonality was seen to have a high impact on the business by a majority (53.8%) of providers. Four providers referred to seasonality as a barrier during the interviews; if a business operates for only part of a year then staff will change regularly and are not likely to commit to the business and there is less fluidity within the organisation.

> "There's quite a lot of businesses that only go for certain months of the year so unfortunately that also takes from the professionalism," (Rock climbing provider C, Kerry, Quote 50).

One provider said that the weather, not seasonality, is a barrier for them. Another provider pointed out the importance of planning in the running of the business and said that the seasonality of the industry certainly is a barrier,

> "... if you're up and running for 12 months you can actually have a cycle of things going on like, every February I do this or....you have your quarters," (Mountain biking provider A, Limerick, Quote 51).

Three other providers pointed out that during quieter periods there is an opportunity to recuperate from a busy season and to take time to network, make connections and set up for the next season. Providers who operate seasonally expressed that they had the opportunity to network in the off season and did not consider it a barrier. One year round provider pointed out that although he was happy to network all year, it was difficult to network with other providers who operate for only a few months a year. Marchant and Mottiar (2011) described seasonal operators as 'unconstrained' and said that it can be difficult for year-round committed, 'constrained', providers to engage effectively with providers who do not share the same commitment.

Competition with other providers proved a barrier for 33.3% of respondents and similarly location affected 25% of providers. Lack of trust (22.9%) and lack of interest (14.6%) were the smallest barriers to networking. This shows that a small number of providers are interested in networking but are cautious to commit personal time to activities that may not reap tangible rewards. Most of the adventure tourism businesses in this research are micro businesses with owner-managers. This means that the providers must carry out every role in the business and must dedicate their own time on top of the day-to-day running of the business to extra initiatives (Ingram and Zou, 2008) like networking events. If past experiences of such events have been negative then providers will naturally be unwilling to freely offer up valuable time to similar events. The providers communicated a strong sense of competition during the interviews, especially within activities and said that they would be reluctant to open up to other providers who could just take all the ideas without contributing anything in return. It is apparent that among those who are in the minority and consider lack of trust to be a barrier, those providers feel strongly about the issue. Trust as a barrier to effective networking seems to be a major issue for some providers:

> "You can talk about adventure hubs and networking all day but the trust needs to be there first," (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 52).

> "Trust and personal agendas kill the networking spirit," (Rock climbing and kayaking provider, Clare, Quote 53).

The findings suggest that trust is a deeply rooted issue for some providers. Kelliher et al. (2014) found that networking activities over time help to promote stakeholder trust. If the providers are willing to engage initially then there is scope to lay foundations for effective networking to take place.

Lack of interest is clearly not an issue for adventure tourism providers for networking, 86.5% of respondents denied that lack of interest was a barrier. This figure was higher in Kerry (94.4%) and lower in Clare (72.7%).

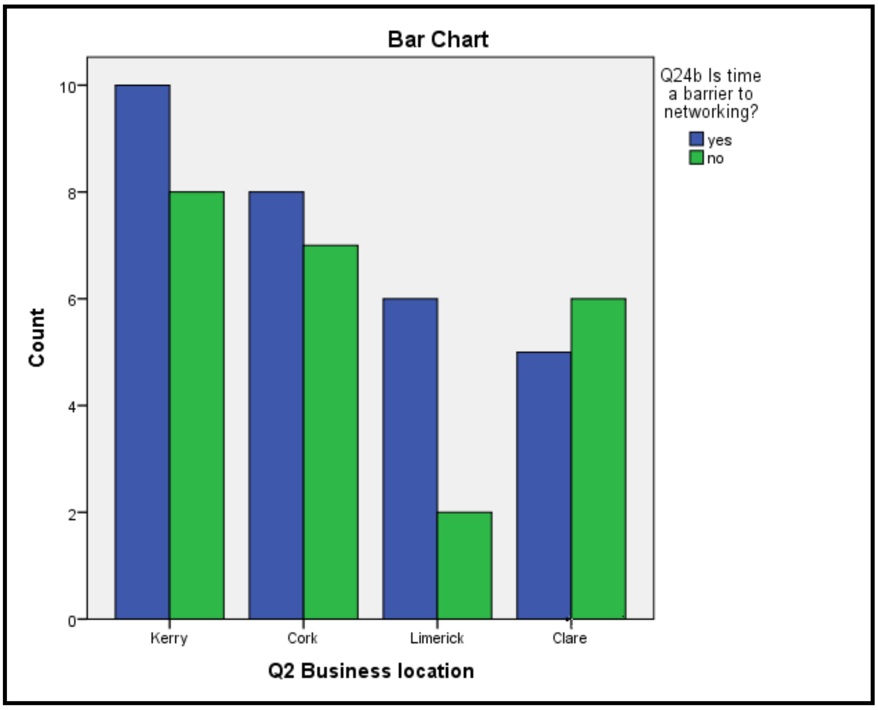
Competition with other providers was not seen to be a barrier across the four counties with an average 69.2% saying that it was not. A fear of sharing resources and client lists was discussed by the interviewed providers; a great deal of time and energy has been put into developing the resources and client lists in the businesses. These lists are of great value to the providers and they are protective of them but with increased networking and use of social media among providers there is more transparency and less to be protective of.

Three providers spoke at length about the effect that 'cowboy' providers and unqualified part time staff have on the success of their business. Easto and Warburton (2010) discussed the low entry barriers for anyone who wishes to become an adventure tourism in provider in Scotland and the effect that it has on the professionalism of the sector, a similar issue seems to be developing here in Ireland. They also described how these people were affecting the overall professionalism of the adventure tourism industry but more importantly how they were driving down costs unfairly by offering a substandard service with poor quality equipment and unqualified and uninsured instructors and guides. Providers also referred to the knock on effect in driving up insurance prices, which have risen dramatically in recent years. These extra costs are pushing small genuine providers, who spend money on training and development, out of competitiveness unfairly. These providers spoke very strongly about the physical and professional risk that these ‘cowboys’ posed and the difficulty with trying to expose and remove them from operating. This point ties back to the issue of adventure tourism being unregulated and the need for it to be examined and afforded a national plan. It is clear that there is demand for regulation of the adventure tourism industry to minimise risk and improve quality within the industry as suggested by Bentley et al. (2004), Page et al. (2005), Jennings et al. (2007) and Smulders et al. (2013).

Regulation of the industry was mentioned by all the providers who were interviewed. They mentioned that this was a vital element in developing the industry for the future. When the industry becomes regulated it should ensure a professional sector for all concerned. However, the providers also expressed concern that the regulation of the industry be carefully implemented and maintained. It is extremely important that regulating the industry does not create more red tape and operating costs for the already pressurised activity operators.

Providers in the industry have noticed a lot of changes since the economic downturn and since they have started operating. A recent change in the industry that providers mentioned is the addition of voucher promotions like GrabOne, Living Social and Groupon. While start up providers may see these vouchers as a good way to promote their business and spread the word quickly about the product on offer, there is also the fear that customers will come to expect drastically cheaper rates and therefore undervalue the industry. This may force issues in pricing which negatively affects the sector.

Location is only a barrier for 23% of the questionnaire respondents and it is considered to be strong feature for many adventure based businesses. Many activity providers offer a mobile service or perhaps work from home meaning there is no office or shop to use for networking activities where a few providers could gather and meet. If networking meetings were to be set up they would likely have to be in a local community centre or hotel where there may be costs incurred.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 0.668. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.3b Time as a barrier to networking, by county

The barriers presented in these findings echo those cited by O'Donnell (2012) in referring to time, turf and trust as barriers to collaboration. Time is a barrier for 60.4% of adventure tourism providers in the research area, competition with other providers (turf) is for 33.3% and trust is an issue for 22.9%. Rigg and O'Mahony (2012) suggested that the issues in collaborative arrangements are to do with; trust, power, governance, leadership and clarity of shared outcomes. Interviews with providers regarding previous networking experiences highlighted similar issues. In discussing whether they would consider entering a networking arrangement or adventure hub, one hill walking provider in Limerick said:

> "So how it's going to be sold, how it's going to be organised, I'd be looking at it in a lot more detail before I'd sign up to it. I'm not saying no but I'm saying that due to previous lessons, I would be very tentative in whether I'd support it or not." (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 60)

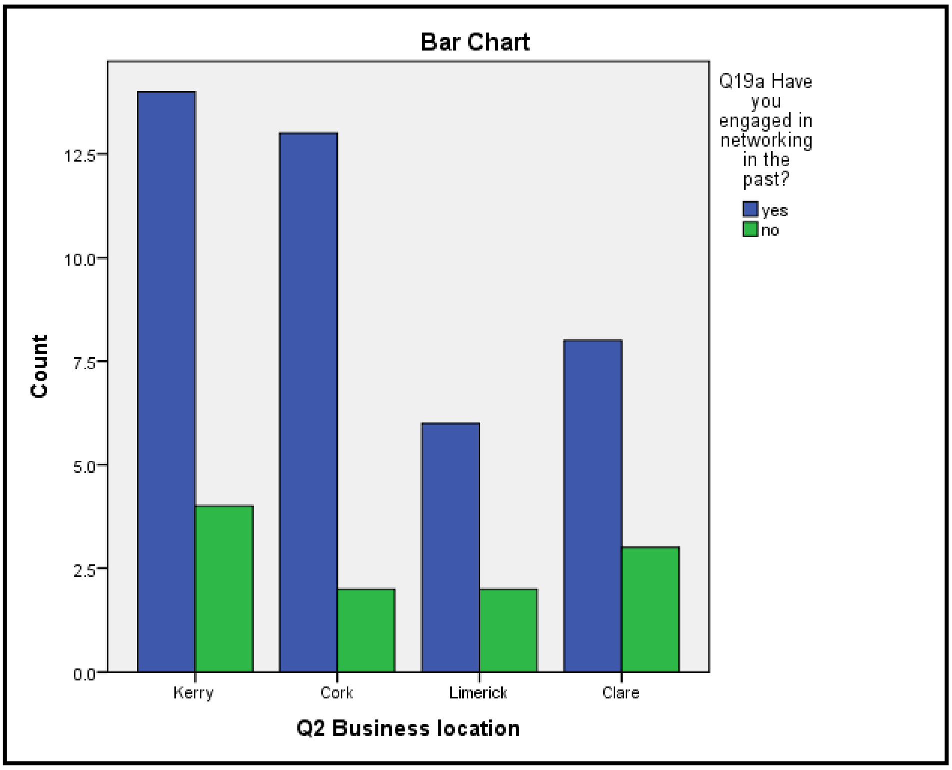
During the attempted setup of a network there is huge potential for challenges to arise, often referred to as 'frustrations' (Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002) in networking. Where frustrations in planning and structuring a network arise; the risk of network failure increases. A lack of cohesion and understanding of the objectives and outcomes of the networking venture creates frustration, slow progress and low achievement (Vangen and Huxham, 2005; 2006).

> "I ended up not wanting to spend my time listening to people whinge rather than looking at the bigger picture." (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 61)

The networking literature suggests that inter-firm conflict, external disruption and lack of infrastructure is to blame for failure (Pittaway et al., 2004) however this research shows that, in the adventure tourism industry at least, networking fails when the structure and organisation are unclear and expectations are mismatched among stakeholders (Mandell and Steelman, 2003).

4.3.4 Providers' Networking Experiences

A huge majority of providers across all four counties said they have engaged in a networking relationship in the past. At least 70% of the providers in each county have done so with the highest proportion of adventure tourism providers engaging in Cork (86.7%).



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 0.818. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.4a Networking experience, by county

The providers were asked in the questionnaire if they had networked with a range of other types of providers. Providers networked with other adventure tourism providers in the highest percent of cases (73.9%), accommodation providers in 63% of cases, food and beverage providers in less than half of the cases (43.5%), transport providers in 41.3% of cases and lastly educational providers in just 21.7% of cases.

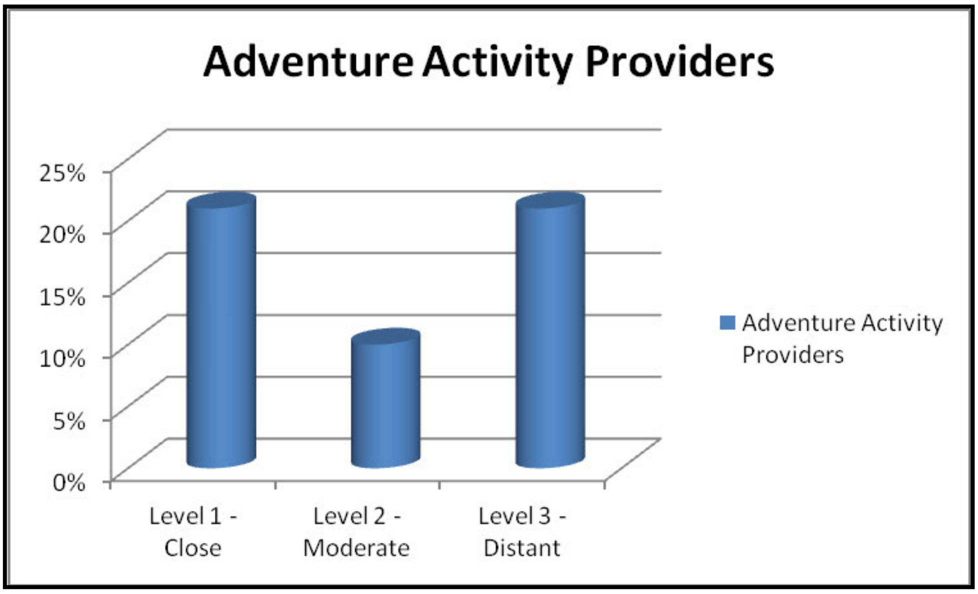


Fig. 4.343b Sociogram results, Networking Activity with Adventure Activity Providers.

The sociogram revealed that other adventure tourism providers are strongly represented throughout the levels of the sociogram, 21% at level 1, 10% at level 2 and 21% at level 3, see Fig. 4.3.4b above. The noticeable difference in volume between these statistics is explained as follows: The questionnaire sought to find out whether or not the participants engaged in networking (in any capacity, past or present) with other types of providers. If they answered yes, then this counted towards the relevant type of providers' % as above. In the sociogram, the participants were asked to list or identify the businesses who they network with (currently or regularly) and to place each one at level 1, 2 or 3 depending on the nature of the networking relationship. Some labelled specific providers and some gave generic labels. The data was constructed as it was presented and each label was deemed individually valuable. Therefore the questionnaire data reveals networking partnerships but the sociogram identifies patterns of networking. The data overall indicates that networking relationships between providers is regular and a valuable resource.

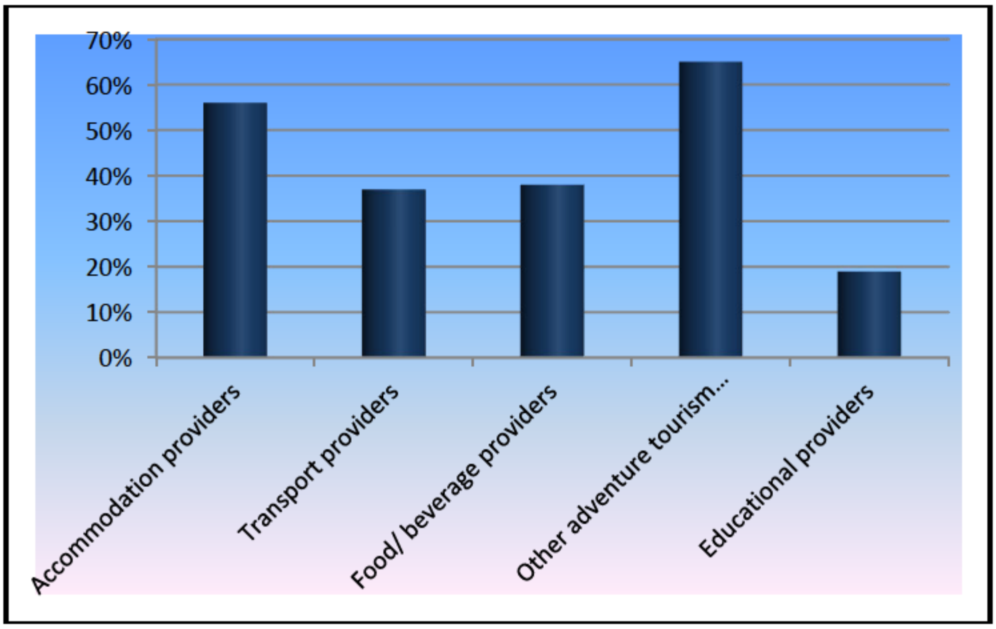
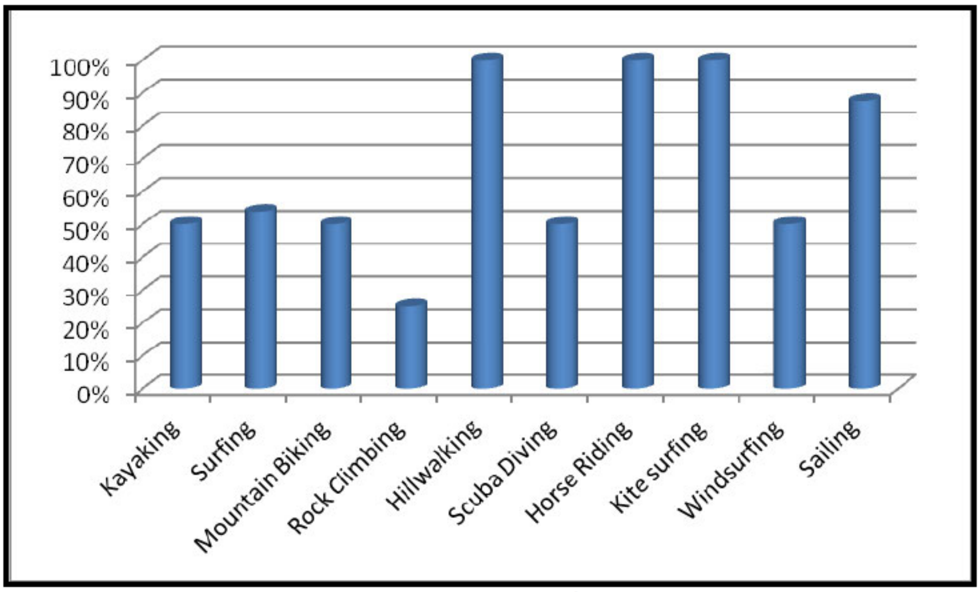


Fig. 4.3.4c Types of providers the participants networked with

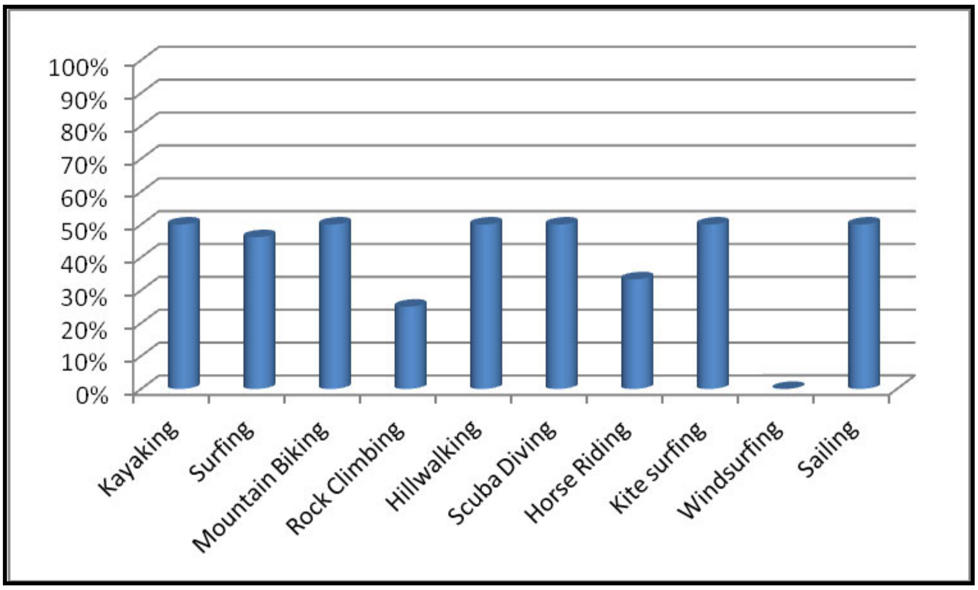
A pattern emerges when activity providers were cross referenced by activity type with their networking with accommodation providers; the activities that typically take longest (typically 6-8 hours) were the ones to network most with accommodation providers.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 1.000/ p= 0.991. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.4d Networking with Accommodation Providers

Clearly it is more likely for hill walking (100%), horse riding (100%) and sailing (87.5%) tourists to seek accommodation after full day adventures. Less than half of surfing, mountain biking and rock climbing providers' network with accommodation providers. This may be because these activities typically take less than 4 hours and tourists are likely to move on or organise other activities and excursions.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 1.000/ p= 0.991. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.4e Networking with Transport Providers

The percentage of adventure activity providers who network with transport providers was generally low. This was a consistent result across the questionnaire, sociogram and interview results.

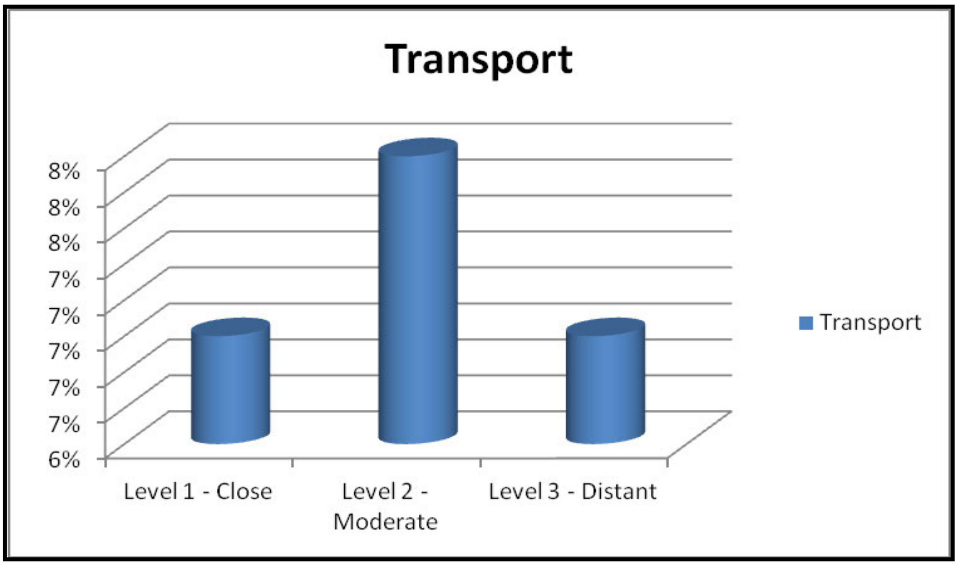
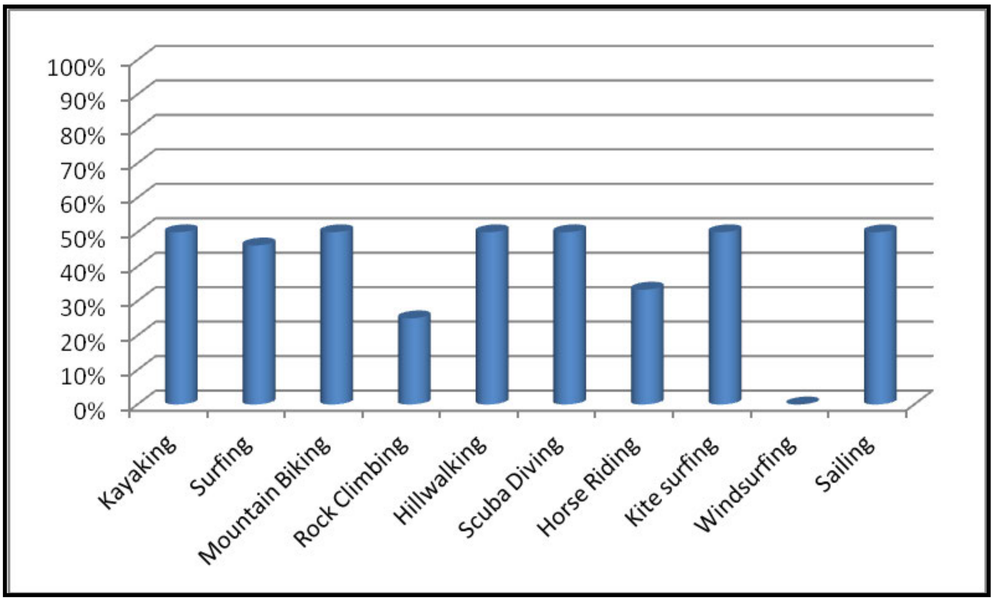


Fig. 4.3.4f Sociogram Results – Transport

Transport operators featured minimally across the sociogram levels of interaction with adventure tourism providers, see Fig. 4.3.4f above. This suggests that transport may not be required; perhaps visitors tend to use their own transport or stay near the activity location. Some activities, such as mountain biking, require large volumes of equipment and therefore the provider will be using transport already and may have the facility to offer transport to participants. If activities are easily accessible then tourists may not require extra transport facilities.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 1.000/ p= 0.991. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.4g Networking with Food/ Beverage Providers

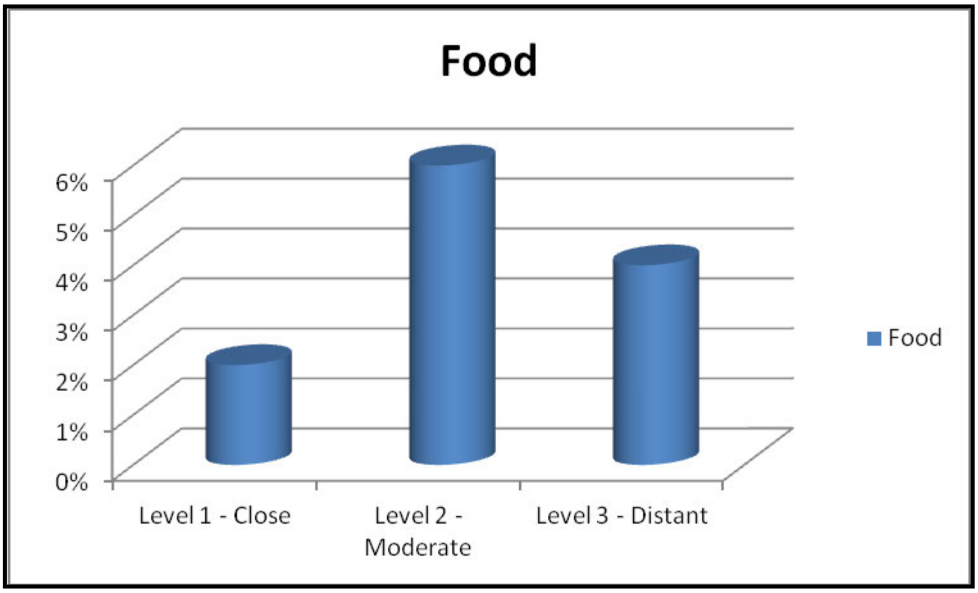
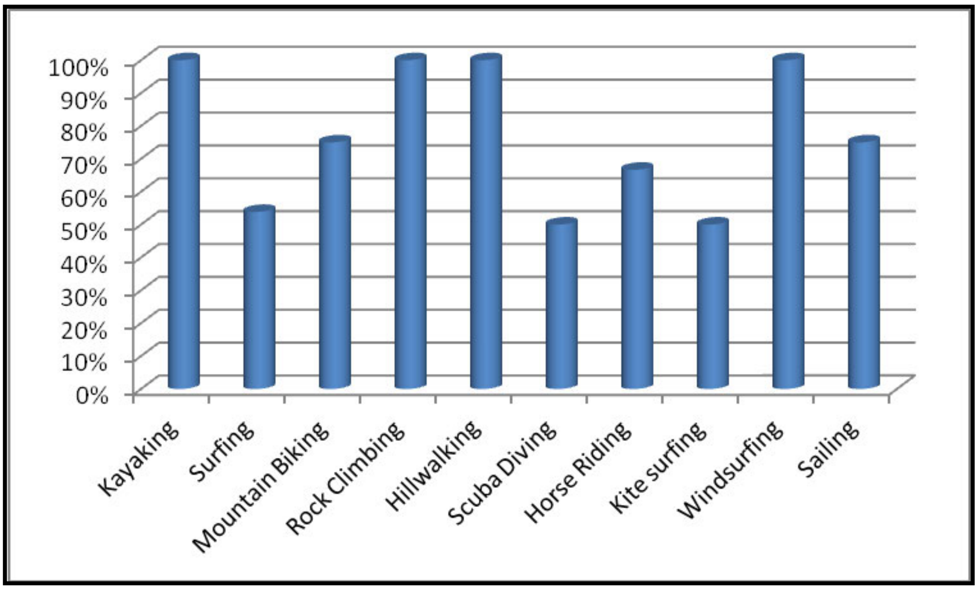


Fig. 4.3.4h Sociogram Results – Networking with Food Providers

The sociogram results show that food providers feature in very low proportions of adventure activity providers' everyday networking. Only 2% of adventure providers engage in a close networking relationship with a food provider. There may be several explanations for this low figure, adventure providers are often located near the resources used for adventure and these can be rurally and remotely located so there may not be food options conveniently located. As mentioned above, adventure activities can be half day or full day activities or longer; in these cases, food may be brought by the adventure provider or by the participant themselves. Finally, if activity participants choose to stay at nearby accommodation, this accommodation is likely to provide food options and therefore the results might be entwined with those of accommodation providers above.



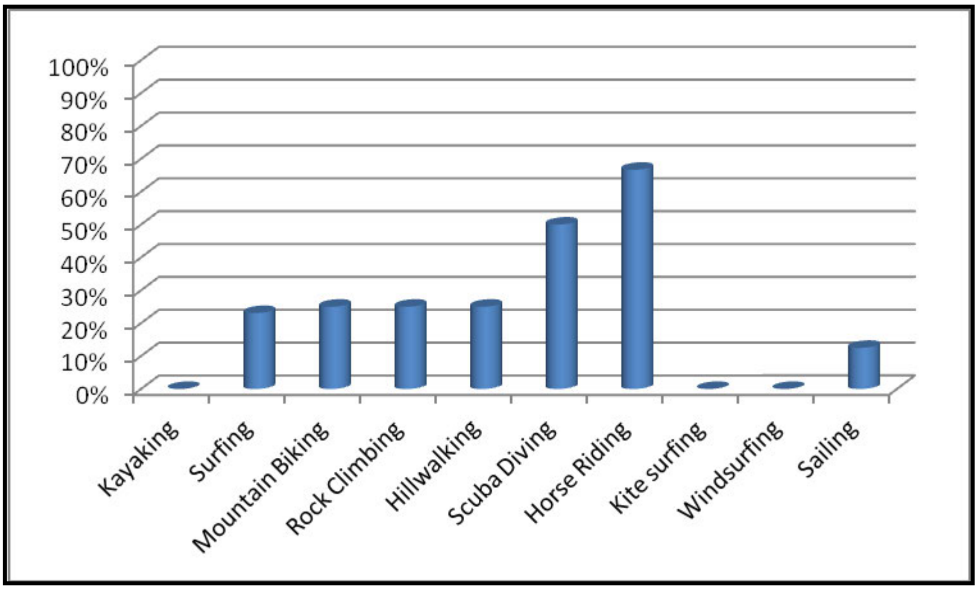
An exact contingency table was generated, p= 1.000/ p= 0.991. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig4.3.4i Networking with Other Adventure Tourism Providers

Networking with other adventure tourism providers was generally high across the seven top adventure activity provider groups. Clearly the highest percentage is to be found in activity providers who have a natural twinning of products with other adventure activities. For example, hill walking (100%) can be twinned with mountain biking and rock climbing as the terrain can be mixed and suited to either. Examples of these can be found in The Burren, Co. Clare and in Ballyhoura, Co. Limerick. Kayaking is also an activity of which providers said they network 100% with other adventure tourism providers. Kayaking fits easily with surfing, canoeing, Stand Up Paddleboarding (SUP) and sailing so there is plenty of scope to network for strategic fit (Porter, 1996).

The providers were asked if their previous networking experience benefitted their business. The majority of providers said that their business reaped benefits from the experience (65.4%). This figure was consistent across the counties except for Cork where 40% of providers there said they did not see any benefits as a result of networking activity. 19.2% of providers said that they didn't know whether their business had benefitted or not. These providers are likely to be in the process of networking and have not yet seen a result.

Since the expected and the real benefits may differ, it could be deduced that the networking experience brings additional benefits that were unexpected by the provider initially, see section 4.3.2.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 1.000/ p= 0.991. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.4j Networking with Education Providers

Education providers, such as schools, colleges, language centres, youth clubs and scout groups, are the group least engaged for networking by adventure tourism providers, according to the quantitative data alone. Perhaps some providers consider their remit to be tourism alone rather than education and OECs often market themselves to the education sector and may have dominance over this segment, particularly since they are linked to ETBs (Education and Training Boards), formerly VECs (Vocational Education Committees) and often have higher capacity to cater for larger groups. It is also possible that smaller providers don't have the capability individually to offer activities for large groups. There is scope here for networking potential so that clusters of smaller providers can compete for larger contracts.

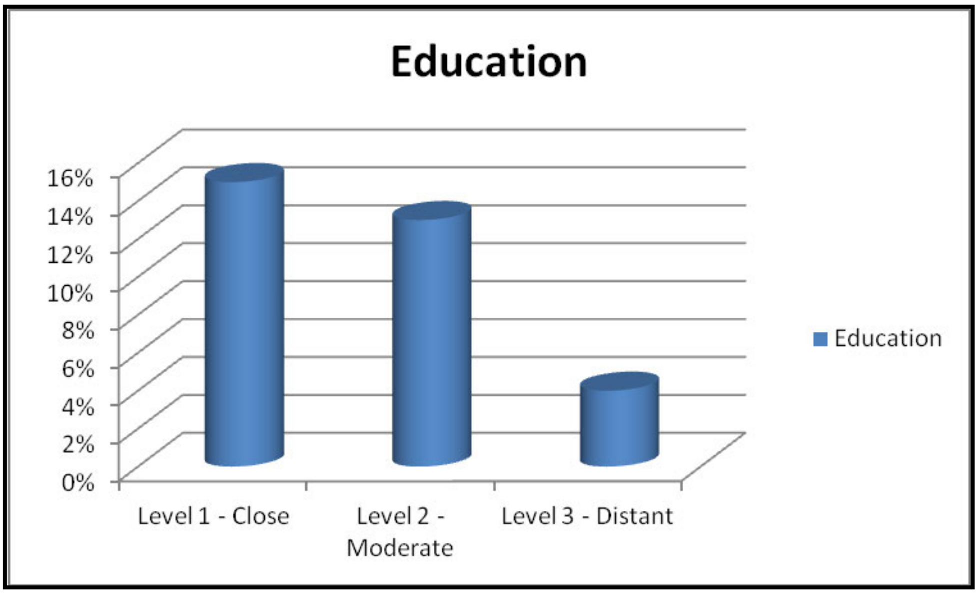


Fig. 4.3.4k Sociogram Results – Education

In contrast, the sociogram showed an interesting difference in the data. When education providers and clubs were analysed separately, it became apparent that education providers featured in the close networks of the participant providers, while clubs, for example youth clubs and hobby clubs, were mainly placed at level 2 showing moderate networking activity with adventure activity providers. Clubs may be seen as similar to educational providers in that they seek group activity sessions and are an excellent networking and marketing opportunity for these providers, see Fig. 4.3.4l below.

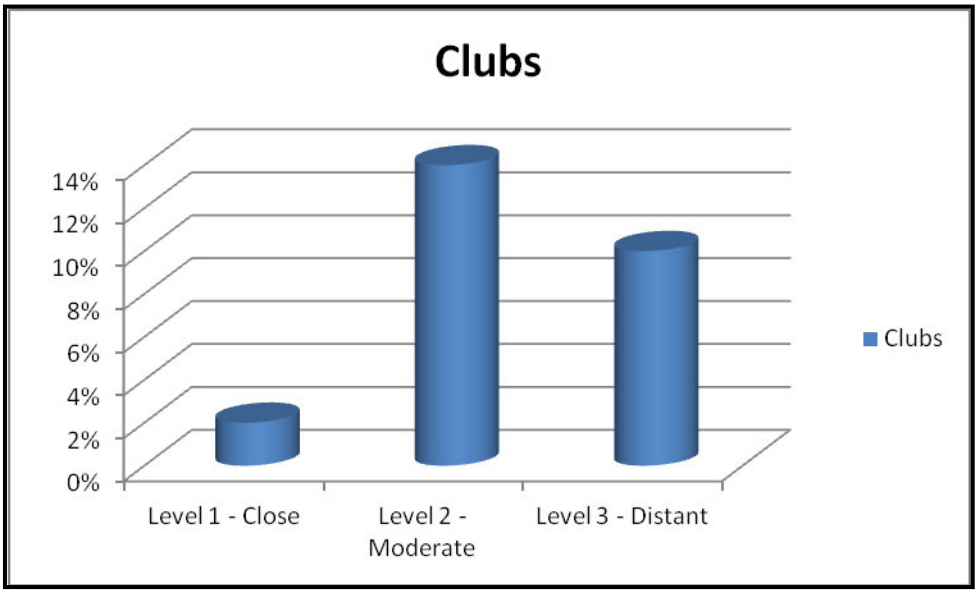


Fig. 4.3.4l Sociogram Results - Clubs

All of the interviewed providers said that they had tried networking at some point. The type of networking and the degree to which the providers committed to networking varied. The majority, 75%, simply twinned their product with another similar or complementary one. For example a hill walking provider in Cork described a client who sought out their services but who also wanted to go kayaking so the provider made contact with a known local kayaking provider and from then on offered the combined product on request. Some providers, for example near Tralee and Dingle teamed up with local bed and breakfasts and hotels in order to offer a complete activity break for their customers, though this was short lived as the bond between the stakeholders was eroded due to an imbalance of enthusiasm in selling the product; providers felt that they were recommending the accommodation but that the accommodation providers were not marketing local activities to their clients.

Providers who had taken part in networking in the past said that the structure was very informal and based on a casual understanding that providers would recommend each other's business, generally by word of mouth. In small communities especially "every customer keeps the door open," (Surfing provider B, Clare, Quote 54) which in turn keeps the community alive.

The networking experiences among the providers tended to be informal in both structure and frequency, depended on demand and brought providers together who were likely to offer complementary products. Willingness to engage in networking activities in the future was met with slight scepticism but enthusiasm for a solution that must be worth the effort and time spent, measurable and specific to adventure tourism providers. When asked why providers declined to be part of a networking attempt in the future they said that if an opportunity presented itself then they would consider it but at the moment networking was not necessarily for them, that they were happy to work on their own. One interviewee was dismayed at an initial experience of a networking meeting,

> "The problem with networking committees is that the strongest character takes over the room" (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 57).

In some areas where there was an abundance of accommodation or restaurants the providers would leave posters and flyers for proprietors to give to customers, in return they would offer to recommend the bed and breakfast, hotel, bar or restaurant to their clients. This informal style was preferred for all the providers who commented on their prior networking experience.

Those who took part in more formal networking structures (4 out of 16 interviewed providers) felt that they contributed more time than others in the network or than they felt was necessary. They also felt that committees who governed the initiatives were problematic and that networking initiatives for adventure tourism providers should be exclusively, at least initially, for adventure tourism providers. None of the providers who were interviewed were currently participating in any formal networking initiative though some were in informal networking partnerships with other providers.

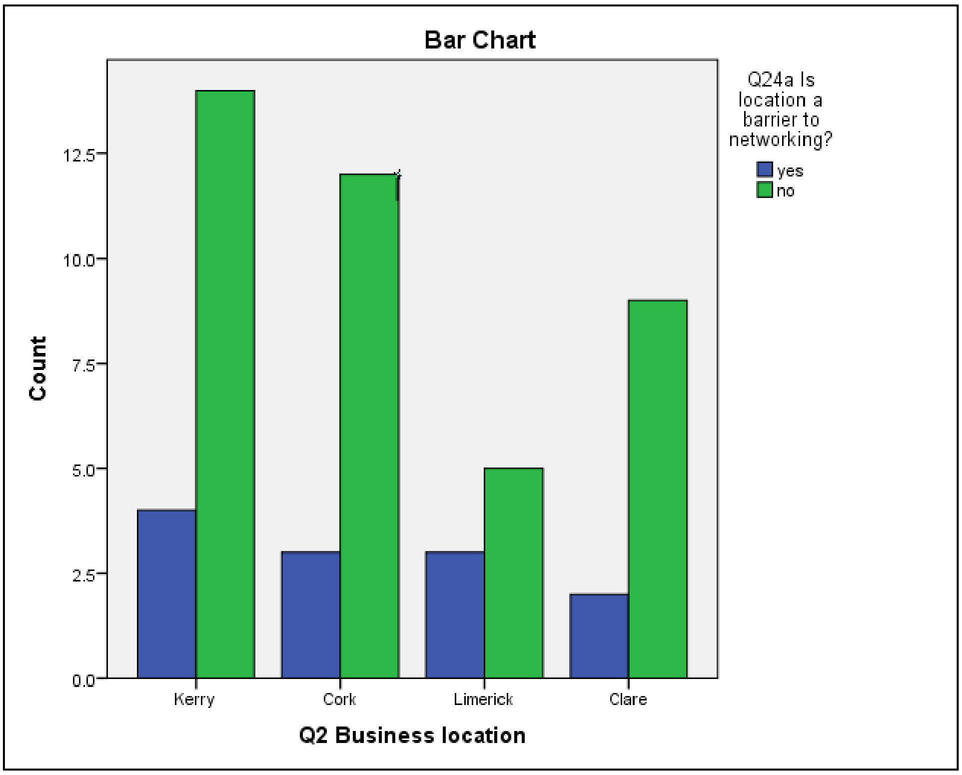
Two providers said that they received business mentoring through Fáilte Ireland and that it was beneficial in both instances. Five providers spoke about mentoring but in terms of them and their business being the mentor not the mentee. These providers are well established within the industry and have, for example, taken on interns and networked with fledgling providers in order to provide support. The feedback from these experiences for providers was that they were beneficial but often time consuming. One provider mentioned a crossover of needs met by taking on an intern who wanted adventure skills training and who, in turn, managed the business' social media and online marketing campaign.

While mentoring is encouraged and facilitated by business support agencies in Ireland, DeFaoite et al. (2003) suggest that evaluation of the effectiveness of mentoring supports is lacking and therefore difficult to measure. Bisk (2002) found that the mentoring relationship was affected by anxiety from the mentee around revealing information about the business to a stranger. Once this was overcome, the benefits of mentoring became evident. Skills development of the entrepreneur through mentoring (Cope and Watts, 2000) is enhanced by the facilitation of the mentees to reflect on the mentoring experience and construct knowledge that is beneficial to them (Smith and Patton, 2011). In addition, Rigg and O'Dwyer (2012) maintain that mentors also provide learning within the relationship around identity and social capital. Mentoring as a business support is perhaps best suited to start up businesses and even more relevant in the beginning phases of entry to the tourism market rather than in an add-on capacity. Enterprise Ireland offer new mentor supports specifically for small and new businesses showing that the needs of these businesses are being recognised. Mentoring is seen to be beneficial but time consuming and it appears that the adventure tourism providers in this research sought more flexible support options.

4.3.5 Location and Networking

Some locations impacted negatively on the success of the businesses because of a lack of supporting infrastructure and other similar businesses with whom they could network.

> "Remote locations are amazing to draw people in but you've got higher transport and associated costs," (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 10).



An exact contingency table was generated, p = 0.807. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.5 Location cross referenced with location as barrier

Location was not considered to be a barrier to networking either (Fig. 4.3.5 above), according to the providers. 76.9% of respondents said that location was not a barrier to networking. This could mean that the providers are located within reasonable distance of potential networking partners, perhaps in a cluster of tourism businesses or a resort destination. Porter (2000) described cluster theory as the effect on competitiveness of geographic location but it may also be the case of mutual or community support for these providers.

There is clearly a dichotomy of strengths and weaknesses associated with providers' location. The ATTA et al. (2010b) definition of adventure tourism dictates that there is an interaction with nature. The providers discussed their definitions in the interviews and mentioned taking advantage of unique and beautiful 'natural resources'. Adventure tourism businesses are located in or within reach of activity locations; beaches, mountains, rivers, lakes and trails. Adventure tourism businesses are either located in an adventure hub, a destination marketed to attract adventure seekers, or the businesses are widely spread in rural areas. Location is part of what characterises the business. The 'authentiseeking' (ITIC, 2011) tourist wants to find the unspoilt landscape and the 'real' experience of what is on offer. The advantage for many small tourism businesses is that a location can offer special scenery and the necessary conditions for adventure activities but there are potential disadvantages; isolation, inaccessibility, poor infrastructure and lack of passing trade. Isolation in particular may mean that a business is off the beaten track for clients but crucially it means that they will likely suffer from a lack of support that other businesses may enjoy from nearby or destination based businesses. Without even purposely engaging in networking activities with other businesses the fact is that the fewer businesses surrounding a provider, the less likely they will be to become involved in networking activities. Cluster based networking is of particular relevance here. Where proximity to other businesses is absent there is no opportunity to belong to a cluster (Porter, 2000) but adventure tourism businesses cannot set up just anywhere; location is a key consideration. Wang and Krakover (2008) warn that a tourism destination might attract visitors and the businesses may cooperate in drawing them there but once there, the competition begins.

Providers spoke about the opportunity to capitalise on rural and remote locations by selling merchandise and equipment related to their activities. Even if tourists don't choose to take up lessons or book a guide they might be interested in obtaining new gear from a knowledgeable provider. In this case location is not a barrier but a reason for adventure tourists to visit providers.

Rural or isolated locations may be a barrier for a business due to a lack of passing trade and higher costs such as transport, but providers did not consider location to be a barrier to networking (76.9%). Providers' use of online resources and social media may be one reason, and this topic is discussed fully in section 4.3.11. This may also be explained by the idea that some adventure tourism providers consider networking to be a part of their business habits rather than an additional strategy; they simply network as a necessity for business survival not to add to or enhance existing custom.

All four counties in this research are coastal and are situated along the Wild Atlantic Way route, a flagship project initiated by Fáilte Ireland in 2014 which will be a major tourism focus for 10 years. It is a medium for business networking and will create a buzz around the scenery and activities on offer along the west coast. The 'authentiseeking' (ITIC, 2011) tourist expects to experience the true culture and community of the areas they visit so preserving the locality and the society and community plays a part in showcasing the genuine Irish experience (ATTA et al., 2010a; Tourism Ireland, 2011; Novelli and Tisch-Rottensteiner, 2012) .

Grangsjo (2003) spoke of 'Gemeinschaft' as a way to describe the structure of small community based businesses whose priority is to work together to benefit the community and evolve naturally. The providers' discussion and reflection on the locations of their businesses shows that, while the businesses may have initially been and intended to remain 'Gemeinschaft' they have in recent times tended towards the competition fuelled, network based, strategised 'Gesellschaft' type where the business demands more planning and control. This situation is echoed by Wang and Krakover (2008) in discussing destination tourism. They said that initially, tourism businesses in a destination cooperate to attract tourists then switch to compete with each other once tourists arrive. This comes back again to the motivations of providers and the idea that lifestyle entrepreneurs, according to Deuchar (2012), are concerned with enhancing local areas through tourism rather than individually achieving higher profits. Further exploration of networking and destination tourism will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.3.6 Networking Patterns

Respondents were asked to specify which networking type most closely related to their networking experience. Respondents who had not networked with other businesses selected the N/a option which comprised 19% of the providers. Providers could choose from four loosely described networking patterns that indicated; clustering, cooperation, collaboration or coopetition.

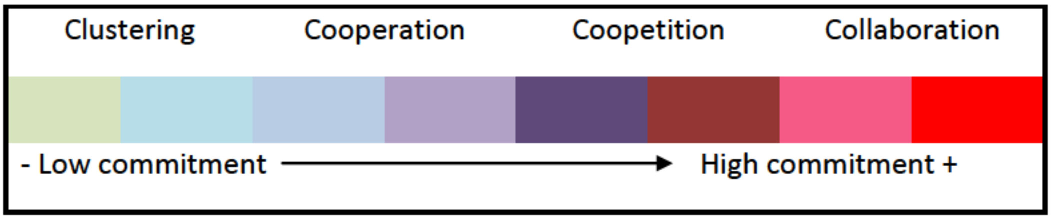


Fig. 2.3.5b Scale of Network Relationship Types

These categories were described briefly for clarity. Clustering and coopetition describe most of the networking patterns with 27% each. Cooperation and collaboration were also present in almost equal measure and comprised 14% and 13% respectively. Since both cooperation and collaboration work towards a goal, usually in a project of some sort, it is unsurprising that these networking patterns are lower; they require a commitment from stakeholders. Coopetition, of course, requires some commitment but it provides for maintenance of the competitive element.

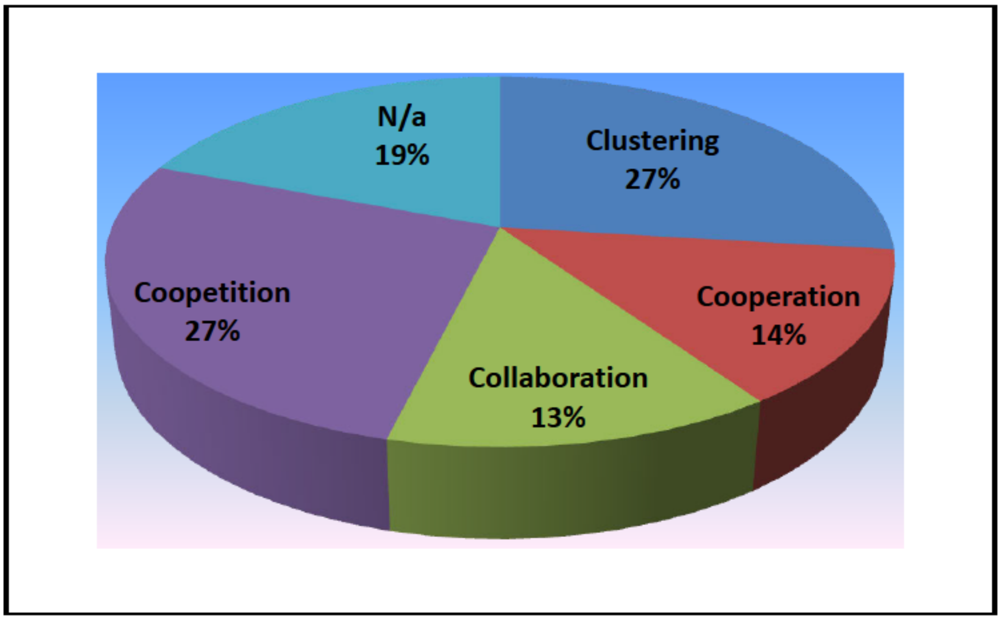


Fig. 4.3.6a Types of networking carried out by providers

Edgell and Haenisch (1995) recognised the appropriateness of a coopetitive networking structure in tourism in order to achieve an improved tourism product and to compete on a larger scale. It is clear from a review of the providers' networking experiences outlined in the previous section, 4.3.4, that providers tend to be more comfortable in loose networking relationships where, for example, businesses would recommend each other to tourists and other providers.

The analysis of these patterns was cross tabulated with the locations to investigate if there was any deviation across the counties. In Limerick there was higher rate of cooperation (25%) than clustering (12.5%) and in Clare coopetition far outweighed any other pattern (45.5%). Cooperation was not represented at all (0%) in Clare providers. This suggests that rather than cooperating with other businesses, the Clare providers recognise that an element of competition remains present in networking activities which gives rise to the higher coopetition result; almost half of those in Clare networked in this way.

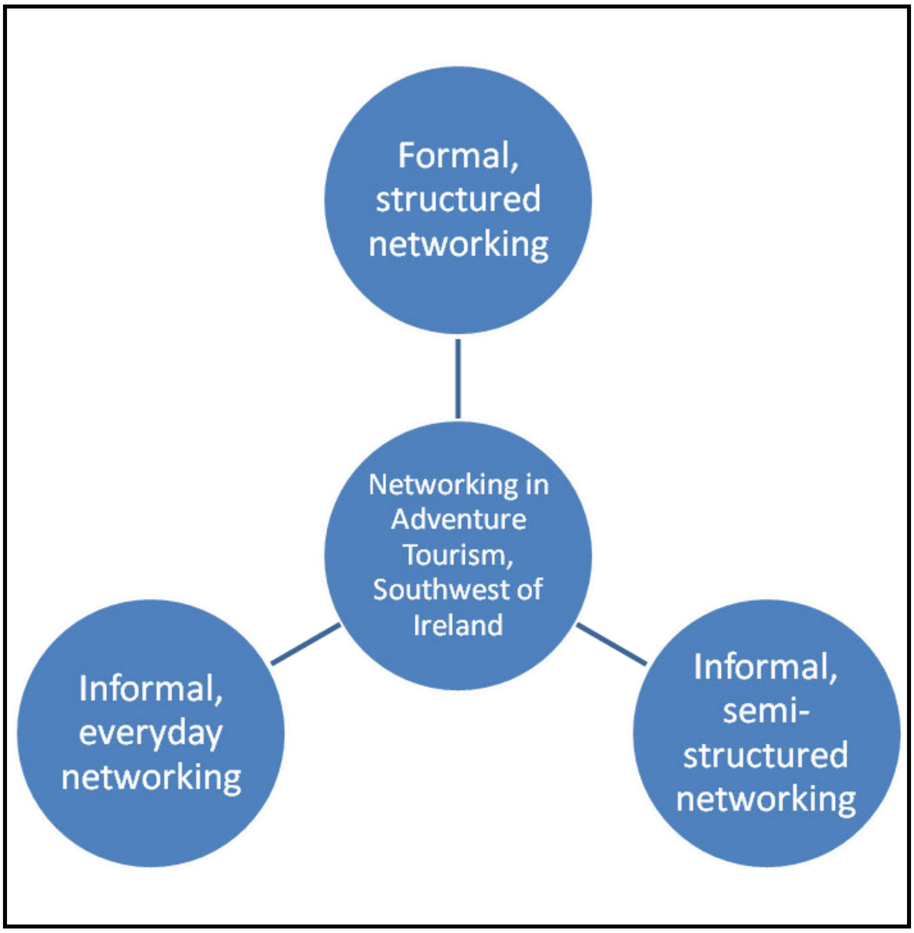


Fig. 4.3.6b Networking in Adventure Tourism

It is recommended that where small tourism businesses are concerned, coopetition is necessary in order to survive (Nalebuff and Brandenburger, 1997; Tinsley and Lynch, 2007). One provider described a coopetitive networking arrangement where they worked with a competitor on a project;

> "So, I suppose we were both very apprehensive about that [working together] but we ended up working extremely well together. How do I know that? The customer feedback mentioned very relevantly and clearly that the teamwork that was provided by the guides was extremely professional," (Hill walking provider, Limerick, Quote 58).

The tourism business environment is filled with competition and providers must adapt in order to maximise the benefits to be reaped from coopetitive networking opportunities (Kelliher et al., 2009).

When data from the questionnaire, sociogram and interviews is examined together, a clearer picture of the networking activities of adventure tourism providers begins to form. The findings from the questionnaires and interviews allude to networking being viewed as a structured endeavour but the sociogram shows that networking is a phenomenon that occurs regularly through the volume of networking relationships identified in the sociogram. The results of the sociogram also reflect regular interactions of adventure tourism providers with a range of auxiliary tourism providers and other businesses. The research has led to the discovery of three types of networking in the adventure tourism industry in the southwest of Ireland, see Fig. 4.3.6e. The first is formal structured networking and is rarely employed or successful in adventure tourism. Providers who took part in this research found previous formal structures through initiatives and hubs to be unsuccessful and unproductive because of poor management structure, unclear objectives and diluted purposes. This type of structure is categorised by high levels of commitment in terms of the three T's; time, trust and turf (O'Donnell, 2012) from stakeholders. Small tourism businesses simply do not have the time or resources available to commit to these types of networking arrangements, nor do they like the prospect of exposing their client lists and business information. The second type of networking is informal structured networking which is categorised by some commitment of the three T's and is needs based and often short lived or temporary. For example, two adventure businesses may come together to offer a combined product to a large group. They may share certain resources but do not fully expose marketing plans, client lists, budgets and so on, to each other. Finally, the third type is informal everyday networking and this involves initiating and maintaining regular contact with other providers and businesses within and outside the tourism industry. The networking structure is broad and regular. There is little to no commitment of the three T's and the informality allows for providers to gather contacts and information without committing to formal arrangements. This structure was unearthed by the sociogram and appears to be frequently used by providers and highly appropriate in the current industry context.

Sociogram

In this research, a sociogram is used to illustrate a simple set of relationships between the provider and their close, medium and distant networks. 34 of the 52 questionnaire respondents (65%) completed the sociogram section and the results have been distributed throughout this chapter in relevant sections. It is important to realise the significance of the overall findings of the sociogram displayed at once since the purpose of the tool is to identify and examine patterns of interaction.

	Level 1 - Close	Level 2 - Moderate	Level 3 - Distant
Accommodation	17%	2%	0%
Adventure Activity Providers	21%	10%	21%
Business Supports	4%	8%	10%
Clubs	2%	14%	10%
Education	15%	13%	4%
Fáilte Ireland	4%	13%	10%
Finance	6%	10%	10%
Food	2%	6%	4%
NGBs	9%	4%	3%
Tour Operators	13%	12%	21%
Transport	7%	8%	7%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Fig. 4.3.6c Sociogram results, by level

Providers were asked to identify agents in their business network and to assign them to be close, moderate or distant networking partners. No minimum or maximum limits were set as to how many agents they should identify. Accordingly, there were assorted results from providers and the most appropriate way to analyse the results is to place them into categories as illustrated in Fig. below, and to present the percentage representation within that level. Since, for example, one provider could name four different local hotels in their sociogram and another provider might use the generic label of 'local hotel' in theirs, each label placed on each level was categorised and scored. The results of the sociogram are presented as a percentage share of each level. It is important to show the weighting of each category at each level. Using a percent representation allows for a fairer analysis across the levels and within the categories.

The following diagram (Fig. 4.3.6d) is a visual representation of the level 1 network from the sociogram, see Appendix C. It shows the businesses and supports with whom the research providers identified as being in their close network. The close network refers to either frequent contact or a close working relationship. The results show that these adventure tourism providers are in close contact with other adventure tourism providers (21%) and accommodation businesses (17%).

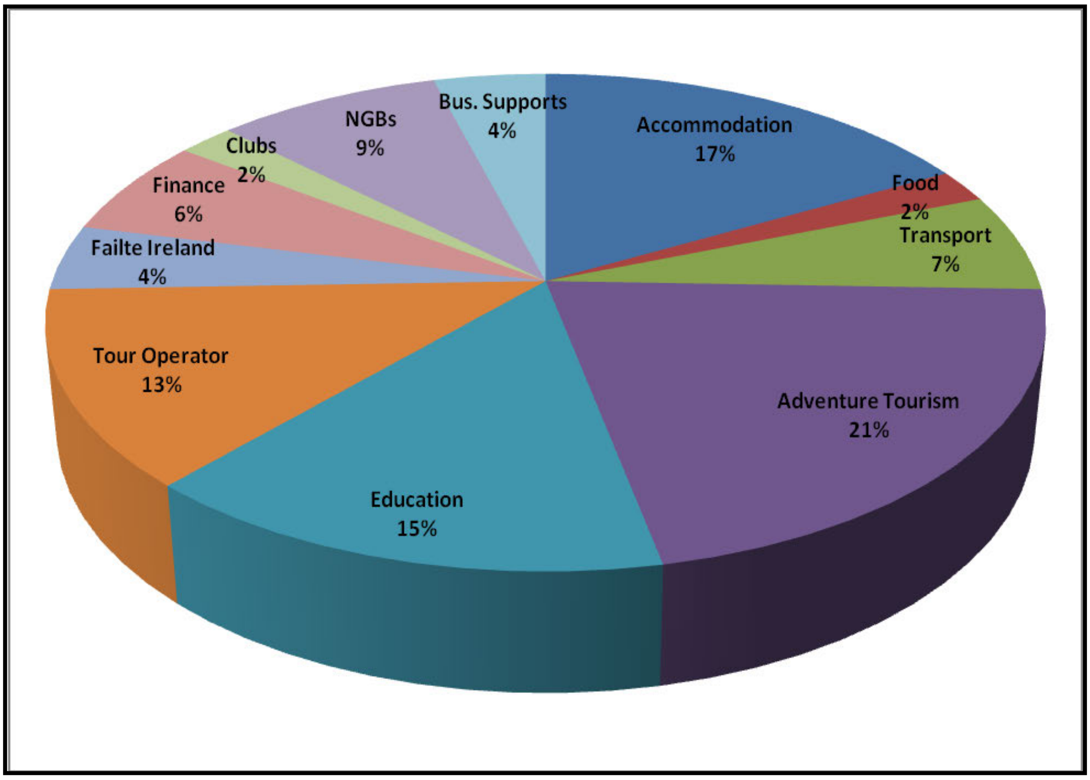


Fig. 4.3.6d Level 1 – Close Networking Relationships

This supports the interview data suggesting that providers are being increasingly innovative and developing adventure tourism packages with their activities by combining with other activities and offering accommodation.

Fig. 4.3.6e shows a visual representation of the level 2 network from the sociogram, see Appendix C. The results of this part of the sociogram analysis show that contact here is more evenly distributed throughout the categories. The categories of Clubs, Fáilte Ireland, Tour operators and Education are evenly distributed suggesting that these are in the network for providers but may not be crucial to the everyday running of the business.

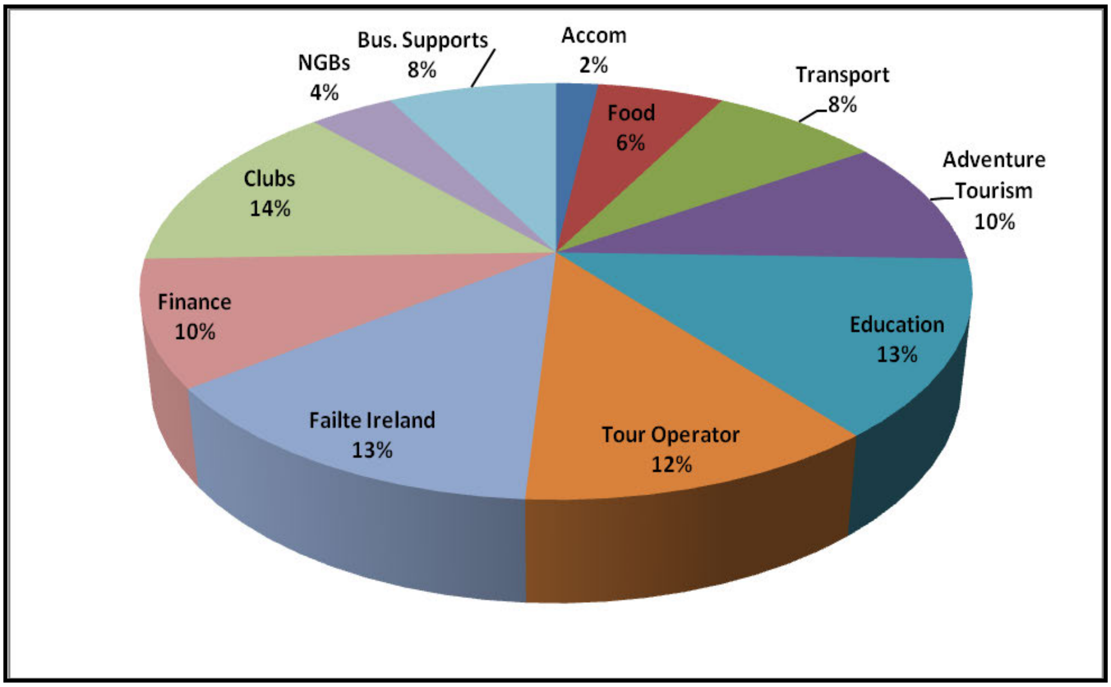


Fig. 4.3.6e Level 2 - Moderate Networking Relationships

Fáilte Ireland feature in the moderate network and this tells us that, while providers do not consider Fáilte Ireland to be in their close network (See Fig. 4.3.6d) contact is maintained. This is likely to translate into Fáilte Ireland keeping contact through mailing lists and holding events or launching tourism initiatives.

Another striking feature of the diagram (Fig. 4.3.6e) above is that accommodation is only represented by 4% of the moderate network having represented 17% of close networking relationships in the previous diagram (Fig. 4.3.6d). Furthermore, accommodation is not at all represented in the distant networking relationships shown in the diagram below (Fig. 4.3.6f). These figures combine to show that viewing this data level by level gives true insight into the networking patterns of the participating providers.

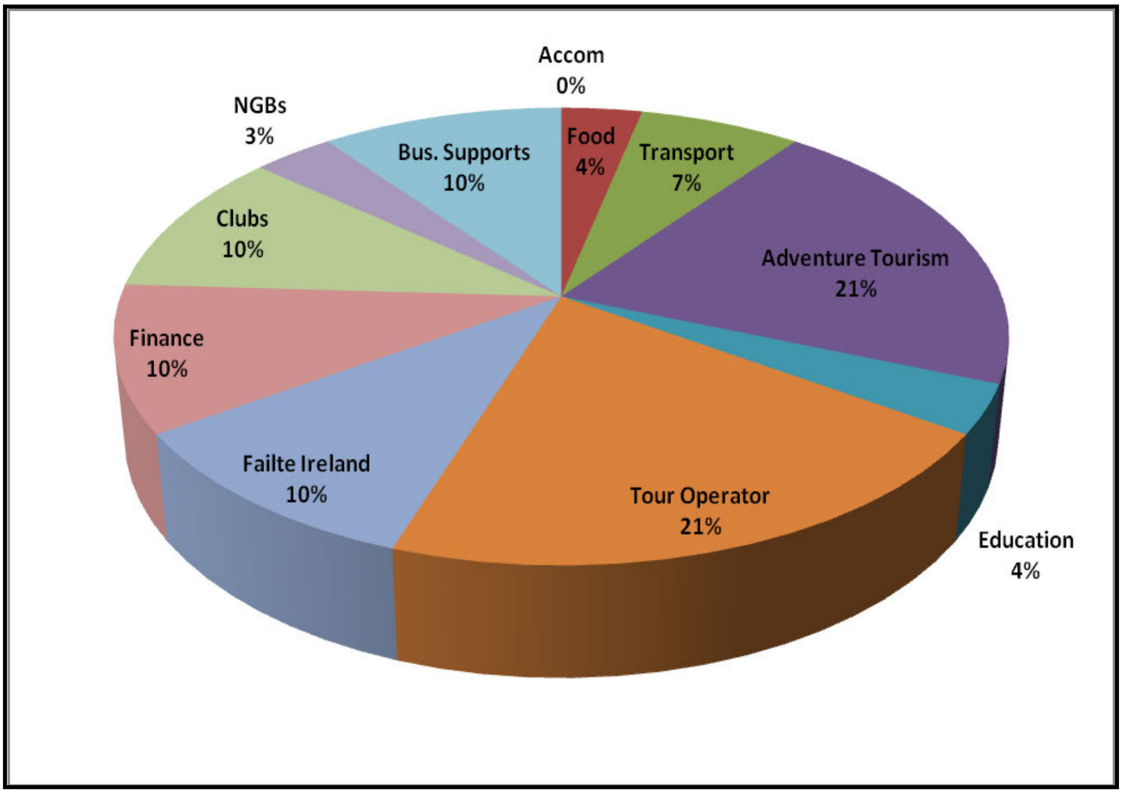


Fig. 4.3.6f Level 3 - Distant Networking Relationships

The diagram above (Fig. 4.3.6f) represents the level 3 network and shows the businesses and supports that the partipating providers consider to be in their distant network. The distant relationship may be one that is irregular, infrequent or casual. Other adventure tourism providers and tour operators both represent 21% of the distant working relationships suggesting that the participating providers are aware of these businesses but may not actively seek networking relationships with them, rather they are aware of them should an opportunity arise for mutual benefit. This may be evidence of the global trend of disintermediation in the adventure tourism sector (UNWTO, 2014); breaking ties with the middle man in the tourism transaction.

It is clear from the sociogram data that adventure tourism providers establish networking relationships with a broad range of specific businesses and maintain the relationship. It is likely that, over time, the providers recognised the value in networking with particular businesses. This suggests that these relationships are well founded and specific to providers where the networking relationship is beneficial in some way. The networking relationships that are effective or have potential are the ones most likely to be included in a network diagram (sociogram) by the provider. This is why this structure is significant. The sociogram results indicate networking relationships that are both current and valid. For example, if we consider networking between the respondent providers and other adventure tourism providers the questionnaire revealed that 65% of respondents had networked with other adventure tourism providers. There is a huge gap here in what could be seen as past or 'one-off' networking (questionnaire) and current or regular networking (sociogram). These figures together suggest that other adventure tourism providers do feature as potential networking partners but they do not become part of regular networking for most providers.

4.3.7 Benefits of Networking

The research questionnaire was used to determine the level of benefit, if any, that the providers gained from networking activities. A majority of providers said that they benefitted from networking with other businesses, see Fig. 4.3.7. During the subsequent interviews the providers elaborated on the benefits of networking. The providers said that they benefitted from networking in the past in two ways mainly; by having the opportunity to package their products together with others, and by passing clients to each other as it is generally reciprocated and everyone wins.

> "Well, you just know really that if you recommend a B&B or whatever to customers and you tell them to say you sent them, then the B&B will appreciate the business and mention the kayaking or surfing to their customers if they ask." (Rock climbing and Kayaking provider, Clare, Quote 59)

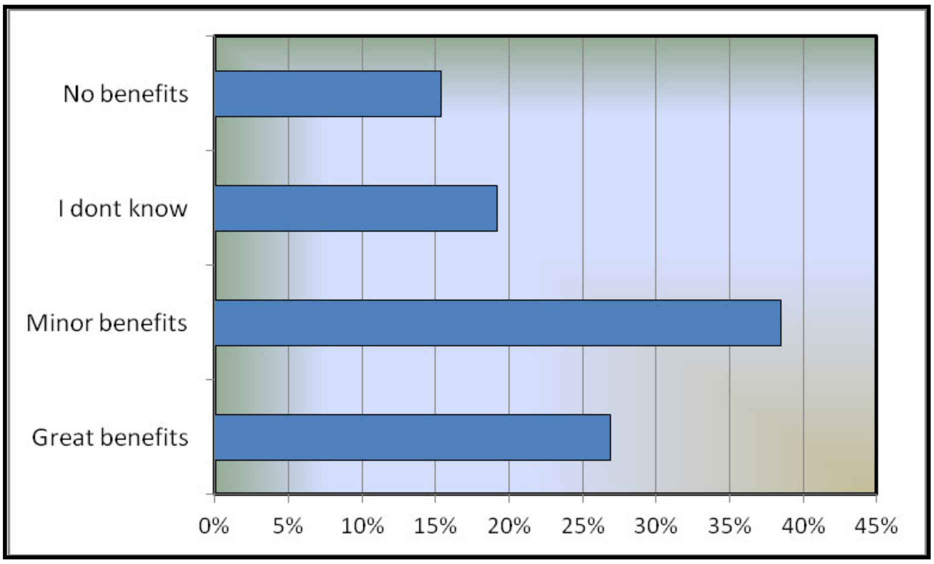


Fig. 4.3.7 Providers' perceptions of networking benefits

The informal structure of networking in this way appears to be one that adventure providers are most comfortable with. A coopetitive networking structure appears to afford the providers expected benefits while limiting potential challenges, see section 4.3.8.

Earlier this research addressed the providers' motivations to engage in networking activities and alluded to the idea that motivations are expected benefits. The findings of this research show that the actual benefits of networking may be different to the expected benefits. For example, the research found that the providers were motivated to network by financial gain, growth and development of the business, including opening up to new markets, gaining ideas for marketing and sharing associated costs. However, the actual benefits described by the providers during interviews were less tangible and related more to support; assurance of quality in other providers' product, the promotion of the industry and activities, gaining support from within the industry, and twinning products between providers. Morrison (2004) suggests that, in order to establish effective long term networking there must be clear and tangible benefits resulting from networking efforts. Childs et al. (2005) specified that trust should be developed between networking partners and this research contends that issues of trust between competing adventure businesses is an issue that prevents commitment to long term networking. Strengthening social capital (Putnam, 1993; Sullivan and Skelcher, 2002; Ateljevic, 2009) appears to be a resulting benefit of networking rather than an expected one.

When asked about expected outcomes from networking efforts, the interviewees spoke about tangible outcomes from networking opportunities such as increasing customer numbers, tapping into new markets, and marketing a tourism package product. However, as illustrated in Fig. 2.4.2 'The Benefits of Building Profitable Tourism Destinations' (Morrison et al., 2004, p.198), there are far more intangible benefits to networking such as establishing tourism destinations, learning and exchange, and community benefits. In turn, these intangible benefits contribute to cohesiveness of a tourism destination and therefore enhance the genuine and authentic experience that is much sought after by today's adventure tourist (ITIC, 2011; Novelli and Tisch- Rottensteiner, 2012). Grangsjo (2003) referred to a similar idea with the notion of Gemeinschaft in small business networking as the existence of a genuine synergy between businesses in a network. The openness to and development of bonds between small tourism businesses is a major benefit that brings further positive consequences (Lynch et al., 2009), particularly in clusters of tourism destinations.

4.3.8 Networking Supports

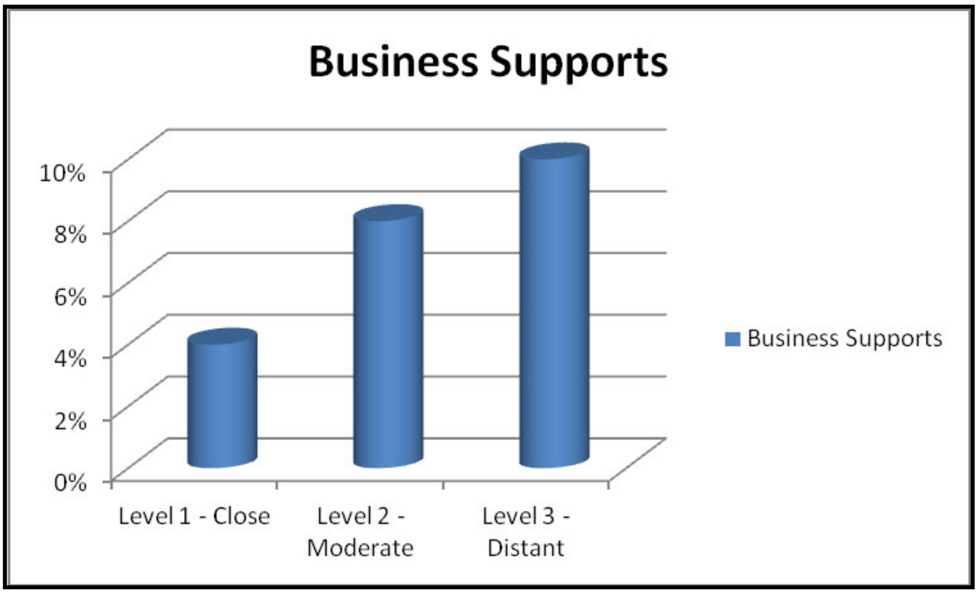


Fig. 4.3.8a Sociogram Results – Business Supports

The sociogram showed that, in general, business supports were only identified in a meagre amount of adventure activity providers' close networks but in 10% of distant and 7% of moderate networks.

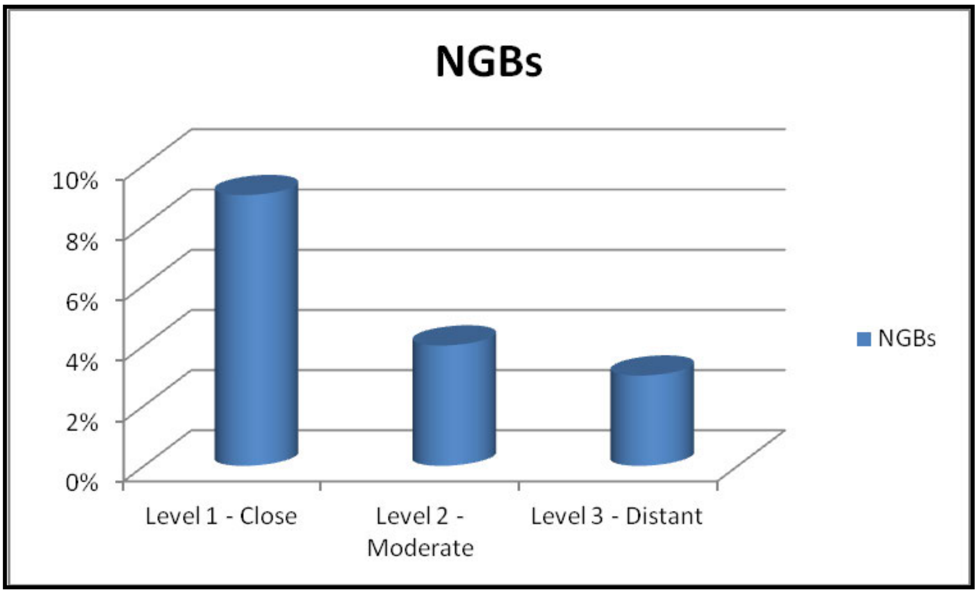


Fig. 4.3.9b Sociogram Results – NGBs

This suggests that supports are in the background of a significant proportion of adventure providers' businesses. The highest frequency of membership of organisations among the providers was of the national governing bodies of the relative adventure activities (61.5%). Only one provider said that they did not belong to any organisations.

NGBs didn't feature as much as expected on the sociogram but of those who identified NGBs to be in their network, the majority said that they network closely with their relevant NBGs, see Fig. 4.3.8b above. This also may suggest that some NGBs are more effective in maintaining working relationships with activity providers. In the interviews two providers said they received business development support in the form of marketing strategy advice and web design. Fáilte Ireland was also credited by one provider with being very effective in bringing international clients to providers through tour operators and effective marketing.

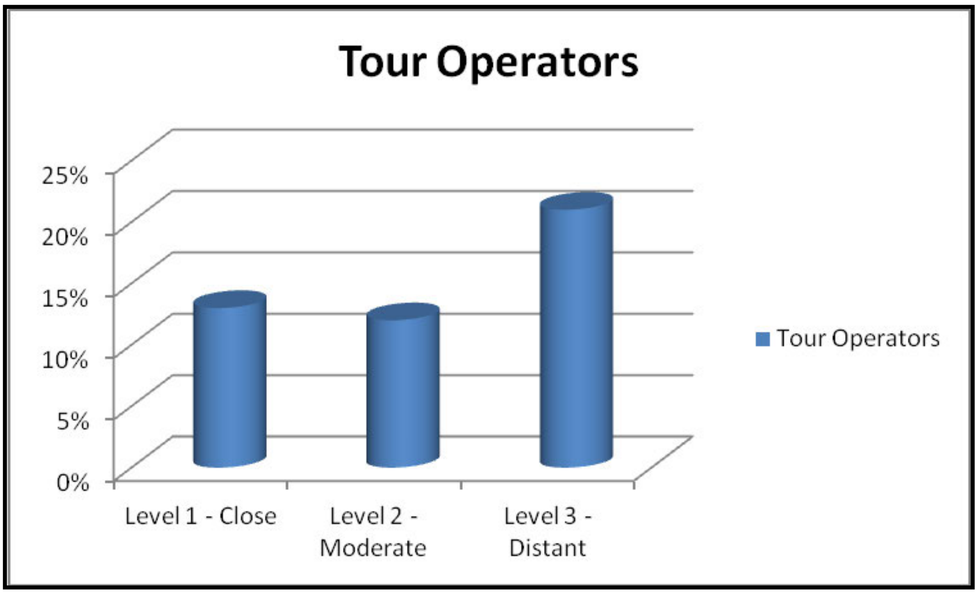


Fig. 4.3.8c Sociogram Results – Tour Operators

Unsurprisingly, tour operators are a regular networking opportunity for adventure tourism providers and they featured strongly on the sociogram results. The relationship appears to be consistent but providers may not be reliant upon the fruits of this networking activity since disintermediation (UNWTO, 2014) has been influencing the industry, rather, they can gauge the market, get referrals and link with other providers through tour operator networks.

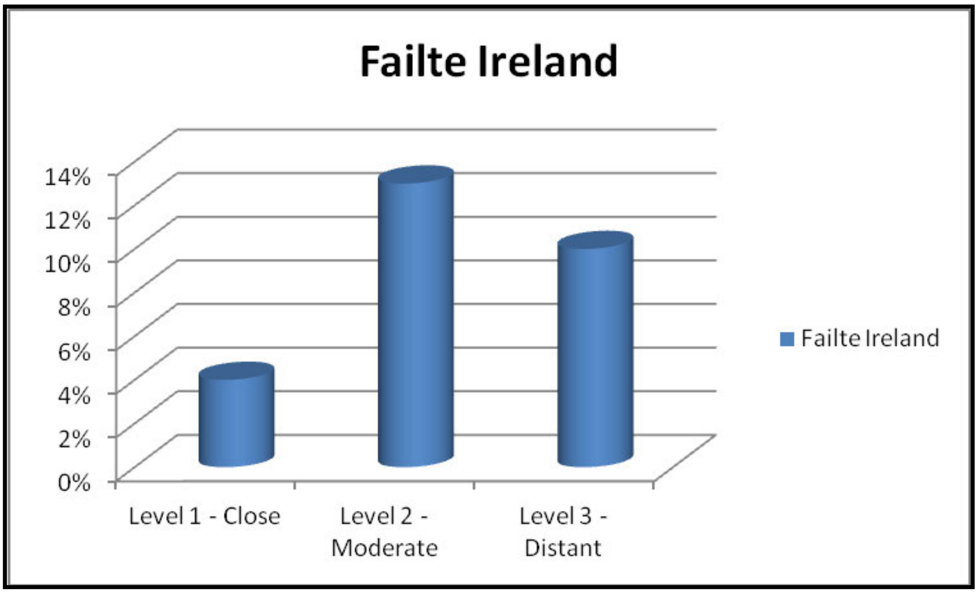


Fig. 4.3.8d Sociogram Results – Fáilte Ireland

The sociogram results also reflect the presence of Fáilte Ireland in the moderate and distant network of the participant providers. The pattern of interaction as illustrated above shows that very few (3%) maintain close contact with Fáilte Ireland but 13% consider their networking activity with the agency to be moderate. This is encouraging, especially combined with others who claimed to have a distant networking relationship with them. This indicates that the providers are not reliant upon them but are likely to make contact as needs arise.

In terms of the need for business development support the response from interviews was clear; business development, whether in the form of mentoring, training, workshops or networking, is in demand and would be welcomed by providers. Some providers felt that they needed business analysis to find out if they could improve their product or management.

Providers were asked if they had received any business supports and if so, to specify whether the support was financial, training or mentoring. The highest response was to say that they had received no business supports (34.6%). It should be noted that the providers were not asked if they sought support, only if they had received it. For example, a provider may have applied for a grant but not received it. Over 30% of providers received financial support and over 23% received support in the form of mentoring. Providers were asked what supports they felt would be beneficial to their business. The responses were dictated by the providers themselves and then categorised appropriately into those seen in Fig. 4.3.8e.

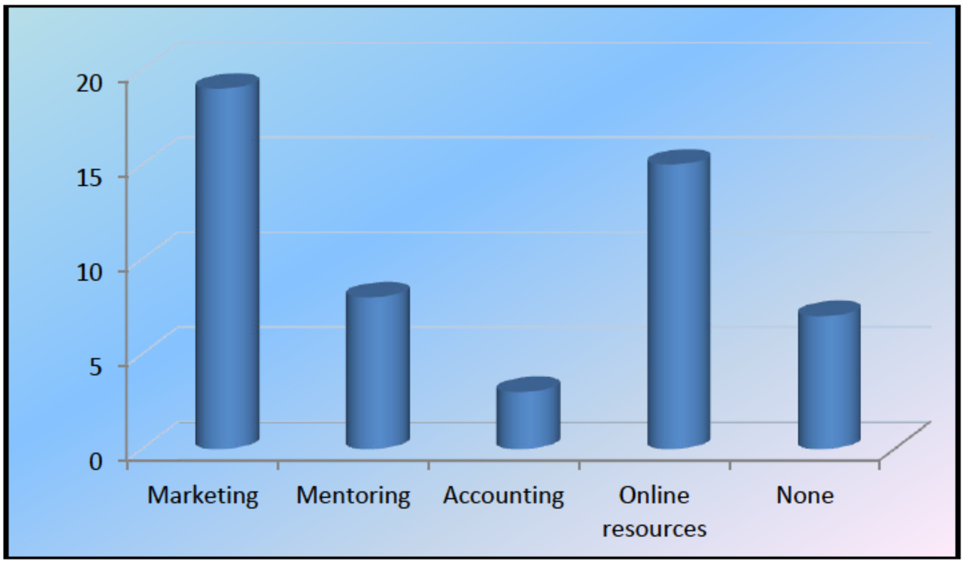
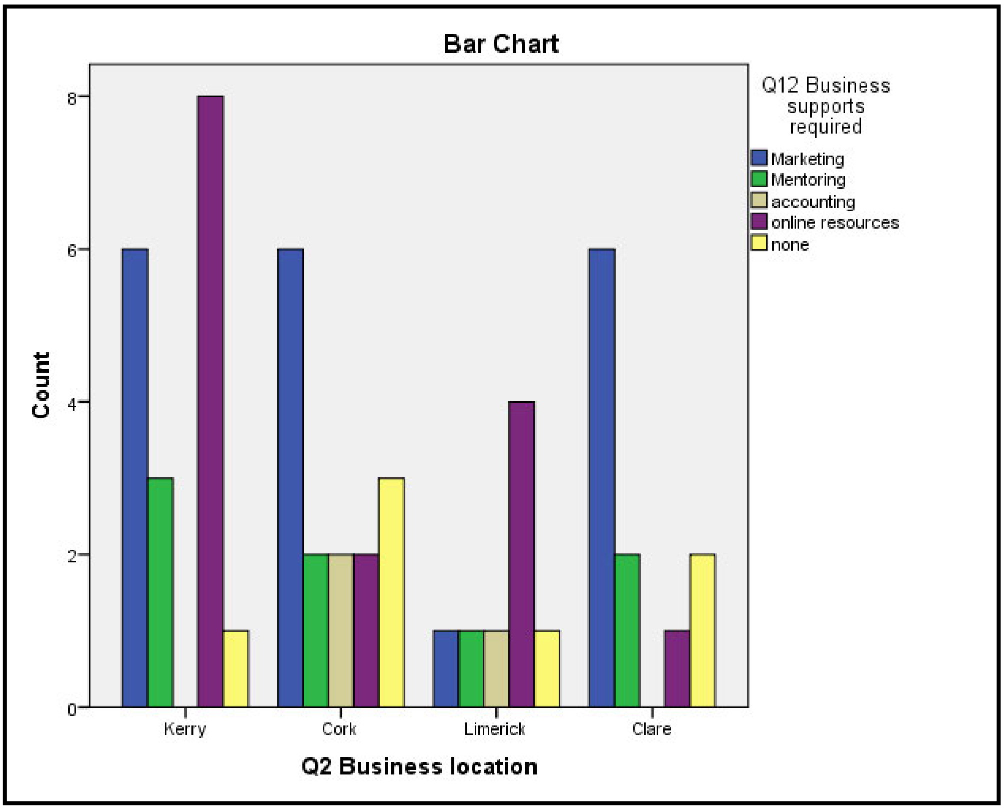


Fig. 4.3.9e Business Supports Needed

Marketing support was the highest in demand (36.5%). Support with online resources (28.8%) was also highly sought after by the providers. Mentoring was required by 15.4% and accounting support by 5.8%. 13.5% of providers did not require support. This could suggest a lack of knowledge on the range of supports available or on low cost or free supports available. If mentoring was offered then trust may be an issue. Providers may have heard negative feedback from other business owners about prior experiences or they may consider themselves to be sufficiently skilled so as not to require supports at this time.

These figures were also cross referenced with the business location, see Fig. 4.3.8f below. In Kerry only one person did not require any support at all. In Cork less support in online resources was required (13.3%). In Limerick the same requirement was up to 50%. In Clare, marketing was far more in demand (54.5%) and support with online resources far less (9.1%). Providers were also asked during the interviews if they felt that they needed any supports or training in order to enhance or develop their businesses. Providers mainly pointed out that while they are accomplished in their chosen field within the adventure tourism industry and highly skilled instructors and guides, the main issue is in formal business training and strategy.



An exact contingency table was generated, *p* = 0.284. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.8f Business supports required per county

Over half of the providers pointed out that they are very comfortable with the hard skills of their businesses but the soft skills; running a business, often alone, is challenging and requires knowledge, skill and time. This is recognised in the literature (Deakins and Freel, 1998; Lean, 1998; DeFaoite et al., 2003) where small business training is seen to be necessary but carried out gradually, flexibly and in an ongoing capacity. Cooperative marketing and increased online presence were identified as key drivers of the tourism industry in Tourism Ireland's Strategy for Growth (2012), awareness and skills development of networking strategies and online platforms are therefore becoming more important for providers.

31% of the providers interviewed felt that their computer skills were lacking. They spoke about the need to engage with social media, manage websites, online bookings and the need to move with the times in that sense. The word 'isolation' propped up again in response to this question in the interviews. Fáilte Ireland provide a web check consultation service for tourism businesses who run their own websites. Web check is a three phase service that analyses providers' websites and offers feedback on ways to improve and maximise the potential benefits for the providers' business. A series of Youtube based webinars were developed by Fáilte Ireland as well to assist tourism providers in enhancing their online potential.

In terms of support, financial support was most commonly mentioned. LEADER funding, a rural development scheme, in particular, was responsible for funding capital investment grants for a number of the adventure tourism providers since the 1990s.

One provider also mentioned that support for their business was needed from their local council. The provider explained that as a mobile business who is based at the beachfront it is imperative that they be afforded some leeway in terms of parking so that they can monitor events on the beach itself. During the off season this was afforded to the operator but in high season they were moved back to an area where they could not see the shore. This in turn made the beach less safe during this peak time as their staff also supported the work of the lifeguards on duty.

Overall the most striking result from the quantitative data regarding business supports was to say that over a third (34.6%) received no support of any kind. There are a number of possible reasons for this, the providers may not have identified the supports needed by their business, may have applied for funding or grants and been refused, they may have applied to the wrong agencies, may have had difficulty in completing necessary documentation, may not have had the time to commit to training or mentoring. It may also have been the case that support was not offered to them.

There is no consistency in the level of supports required when analysed across the four counties. Generally, business training is in high demand by providers. Soft skills and strategy development are challenging areas for accomplished activity providers, requiring knowledge, skill and time. During the interviews the need for financial support was mentioned most often by providers. Infrastructural supports were mentioned in the interviews as well as support for online resources and social media.

Financial Supports

30.8% of providers received financial support in the form of capital grants, training funds, low cost loans and investments. The providers were asked to state the level of impact that financial supports, or lack of, has as a barrier to the business. It shows below that the impact of finance on the business is mostly high (57.7%). When considered medium to high impact this is considered to be the case in 92.3%.

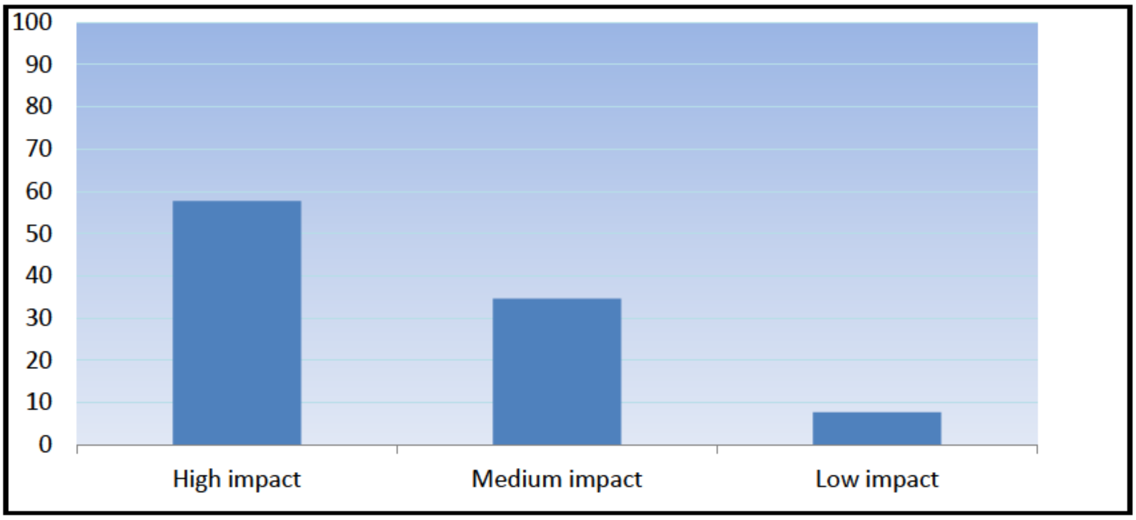


Fig. 4.3.8g Impact of [a lack of] Financial Supports on the Adventure Providers' Businesses

Every provider interviewed stated that financial support was needed. This was twofold; firstly in terms of cash flow for small businesses and sole traders in the form of access to funding or loans with manageable repayment plans, secondly for sole traders; the support of social welfare as a safety net out of season or in the case of poor conditions where providers cannot work. One provider in particular spoke about a sense of suspicion surrounding sole traders in adventure tourism, alluding to the seasonality and almost nomadic business style,

> "There's no backup, it's as if you're a sole trader well you're making loads (sic) of money...you're not, you're making a living and from what I've seen, I'm doing it with passion it's not like I'm earning loads of money." (Hill walking provider, Cork, Quote 13)

50% of providers interviewed specified that they had received LEADER funding for their businesses. County Enterprise Boards were also named as sources of financial support as well as one provider saying that they received capital grant funding from West Cork Development Partnership.

The needs ranged from actual monetary assistance in the form of grants to invest in equipment and training, access to low interest loans, overdrafts to assist with cash flow, off season support in the form of alternative job creation linked to the industry, tax breaks and social welfare assistance where necessary. In addition, six providers specified a skills deficit in terms of small business accounting and bookkeeping.

30.8% of providers received financial supports and 92.3% said that finance was a medium to high barrier for the success and development of their business. Every interviewed provider said that financial support is needed whether in the form of improved cash flow, access to loans, or supports for the self employed. Transience and seasonality of adventure tourism makes financial support more badly needed for stability. 50% of those who received financial support said that it was from LEADER funding as reported by O'Leary and Deegan (2003), an initiative intended to boost Ireland's rural economy.

Providers reported a small business accounting and book keeping skills deficit. They said that they needed to keep costs low, they cannot afford to pay for professional accountancy services, and that they need to be skilled across a range of functions in order to run the business effectively. Insurance and tax issues were raised in the interviews as ambiguous areas that are costly for providers if not managed properly. Knowledge on how to efficiently deal with these was sought by two providers. One provider described the lengthy process of applying for grants and suggested that assistance be made available to small business owners and sole traders with applying for funding because they tend not to have administrative staff and the applications can command fine detail and take time to complete.

The evidence suggests that adventure tourism providers, like many tourism business owners, need to acquire a range of skills in order to support the business without employing costly staff. Morrison and Teixeira (2004) said that lifestyle entrepreneurs often hold a romantic idea of small business ownership whereas the reality for many 'defies economic logic' (p.166) and they spend the majority of their time dealing with administrative responsibilities, marketing and accounting rather than enjoying the lifestyle they had envisaged (Lundberg and Fredman, 2012). Overall, maintaining cash flow is a key capability for successful small tourism businesses (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004; Hwang and Lockwood, 2006).

Training Supports

Only 1.9% (Fig. 4.3.9j) of the surveyed providers received training supports, suggesting that providers understood the question to ask if they had sought training support directly for their business as the providers clearly took up training opportunities at other times in various business related disciplines, like Start Your Own Business (46.2%). When training is further explored in the adventure tourism businesses, it becomes clear that the providers certainly recognise the importance of training and many completed courses other than those offered by business support agencies. The highest percentage for uptake of a course was for Start Your Own Business training (46.2%). Marketing courses were only completed by 13.5% and tourism 25% and business 23.1% courses, respectively.

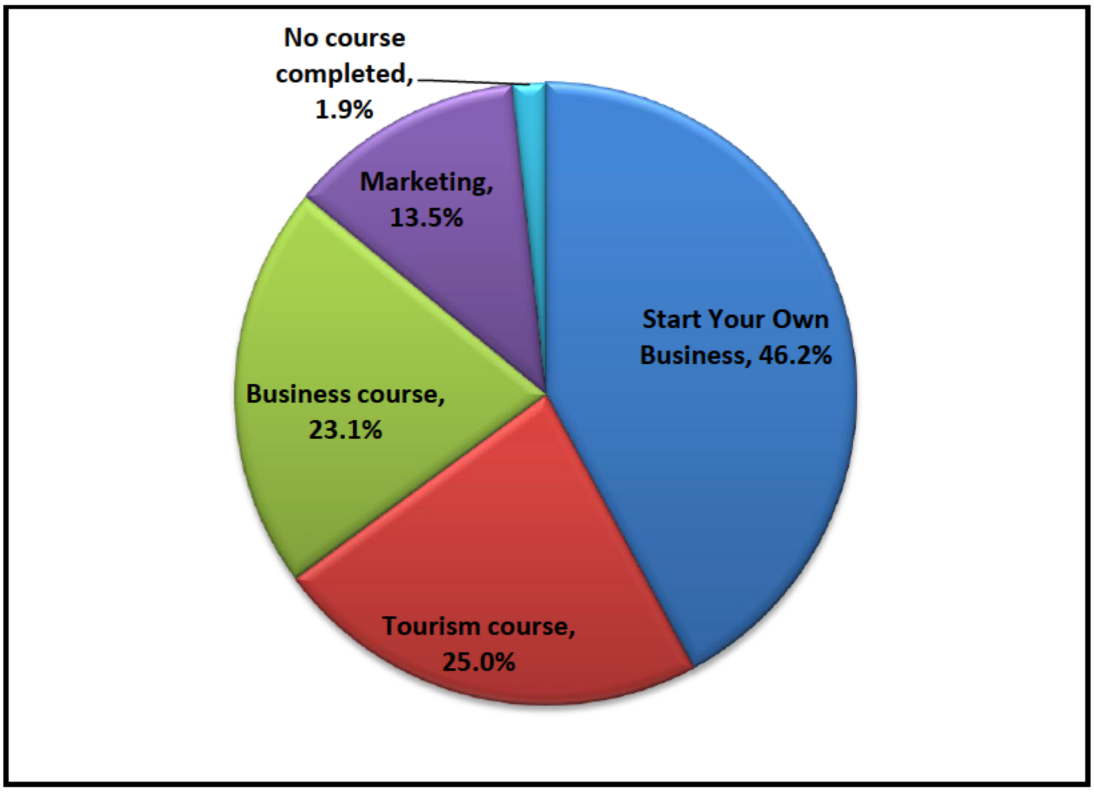


Fig. 4.3.8h Types of training undertaken by providers

When split between counties the results were quite different for Cork than the other counties. The uptake of courses in Tourism (33.3%), Business (40%) and Marketing (26.7%) was far higher in Cork than across the total four counties and significantly lower (26.7%) for Start your Own Business courses against the total for the four counties.

Providers were asked about any training that they had undertaken held by various training providers. Fás courses were the highest taken at 55.8% of respondents having taken these.

The uptake for Fáilte Ireland (26.9%), Enterprise boards (34.6%), and 3rd level institutions (32.7%) was similar but those held by local business networks was only

15.4%. This could suggest that business networks hold fewer training opportunities or that membership of local networks is low.

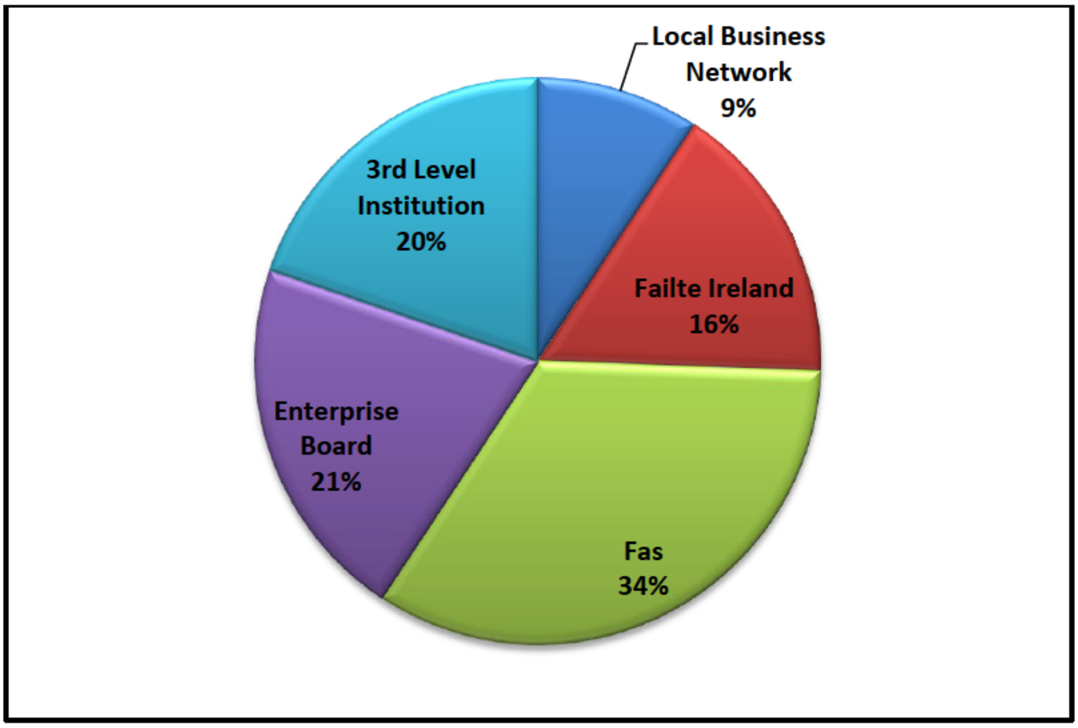


Fig. 4.3.8i Training providers whose training the activity providers attended

General business training accounted for 28.8% of responses, Marketing (which is closely linked though was specified) was 23.1% followed by more activity qualifications and social media training at 19.2% each. The lowest training needed was for leadership qualifications. These relate to the activities themselves and suggest that providers are mostly happy with the skill and qualification level in terms of the adventure activities but would like training for themselves and their staff in areas that would support the business.

	Frequency	Percent
More activity qualifications	10	19.2
Leadership qualifications	5	9.6
Marketing	12	23.1
Social media training	10	19.2
Business training	15	28.8
Total	52	100.0

Fig. 4.3.9j Staff training needs

Marketing for small businesses is a training option offered by Fáilte Ireland and taken up by a small number of providers. Marketing and social media training and small business accounting are still the most frequently requested training areas by providers. Marketing awareness in particular appears to be in significant demand by business owners.

> "I understand that marketing the business is important but it can be such a waste of money if it's not effective." (Rock climbing provider A, Kerry, Quote 14)

Marketing awareness by adventure tourism providers should include; online and digital marketing including web design and web analytics, international market awareness, marketing strategy development support, knowledge sharing on trends and development specifically relating to adventure activities. 25% of providers mentioned previous training with agencies such as Fáilte Ireland. They felt that the training was useful but stopped short of their needs.

> "The days of getting full colour posters and flyers printed is really going, you hear of people coming up with great ways to get coverage without it costing the earth, like getting in with events and piggybacking on different online campaigns or twitter feeds and so on. It's all about the new gimmicks for marketing these days." (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 15)

One provider specified the need for wilderness first aid training for their activity staff. While the majority of providers conduct first aid training in house, it appears that there are activity instructors without first aid training.

While all providers were satisfied that they themselves and their employees are suitable and fully qualified in their respective activities, three providers mentioned additional skills based qualifications that would be useful such as powerboat skills and driver's license. Skills' training is also time consuming and for sole trader providers it can be difficult to take time away from a potential day of earning, particularly if past training experiences were not productive ones.

One provider spoke about his ambition to gain access to third level education in order to up skill to support his business.

> "I've been looking at a few college courses alright on the business side of things. If I can work around the hours I'd hope to do it next year," (Surfing provider A, Clare, Quote 16).

This was echoed by four other providers who said that access to education generally and the availability of off-season courses for providers would be beneficial, particularly in the form of Start Your Own Business type courses. In addition to a demand for off-season courses, one provider suggested that since time and availability would be an ongoing issue for providers that short online tutorials should be made available so that they could be accessed from any web source.

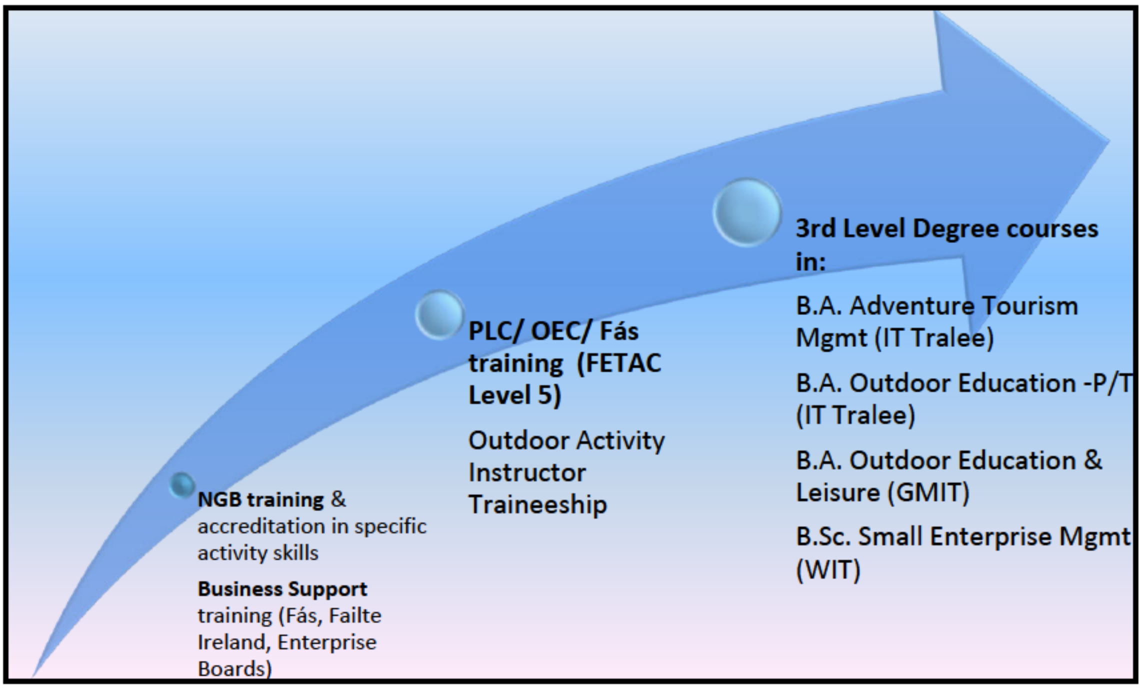


Fig. 4.3.8k Irish training opportunities relevant to the adventure tourism sector

Considering all the providers run tourism businesses, a relatively low number have training in either disciplines of tourism (25%) or business (23.1%). It is not surprising however, that shorter, more accessible and relevant courses like Start Your Own Business are more popular. These are generally run over a number of weeks, part time, at a low cost and often subsidised by support agencies and touch on a range of necessary skills. This echoes the literature which suggests that flexibility and accessibility of training are paramount for small business owners (Deakins and Freel, 1998; Lean, 1998; De Faoite et al., 2003). A range of the various training opportunities currently available in Ireland is shown in Fig. 4.3.8k. The adventure tourism sector in Ireland is relatively small but growing and this diagram illustrates how providers can take part in various training related to adventure activities in order to build their skills and business profile.

As with the development of skills each adventure tourism business should reap the benefits and so too should the profile of the business. This in turn makes the business more attractive to others for networking purposes as sharing knowledge and resources is one major motivation to network, see section 4.3.2 Motivations to Network. The better the business profile, the more opportunities arise to collaborate with others and develop. While the LEADER initiative, for example, provided grants and funding to rural tourism businesses, its purpose was to encourage business owners to create links to maximise potential (O'Leary and Deegan, 2003).

Respondents from county Cork reported almost double the numbers than the other counties for tourism, business and marketing courses and lower figures for Start your Own Business type courses. This could be explained by the fact that Cork is one of the biggest and best served in terms of education and training providers including a university, Institute of Technology an OEC and multiple further education centres offering ranges of relevant courses at higher levels of accreditation that Start Your Own Business type short courses.

Fás has been the agency responsible for training and jobseeking in Ireland, however the agency is in the process of being dissolved and responsibility for jobseeking will be taken over by the Department of Social Protection and renamed Intreo. Responsibility for training will be shifted to the Education and Training Boards, ETBs.

Overall, Fás was the provider with the highest uptake (55.8%) of training among respondents. Up to the time of the completion of questionnaires (Fás has since been dissolved) Fás had employment offices and/ or training facilities offices in every county of Ireland. Fás has long been the referral agency for the Department of Social Protection to which recipients of certain welfare benefits were referred to up skill or retrain in order to find employment. As a training provider, Fás run an Outdoor Instructor Traineeship programme (FETAC Level 5) which delivers leadership qualifications for activity instructors. This programme allows instructors to gain valuable qualifications, while in receipt of a training allowance, that are accredited by the relevant NGBs such as kayaking (ICU), SPA (Mountaineering Ireland), Powerboat handling (ISA). The course also provides supplementary training in Child First, First Aid, Health and Safety and Manual Handling and includes a work experience module. Having completed the course, the candidates can gain valuable experience (at no cost to the host business owners) and subsequently be sufficiently qualified with relevant experience to gain employment immediately on completion. Priority is given to those in receipt of welfare payments which can block those who are self employed as they are generally not entitled to welfare supports.

Participation in training held by county enterprise boards, at 34% uptake, is also high among adventure tourism providers. This may be because business owners would approach enterprise boards seeking support and training may be offered as a way to support the business owner, such as a Start Your Own Business course (46.2% uptake) as discussed previously. Third level institutes were found to have 32.7% of the providers' taking part in courses.

Providers were asked what training they needed and they responded by saying that business, marketing and social media training were their highest priorities, collectively 71% of the responses. Evaluating the effectiveness of marketing methods is important in planning and strategy development but these are skills which require formal training, which 23.1% of providers specified.

Qualifications and skill levels within potential networking partners varies which is a possible barrier for collaboration in the sense of there being an inequality of contribution from stakeholders. Different training levels among stakeholders can be a motivation to engage in networking too; to share the cost of training or swap knowledge between providers. This may develop into a learning network (Matthews et al., 2008) under one of two strands as proposed by Allan and Lewis (2006), either through cooperative and collaborative group activities or communities in practice.

Networking initiatives and opportunities are often designed and promoted by tourism and business support agencies such as Fáilte Ireland and Enterprise Boards. Whether networking is structured or unstructured there exist supports to help businesses engage with, develop skills of and enhance business networking.

In the research questionnaire providers were asked if networking supports were a barrier to their business, specifically whether the impact was high, medium or low. Overall the results showed that half of the providers considered networking supports to have a medium impact (50%) as a barrier, 30.8% said they had a high impact and 19.2% said it had a low impact.

The lack of networking support can therefore be deemed a medium to high barrier. The medium to high impact was cumulatively 80.8%. This is significant and shows that networking supports are either lacking or not appropriately designed for the adventure tourism industry. Across the counties there was a slight deviation; in Kerry the networking supports had a positive impact on the business (medium impact 61.1%, low impact 11.1%) and in Clare, networking supports were less problematic (medium impact 27.3%, low impact 36.4%). There are two support networks (Burren Eco-Tourism Network and East Clare Tourism Network) in County Clare that that were mentioned in another section of the questionnaire. There may be particularly skilled or knowledgeable support personnel in these networks, the activity providers may have highly developed interpersonal skills, or an element within the community environment may be conducive to more effective networking.

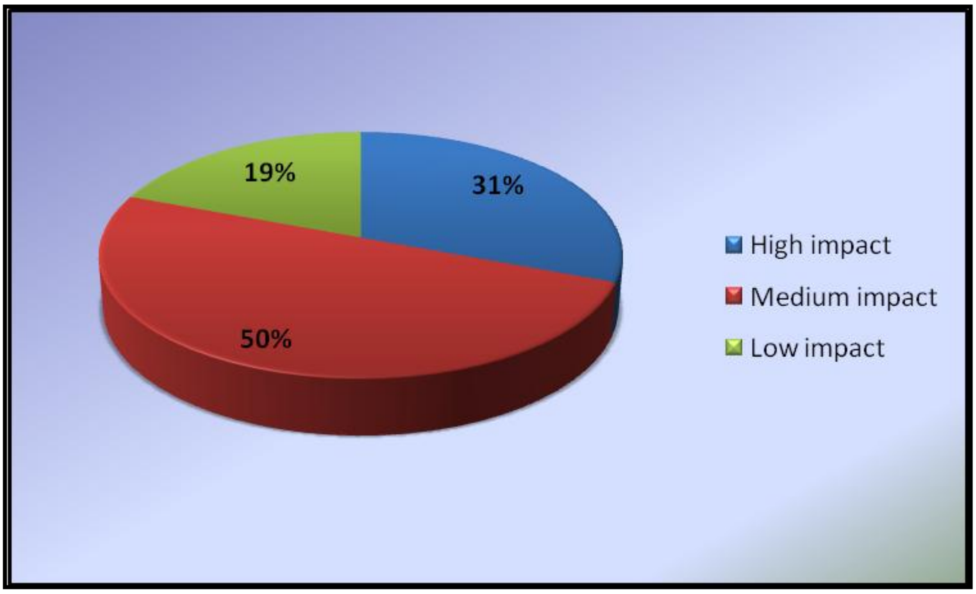
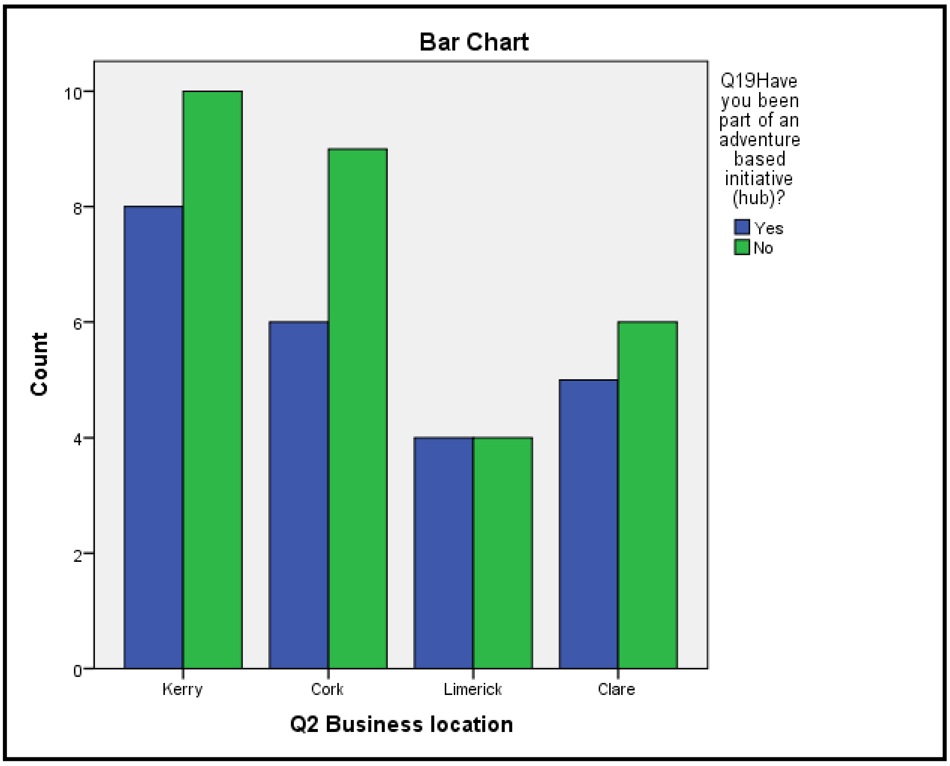


Fig. 4.3.8l Networking supports [lack of] as a barrier to business success

The lack of networking support felt by adventure providers may be as a result of adventure tourism businesses often being located in rural areas (Ateljevic, 2009). During the research interviews the providers spoke about adventure hubs and the focus of networking events being in specific tourism hotspots like Dingle or Killarney. Some providers found that, outside these towns there was very little attention paid to creating awareness of adventure or tourism offerings. The providers referred to adventure and tourism hubs as aiming to develop a wide area, for example The Dingle Peninsula or The Ring of Kerry, but the focus of meetings became a majority rule and centred on the hub town rather than providing opportunities for the rural and remotely located providers. These hubs, while inspiring enthusiasm initially seemed to fall away and lose efficacy. The Kerry providers spoke at length about these hubs and were regretful that they had not been more effective. When asked why they thought the hubs failed, the majority believed that it simply came down to the fact that the ‘adventure hub’ was filled with secondary services and that the collective voice of the adventure providers involved was diluted by those of accommodation, bars and restaurants. The autonomy of a network is a key factor along with embeddedness and place according to Hayden et al. (2014). For a network to be successful, the agents within it must share common goals and interests.

44% of providers said they had taken part in an adventure based initiative or hub activities and there was little difference between the counties in terms of participation. An adventure hub initiative was started by Fáilte Ireland’s 2007 Get Out There! project. The hubs created in the research area at least appear to have faded gradually. Those providers who took part in these hubs reported that despite initial support and enthusiasm for the initiative and potential benefits the adventure hub seemed to lose their interest. There is no current evaluation literature available from Fáilte Ireland from this initiative.



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 0.979. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.8m Participation in adventure hub by county

Providers were asked in the interviews if they would be willing to be part of the formation of an adventure hub in their location and fifteen out of the sixteen responded positively, though there were some conditions attached. Providers would require that the hubs be carefully planned, managed and maintained effectively. They also stipulated that the hub should only involve adventure activity providers since some past experiences of similar networking initiatives resulted in a dilution of the collective purpose.

> "It should be kept small with passionate people who are energetic." (Mountain biking provider B, Limerick, Quote 30)

The hub would be more attractive to providers if it was managed by business professionals and linked in with national tourism strategy.

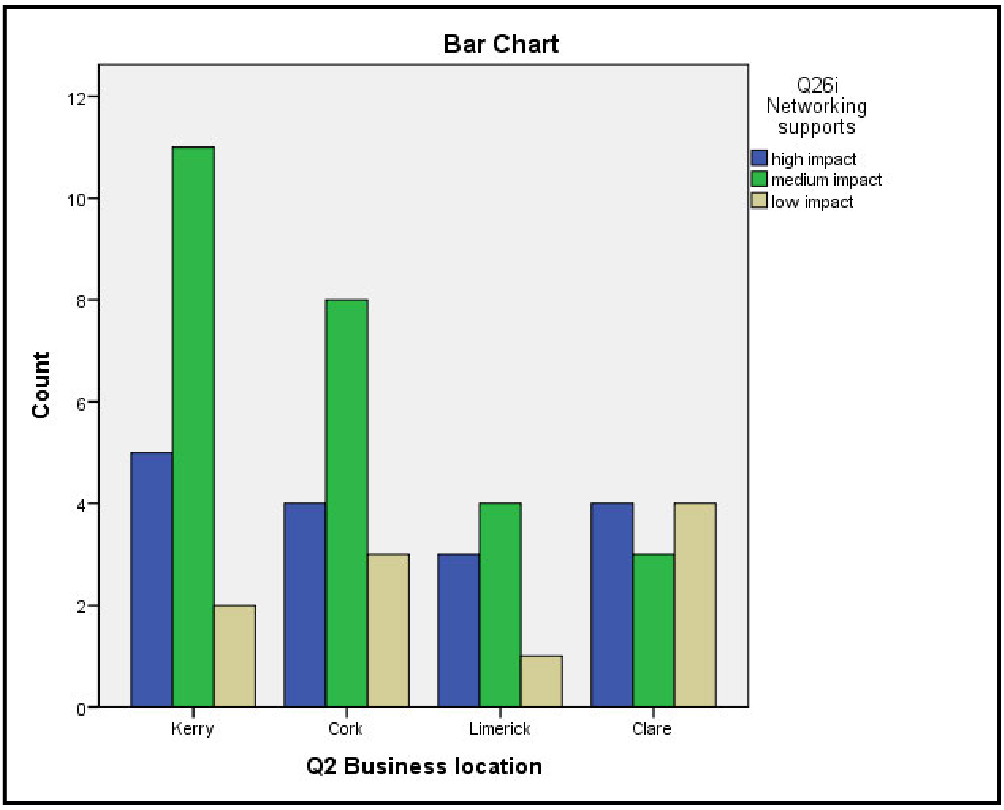
Despite the attraction to developing hubs for adventure tourism operators, the providers recognised the merit but were cautious about the reality of hub development and the effect it would have on their business and on the area. A Kerry watersports provider also spoke about the fact that he could easily recommend a particular restaurant for a good meal or a bar for a nice atmosphere but he felt that other business owners hadn't experienced his product and only knew of it through word of mouth and local knowledge.

> "You have to trust the other parties to promote you as well as you're potentially promoting them," (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 55).

> "If you know the other persons product you're more confident to promote it. We've tried to get people like the receptionists from hotels and so on to come over and do surf lessons with us but it hasn't really worked," (ibid., Quote 56).

It seems that the hubs were a good idea but they were not executed well as there was an imbalance of commitment and understanding between stakeholders, as is commonly an issue in strategic alliances (Terpstra and Simonin, 1993; Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Wang and Krakover, 2007; O'Donnell, 2012).

Isolation for some providers is not an issue in terms of attracting core clients but a big issue for participating in networking activity. Isolation also means more than needing to travel further to reach target markets; it means isolation from communities and tourism networks such as clusters that evolve organically due to proximity (Forsman and Solitander, 2003; Deuchar, 2012).



An exact contingency table was generated, p= 0.633. Since p> 0.05, therefore it is statistically not significant. (See Appendix E)

Fig. 4.3.8n Impact of networking supports [lack of], by county

Providers who took part in networking initiatives or who received support from agencies specified the source. The following is a list of those named in the interviews;

- Burren Ecotourism Network (B.E.N.)
- Baltimore Marketing Group
- Development Partnership Working Group
- East Clare Tourism Network
- Outdoor Education Ireland Network
- Sailing and Watersports Network (Kinsale)
- Kinsale Chamber of Tourism
- LEADER funding

It should be noted that some of these support networks are no longer running. Two providers said that they are trying to set up a network for their respective activities; scuba diving and mountain biking; reflecting the providers' recognition of the need for support and structure within adventure activities.

4.3.9 Innovation in Networking

A wealth of literature suggests that small tourism businesses must continually innovate in order to survive and thrive (Siguaw et al., 2006; DTTS, 2013). Harrington et al. (2010) warned against following best-practise models from other countries because innovation networks are subjective to the country and context. This research searched for information from Irish adventure tourism providers who agreed (75%) that they had to become more innovative in order to attract clients since the economic downturn in Ireland in recent times. The economic downturn damaged Ireland's economy and image internationally (DPC, 2011) and as a result, innovation is needed across the adventure tourism industry.

During interviews, when asked what the word 'innovation' meant to the providers, the responses were varied.

> "Innovation...you have to have a different selling point if you're going to compete with other people in the industry." (Diving provider, Clare, Quote 62)

It meant having something different to offer; something exciting, new and ahead of the rest of the competition. One provider mentioned the research and introduction of stand up paddle boards to their repertoire in recent years. They felt that it was an innovative move requiring an investment of time and money. The risk has been justified and it has become a popular activity in its own right and complementing traditional surf and windsurf providers.

> "It's something that's there already but it's the idea of pushing things together that previously weren't so I don't know I'm kind of excited by it because the country and the government is starting to realise that adventure tourism is one of our biggest resources." (Surfing provider, Kerry, Quote 63)

Some providers were a little vague about innovation, perhaps unsure of an example, while others spoke about innovation with enthusiasm,

> "Something new and exciting and different; a buzz, a thrill, a challenge. That to me is innovation." (Surfing provider A, Clare, Quote 64)

Another provider spoke about innovation in training and delivery techniques,

> "We have huge changes in how people learn so we have to adapt...where now this year; all the entry level people for training have ipads instead of the book." (Diving and surfing provider, Kerry, Quote 65)

These descriptions fit into Chan et al. (1988) incremental and distinctive innovation types. None of the providers alluded to what Chan et al. would term 'breakthrough' innovation. It was clear from an overview of the responses to this question though, that innovation can be taken in lots of different contexts and can be applied in many ways, to techniques, products, concepts, and marketing. Shaw and Williams (2004) found that innovation is linked to entrepreneurship and managing business risk but innovation in tourism is not so much technological as behavioural (Sundbo, 1998; Drejer, 2004). It was also clear that innovation was seen to be a positive concept and one that is familiar to and welcomed by adventure activity providers.

Three providers said that they were doing things differently or developing their skills as an instructor or guide; keeping the basic skills intact but adding a twist. Another two providers suggested that it meant using new and better equipment and technology "new fin technology and surfboards; faster, more durable, better lifesaving equipment," (Surfing provider A, Clare, Quote 66). The remaining providers spoke about how innovation was essential in this market, particularly in an exciting and dynamic sector such as adventure tourism.

When it came to innovative networking practices, there were a few examples such as; networking with schools and youth groups and using a reward system for families who would return throughout the year, networking with trend setting providers and suppliers to introduce new activities like stand up paddleboarding, offering low cost activity sessions for local youth groups in low season so maintain interest among locals and employing networking and marketing strategies online to draw attention to the local area and activities. Weirmaier (2004) maintains that networking, especially coopetition, is the most promising vehicle of innovation.

The main changes and evolutions for the majority of providers is that the product that they're offering is continually evolving and changing and their product becomes a more complete package so that they no longer just offer hill walking but the possibility to combine activities. Seizing the opportunity to work with other providers and secondary services is something that providers are more frequently doing. The providers doing so, report that the more successful operators have healthy networking relationships with other providers.

An example of this might be in an instance where surf providers along the west coast network together to create a surf tour of the western seaboard. Together, the providers can market this tour and each provide the surfing activity and recommend the best accommodation in each area. By each promoting this tour, each member of the network of providers gets a share of every client who signs up. For this type of product to be a success, accommodation and transport providers need to be included in the networking equation so that the package and experience is complete. The provider who shies from working with anyone must then offer a specialised or very individual product.

The adventure tourism providers spoke about the need to tap into new and alternative markets in order to generate more business and to combat the downfall of seasonality in the industry. For marketing efficiency, businesses must identify specific markets and target them. Other sectors in the tourism industry are a starting point for potential shared interest. In the research questionnaire, providers were posed with 8 other tourism niche markets and asked whether those markets could complement their own product. The providers had the option to select any number of the niche markets that they felt would be suitable. The market that was seen to potentially complement the adventure product was the eco/ green tourism market at 61.5% of cases, closely followed by wildlife tourism (57.7%) and sports tourism (50%). None of the other tourism markets scored lower than 30.8% of cases, as for rural/ agri tourism. This suggests that at least a third of adventure tourism businesses could tap into secondary complementary markets.

The development of niche tourism pockets in rural areas of Ireland is one way to stimulate sustainable economic development according to Kerry County Development plan (2014). “Niche tourism by its nature has the capacity to develop in locations throughout the county and as such can contribute to sustainable economic development of peripheral and rural areas with an otherwise weak economic base,” (p.61). Fig. 4.3.9 shows the niche tourism products that the providers considered to be complementary markets to their own. Across the niches there is a high level of recognition for auxiliary markets.

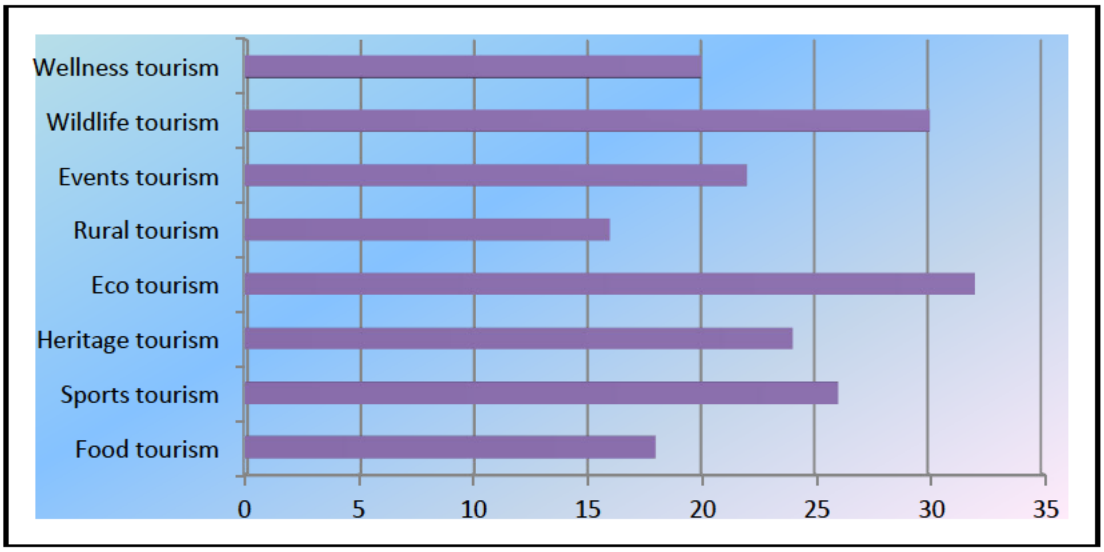


Fig. 4.3.9 Complementary niche tourism markets

Providers said during the interviews that they predict that more activities will evolve like the Stand up Paddleboarding (SUP) market, zorbing and water inflatables. Clients are seeking more intense adventure and are willing to push the envelope for a more unique experience. Grouping products together and creating packages is another development that is envisioned by providers as well as a longer season mainly due to better equipment and more adventurous providers. Adventure activity trade shows were identified as a new and developing feature of the industry. These create the opportunity for providers to explore new trends in adventure for themselves, to network among businesses and to get new ideas for innovating their own product.

Providers were asked to contribute pieces of advice for potential start up providers; planning was the main piece of advice offered. The importance and emphasis of planning in a small business was stressed. Other advice included; researching the market intensely, work very hard, enjoy the journey, and ensure consistent cash flow.

One provider said that they regularly follow the Tourism Ireland updates and finds them easy to assimilate. All providers mentioned that the evolution of technology has influenced their activities and have helped to develop the industry with improved and safer products it means that they can push the envelope in the service they offer.

Overall it appears that innovation in the adventure tourism industry is unstructured and innovative practices are conjured and executed through the entrepreneurship of the adventure providers. Despite the efforts of providers to stay ahead of trends and sample innovative practices, there is a lack of tourism policy in Ireland to give direction to small tourism businesses as asserted by Harrington and Lynch (2010).

4.3.10 Social Media and Online Networking

According to the research questionnaire, 96.2% of adventure providers use both Facebook and their own website equally. Twitter is used by 51.9% of providers followed by 40.4% of providers using LinkedIn. Only 2 providers responded to say that they use other online resources. It is clear that the providers' own website may be a first port of call for clients but the dominance of Facebook over other social media outlets is significant and could be explored further. It appears that adventure providers have their finger on the pulse by realising that most adventure tourists use the internet to plan and book adventure travel (ATTA, 2013). The findings corroborate Sanders et al., (2014) who found that rural small firms benefitted from the market reach and social networks provided by online efforts. Facebook is well documented to be the front runner of social media and continues to grow exponentially (Schlegelmilch and Ollenburg, 2013).

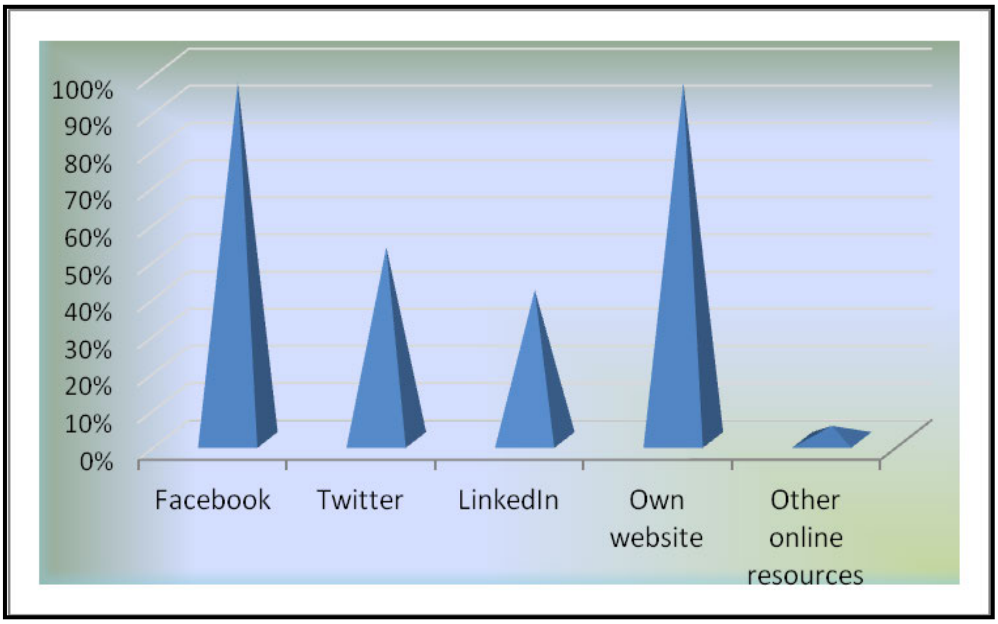


Fig. 4.3.10 Providers use of Online Resources

The use of photo and video sharing capacities is common on Facebook and this shows a move by providers towards more visual marketing strategies. By using these online platforms, adventure tourism providers are reaching out to existing and potential customers and crucially to other providers and tourism supports. Social media provides a subtle learning network, by watching what other businesses are doing to market their product and business, for adventure tourism providers who are often isolated. The providers' responses in the interviews regarding online resources and social networking also shows that the internet has dramatically affected the industry,

> "It's the way forward, if your business doesn't have an online presence you're dead in the water." (Surfing provider A, Clare, Quote 67)

Fourteen out of sixteen interviewed providers said that they maintain an online presence for their business and that it is necessary. Only one provider said that since his business deals with mainly international clients, who are tour operators, so he does not rely on social networking. The other said that he operates his surf business directly from the beach and does not require online marketing like a social networking page.

When asked if social networking could replace physical networking the response was clear and mutual; social networking cannot replace physical networking but the best thing for business is a combination of both.

> "The whole world is online but if you can meet someone face to face that's great. Having both is better." (Mountain biking provider A, Limerick, Quote 68)

Providers explained that social media was most effective in creating brand awareness, promoting the activity through photos and videos and for enquiries and feedback.

> "It's the way forward and very visual, you can just put a picture up and get your message across. A picture will resonate with people in an instant, much faster than any article or review." (Surfing provider B, Clare, Quote 69)

As time passes equipment and technology improves,

> "It's massive. A lot of my clients, they do PADI online so that's how it's going forward now. With underwater cameras, the likes of the GoPro, you can get brilliant footage out there instantly." (Watersports provider, Kerry, Quote 70)

Training in social networking and online marketing was mentioned as needed by providers in order to maximise the networking and advertising potential in a cost effective way.

> "If you facilitate properly and get lots of the right people in a room you can have light bulb moments and make partnerships that can't be recreated online." (Hill walking provider, Cork, Quote 71)

A number of interviewees referred to their use of social media to 'follow' their competitors and potential networking partners. They also connect with and follow international brands, for example sportswear and specialist equipment shops, to stay abreast of trends and to learn about new developments in the industry. One provider commented that if you spent as much time as you needed to maintain a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn page then you wouldn't have much time left for adventure. This is a poignant remark from one provider; the administrative demands on small businesses leave less time for adventure tourism to take place. This has implications for physical networking and harks back to barriers to networking.

Chapter Summary

I have profiled a typical adventure tourism provider based on the results of the questionnaire and interviews. The provider profile presented here is a hypothetical figure who is given a range of characteristics gleaned from the majority of responses from the questionnaire. The profile is not based on any real provider from this research or externally.

Fig. 4.4 Provider "X" SWOT Analysis

Fig. 4.4 shows Provider X under the SWOT framework and present what the literature and findings of this research suggest as the typical and current situation:

Provider X is male, in his 40s. He enjoyed surfing and kayaking for many years before qualifying as an instructor and starting a small business operating surf lessons, equipment hire and kayaking tours along the southwest coast. He networks within a cluster of local businesses, including bed and breakfasts and other providers, and his main market is the domestic thrill seeker who tends to book weekend sessions and enjoy the high quality service. Provider X conducts most of his own activity sessions year round and in high season (June to September) he hires 2 part time instructors.

The objective of this section is to satisfy the first research objective; to identify the profile of adventure tourism providers in the southwest of Ireland. In order to understand the situation and networking potential of adventure tourism providers the profile must be outlined. Over 90% of the adventure tourism providers in this research are small businesses and the vast majority of providers are owners with responsibility for all aspects of the business. The providers have multiple roles and must be resourceful. The message communicated by the providers is that while some offer other services, in conjunction with other providers, like accommodation (50%) or food (11.5%), the providers are focussed on delivering a quality adventure activity product. Combined with market research reports suggesting that tourists want to stay longer and engage in more activities, this gives the adventure provider the ideal motivation to network. A key finding from this research is that a mere 17.3% of providers' businesses have a formal, written marketing plan. Providers maintain that they do consider marketing and carry out informal planning but a strategy that reflects a review of marketing tools, selected target markets and potential cost saving measures is necessary for small businesses.

The participating adventure providers are able to clearly articulate what differentiates their businesses; quality of service and an exciting and authentic product. Factors that detract from the motivation to develop the adventure tourism business include the strain of operating costs, lacking financial support and seasonality within the industry. If the providers can identify precisely what their needs are then they should consider a 'strategic fit' (Porter, 1996) by linking with other providers perhaps within a flagship tourism initiative like the Wild Atlantic Way, to gain valuable benefits such as cost efficiency, developing relationships with new markets, and greater profits (Child et al., 2005; Easto and Warburton, 2010).

Lifestyle entrepreneurs are deemed by much of the current literature to lack true entrepreneurial characteristics based on their motivations (Warneryd, 1988; Macko and Tyszka, 2009) but the context of post-recession lifestyle entrepreneurs in this research, based on their lifestyle motivation to run adventure tourism businesses, illustrates the resilience to persist through adversity and respond to challenging situations by engaging innovative practices (Rimmington et al., 2012). These practices include networking in order to keep the businesses open and competitive. The adventure tourism businesses researched in the qualitative interviews reflected commitment to a quality product, showcasing Ireland's natural resources and an openness to innovative strategies including networking.

This section has contributed to existing literature by profiling the Irish adventure tourism provider; it has laid out the profile and motivations of providers and given key findings related to business marketing and supports, which will be discussed in the next chapter section as they also relate to the overall industry. This detail, which has not been previously presented in the Irish adventure tourism context, offers better understanding of the sector and lays a foundation for a profile of the industry.

The adventure tourism product and the development of the industry has been presented and it is clear that this is a time of growth and development in the adventure tourism sector. This is not a regulated industry in Ireland as yet which presents difficulties for providers as well as some trepidation as to the potential costs and constraints involved in regulation. According to Eccles and Costa (1996), the study of tourism requires specific themes to be addressed; transport infrastructure, product development, future trends, and sustainability of tourism. Tourism infrastructure is considered to be a significant issue for 53.8% of providers and getting the balance of providing effective infrastructure without spoiling the landscape is a challenge for policy and planning. Product development and future trends appear to be high on the agenda of individual providers but when the adventure tourism industry is viewed as a whole there is some focus here provided by Fáilte Ireland but a lack of cohesion within the industry makes communicating these messages difficult, often resulting in diluted information from the wider tourism sector. The sustainability of the adventure tourism industry is a key objective for providers and underlies much of the effort within the industry to plan for the future.

This chapter section follows a profile of the adventure provider and the Irish adventure tourism sector. Working definitions of networking, according to providers, were established and set against those found in current literature. Definitions from providers were less prescriptive about criteria of adventure tourism and more concerned with the concept and purpose of adventure. The barriers to networking;

mainly lack of coordination and lack of time, were identified for adventure tourism providers. Since most providers are owner-operators with limited personnel and resources, allocating time for networking is not a priority if the benefits are not measurable. If networking efforts are focussed and if providers involved have clear objectives then the value of networking will be more meaningful and useful to participants. Networking activities must be purposeful and realistic with input from all stakeholders (Ball, 1997; Peck et al., 2000; Huxham and Vangen, 2005). Coopetition and clustering represented the highest proportion, both 27%, of networking structures found by the questionnaire.

An overall picture of adventure tourism providers' networking experiences was presented, including the types of businesses they networked with; accommodation, other adventure tourism, food and transport providers, and accounts of varied experiences were presented. Quantitatively, 65.4% of providers said that networking benefitted their business. The networking patterns used in the adventure tourism industry were explored and, using a sociogram as a tool, a detailed analysis of the providers' business networks was found and presented. The sociogram showed that adventure provider participants actively and regularly network across a range of businesses and services but mainly with (named) accommodation providers (20%) and other adventure tourism providers (15%). This network analysis tool provides detailed insight into an industry that has, to date, not even been profiled from the providers' perspective. This kind of data generates a visual of the providers' networking habits by effectively mapping out the businesses they engage with and to what degree. This research has paved the way for numerous opportunities to explore habitual networking by adventure tourism providers in more detail.

Networking supports are generally seen to be lacking and this deficit represents a medium to high barrier for over 80% of providers. Support structures for small tourism business networking were expected to include influence from agencies with this purpose, Fáilte Ireland and local enterprise boards, as indicated by the literature review. The providers; where some local business networks were highlighted with varying degrees of efficacy. Although the providers said that they are open to networking and would be willing to take part in, for example, the creation of an adventure hub, their commitment was conditional and cautious because of negative prior experience of ineffective networking activities. Again, this may be due to incongruity of expected and actual outcomes (O'Donnell, 2012; Rigg and O'Mahony, 2012).

Finally, this chapter section concludes by considering innovation in networking. Innovation seen in the adventure tourism sector currently could be described by Chan et al. (1988) as incremental innovation; where there are small advances that take shape gradually. The activity of networking within adventure tourism is not innovation but the networking provides a vehicle for innovation; an opportunity for innovation to grow through communication and collaboration (Weiermair, 2004). One particular way in which adventure tourism providers are demonstrating innovation is through the adoption of online resources and social media into their marketing and networking strategies. It is clear that the internet and social media in particular has heavily influenced how adventure tourism businesses engage with their customers and market their product. The use of social media in particular, as a vehicle for small business is crucial (Schlegelmilch and Ollenburg, 2013).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This research set out to explore the Irish adventure tourism product and how this product can be enhanced through networking. The adventure tourism industry is a valuable one within the tourism sector. It is an area of growth in recent years and is contributing to Ireland's economic recovery by giving visitors reasons to explore Ireland in new ways, to stay longer and spend more. The adventure tourism industry is, however, a highly fragmented one; comprised mainly of micro businesses scattered around the Irish landscape. There is very little academic research on this industry and none to date that addresses the networking activities of providers. It is clear, given research from countries whose adventure tourism industry is well established, New Zealand, Scotland and Canada, that strategies that improve communication and provide opportunities for collaboration are favourable and have been seen to promote wider benefits.

To effectively interpret this research a visual map was created so that the adventure tourism environment could be explored in its full context. In discussing adventure tourism networking there are three aspects to consider; the player (adventure provider), the arena (industry and adventure product) and the activity (provider networking). Fig. 4.2a below is a visual representation of how these research elements fit together.

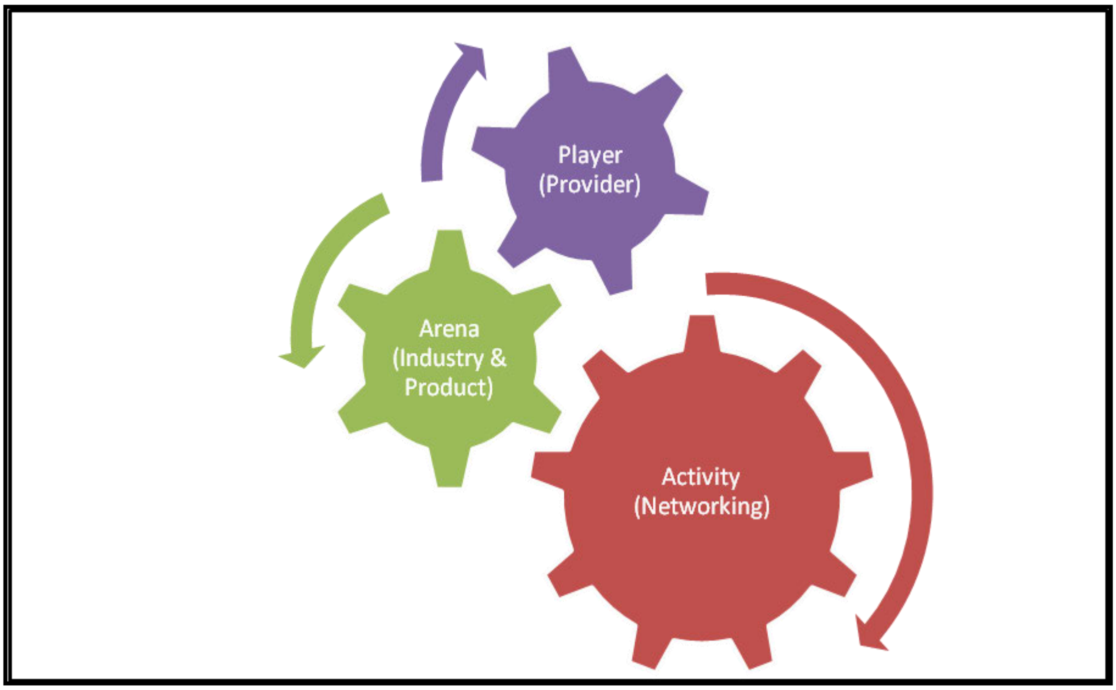


Fig. 4.2a Enhancing the Irish Adventure Tourism Product Through Networking.

This research sought to explore four objectives. These objectives will hence be revisited in order to conclude the thesis and examine the extent to which they have been addressed within this research.

1. To identify the profile of Irish adventure tourism providers.

As detailed in chapter 4, this research provides the first demographic and contextual profile of adventure tourism providers in the southwest of Ireland. Typically motivated by lifestyle factors, the providers are small business owners with multiple roles and a genuine passion for adventure activities and the Irish landscape. A full profile of the 'typical' adventure tourism provider in the southwest of Ireland was presented in Chapter 4 and a SWOT analysis based on the research data can be found in Fig. 4.4. This research found that in terms of motivation to enter the adventure tourism industry, lifestyle factors feature strongly (see 4.2.2e). Findings support Marchant and Mottiar's (2011) assertion that lifestyle entrepreneurs' motives change over time. While lifestyle motivations do not disappear, the research found that over time there are increasing concerns for financial stability (see 4.3.2) and the benefits of networking can help to share operating costs and increase customers for participants (see 4.3.7). Among the participating adventure tourism providers there is a sense that they have weathered the storm financially. The findings in this research directly contradict Morrison and Teixeira (2004) who said that lifestyle entrepreneurs hold romantic notions about running their own business. This research has found that adventure tourism providers are truly entrepreneurial; while few have formal business training, most are thriving and have survived a severe economic recession through perseverance, innovation and quality, authentic products. In addition, the adventure product was examined and found to be not simply an activity provided by an instructor or guide but involving numerous other elements.

2. To identify and evaluate networking structures and practices in place currently or in the past.

The questionnaire revealed data about networking structures used by the participants based on the literature review and the sociogram brought the providers' everyday networking relationships to light. Findings here suggest that coopetition and clustering, which both represented 27% of the networking by providers, are equally favoured by adventure tourism providers. Considering the structure of the industry, this is not surprising. In the former, the element of competition within the relationship is declared and maintained.

Coopetition, recognising the element of competition within networking, was seen to be more successful. This structure is more formalised and planned out by stakeholders but there appears to be some discord about the expected and actual outcomes. The providers said that lack of coordination was a major issue that affects their decision to participate in networking. Overall, structured networking is a process that requires planning and communication.

The adventure tourism industry is fragmented and, for many, seasonal so there is constant competition within the industry. Tourism is an industry that is built on the landscape, rivers, lakes and coastlines. Geographical resources are often shared and adventure tourism businesses are brought together by a mutual resource. In this way clustering is inevitable but it is not a strategy. This research suggests that the structure of networking is not important. The important elements for these businesses is to identify their needs, seek out networking partners who can be of mutual benefit and be clear with expectations and roles within the partnership.

Deliberate networking initiatives, such as the creation of adventure hubs, have had some success in engaging providers in the networking process but the hubs appear to have lost momentum and there is no formal evaluation available. This research has identified, through qualitative interviews, that there were two main issues for adventure providers; the proportion of meetings to action was unfavourable and the 'adventure' hubs were diluted by business owners representing the wider tourism sector meaning that the focus of the hub was no longer on adventure. Unproductive past experiences of networking have made adventure tourism providers cautious about committing to networking initiatives in future.

Evaluation throughout the structured networking relationship is crucial and lines of communication between stakeholders must be active. The sociogram however revealed further insights into the networking habits of the providers. The sociogram tells us that these providers are networking all the time and consistently communicating with other providers and other businesses. The lack of regulation in the adventure tourism industry makes formal networking a fearful exercise that asks businesses to open up and agree to commitments that may leave them exposed. As a term, networking is viewed by the providers as formal, rigid, and structured. The sociogram results show that the adventure providers are comfortable with informal networking and as guides and instructors these business people possess high levels of interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence, as recognised by Easto and Warburton (2010). This means that they have an ability to create a social capital within business networks as Putnam (1993) described. Informal networking, as with proximity networking or clustering, is attempted often between adventure tourism providers but may have limited effectiveness because there is no commitment, declared purpose or clarity of focus.

Considering the issues surrounding trust between providers, a coopetitive structure of networking, where competition is acknowledged within the relationship, appears to be suitable for working relationships in the adventure tourism industry where there is no regulation other than NGB affiliation and where businesses are small and operate independently and often in isolation. This research found that, in practice, there are three ways in which adventure tourism providers engage in networking. The sociogram in particular was used to ascertain that, despite data from the questionnaires and interviews on formal networking, significant regular networking takes place between adventure tourism providers and a range of other businesses.

It is clear that providers in the adventure tourism industry make efforts to incorporate innovative practices, such as engaging in social media and developing their adventure product according to feedback from customers. The providers appear to be enthusiastic about the industry and want to be involved in activity hubs that relate specifically to their industry.

3. <u>To identify the barriers to effective networking for adventure tourism providers</u>

The barriers to networking for the participants were identified in the questionnaire and extended through the interviews. The barriers to networking were seen to be lack of coordination, time, and competition. Most of the providers had been involved in some networking activity in the past and eluded to the idea that, while networking with other businesses was encouraged, the practical side of networking was made difficult by lack of support throughout the process. The initial momentum of new networking initiatives is not sufficient and relationships appeared to fade without structure. The findings of the research point to informal relationship formation occurring regularly between small businesses. These relationships take time to build upon and foster trust between businesses in order to mutually capitalise. Businesses, whether directly or indirectly complementary, must fit together; culturally, socially, and economically. Another issue raised in relation to impeding the development of the industry is the lack of regulation within the adventure tourism industry. Adventure tourism in Ireland appears to be only reaching the political agenda now and the process has been set in motion by the Irish Sports Council under the direction of the Dept of Transport, Tourism and Sport. There is some trepidation among providers that regulating the industry will make operating a small adventure tourism business more challenging with mandatory compliance and extra costs incurred but the qualitative data of this research in particular indicates that regulation will bring transparency, a guarantee of quality and trust. Trust was cited in the quantitative research to be a barrier for almost a quarter of providers but lack of trust between competing providers was communicated strongly in the qualitative interviews suggesting that it may be more of an issue than it appears on the surface.

This research has found, through a review of current literature and data from providers, that the adventure tourism industry is highly fragmented and characterised by small adventure tourism businesses working in isolation. It is imperative that networking is promoted within the industry in order to bring unity to the sector within localities, i.e. clustering and to bring wider industry benefits through coopetition and collaborative efforts. The full potential benefits of networking for the small adventure provider and for adventure tourism destinations are not clearly communicated currently and the impact of supports, many of which are readily available to providers, are not understood. An adventure tourism industry is currently being moulded due to the formation of an industry body and a consultation process for introducing adventure tourism regulation. This is a unique time for the process to be monitored and evaluated formally, through academic research, to assess the impact upon the providers for whom it is intended to benefit.

This research has found that the most significant barriers to networking are lack of coordination and time. In the past, networking has been seen as an action that requires training, meetings, imposed structure and monitoring when in fact, networking is an element of business strategy. To overcome the barriers to effective networking, this research suggests that business owners develop a new way of approaching networking. Adventure tourism providers are primarily lifestyle entrepreneurs and very few have formal business or management training so secondly; quick and effective strategies, perhaps in a handbook, should be available to providers. Thirdly, providers should be trained to identify networking opportunities within their sector in order to fill skill and resource gaps. Networking should become habitual and part of the culture of business within the adventure tourism industry.

4. <u>To identify the supports needed by adventure tourism providers in order to maximise the potential of and overcome the barriers to networking.</u>

This research highlighted a need for improved coordination of networking supports. It is clear that there is a lack of understanding of the range of potential benefits of various networking activities. Supports for networking need to counteract providers who say that they don't have the time or resources to network. Providers did not discuss how outcomes of networking could be measured. Considering the fact that networking can take considerable time and energy commitments from stakeholders, there must be tangible results. Providers must know what they can offer and what they need from an exchange through networking and these should be identified by the business owner prior to engaging with a networking partner. Networking stakeholders must have clarity around; expectations, commitments, reviewing the process. Without a clear plan there is nothing against which to measure the process.

It is evident that some businesses do not identify the specific needs of their business and then seek appropriate or specific supports. Formal training supports are an issue for providers though the range of courses on offer in educational institutions in Ireland at present. Adventure tourism is being supported and promoted as an industry with future growth potential.

This research has responded to the questions raised around the enhancement of the Irish adventure tourism product through networking. The research objectives have been addressed and it has been shown that networking is an effective business tool that can enhance adventure tourism businesses and the industry by developing the adventure product. Opportunities for further research have presented themselves throughout the research and are relevant given the impending changes in the adventure tourism industry and the value of the adventure market to the Irish tourism product.

Limitations of the Research

The scope of this research is limited to the four counties in the southwest of Ireland (Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Clare). This research area gives a specific context to the data and may give rise to infrastructural and cultural influences. While this research captured a snapshot of a sample of the adventure tourism industry at present, it is not an exhaustive study that is applied to every possible set of circumstances for all providers in the 32 counties of Ireland. The extent to which the findings of this research can be generalised requires further examination.

This research captured a snapshot of the adventure tourism industry in a particular time. That snapshot had a specific context entwined with the economic and political climate of that time. The research reflected the situation for the adventure tourism providers and these circumstances may change over time. Methodological limitations of the research were addressed in section 3.10 'Constraints and Limitations' including representation of providers, availability of participants, gathering the database and interviewer bias.

Recommendations for Providers

This research shows that forming strategic alliances with other tourism providers can offer great rewards not only for each stakeholder business but for destinations, communities and the Irish adventure tourism industry. By actively networking with a strategic selection of tourism providers and services, adventure tourism providers can develop a combined or extended product offering, share resources, expand into new markets and benefit from the support of other business owners. This research has highlighted networking partnerships that are most common and appear to be most stable; adventure tourism providers networking with each other and networking with accommodation providers. The ability to offer a combination of products or a 'package' is a favourable strategy that is also proposed by current Irish tourism policy as it creates the opportunity to for an authentic experience of local areas (DTTS, 2014). This research suggests that providers should be creative and original in their twinning partnerships. They should network with a range of other similarly exciting or complementary products and select a small number that offer the best pairing for the customer and in the quality of networking. Potential product twinning examples could be around local history (coasteering + town night walk), food (rock climbing + foraging), events (surfing + music festival) and apparel (scuba diving + branded clothing).

Networking with other tourism providers is highly recommended, in particular with accommodation, transport and food providers. These partnerships should strengthen the product on offer and also address some of the challenges of small business management such as isolation, infrastructural issues and support from within the industry.

Adventure tourism providers, according to the research findings, most often engage in coopetitive networking and cluster formation. This research recommends the coopetitive structure above that of clustering as it acknowledges the maintenance of competition in the relationship but also requires some level of commitment and shared benefits. The coopetitive networking strategy should be promoted more to generate interest within the industry and create an opportunity to tackle small tourism business issues like marketing deficits and isolation, through networking. Seasonality, infrastructure and ineffective network management were raised as some of the barriers to networking for providers and these may be raised and addressed by providers at an early opportunity.

Networking clusters were an equally popular structure among the providers in this research but it is clear that the informality of the structure and the ad hoc nature of clustering is unfavourable and does not yield the benefits of other more stable networking structures.

Providers must be innovative in their marketing campaigns. Marketing materials should reflect the type of business and adventure tourism providers therefore should aim to create vibrant, exciting and dynamic marketing strategies and tools. Social networking, viral marketing, smart phone apps and digital media are fast becoming the marketing tools of choice as they are effective and have the potential to reach exponentially farther than traditional methods. The process of developing an effective marketing strategy and delivering successful campaigns relies on networking with similar businesses both near and far to learn and be inspired.

Recommendations for Policy Makers

Providers are willing to engage in networking opportunities but it seems the extent of the advantages of networking are not well promoted. There are attempts to inform the wider tourism sector about new strategies for growth but these should be filtered down to regions and destinations through workshops, for example in product innovation, networking and engagement, adventure tourism business marketing and product-specific training, for example in social media, app development and financial management.

The adventure tourism industry is one that must urgently be regulated in some form for two reasons; to support and protect the integrity of the industry and those providers who maintain high quality businesses and to ensure participant safety. Currently there is no real deterrent from unqualified, uninsured and unsafe providers from operating seasonal businesses. Regulation must not be an opportunity to increase revenue from already struggling small businesses but a way to ensure high standards of provision to rival those of the top countries for adventure tourism.

Adventure tourism providers would benefit from increased supports in the forms of: Sector specific networking events, qualitative data revealed that adventure tourism supports such as hubs were diluted and lacked focus.

A resource pack of tools and documents explaining the benefits of and how to go about networking in the various possible ways would be of great benefit to adventure tourism providers. The full array of benefits arising from networking between businesses is not realised and there does not appear to be literature on networking other than attending events. A resource pack would prepare providers before attending networking events.

Financial incentive to engage in networking in the form of tax breaks or grants. While financial barriers were not seen to be significant in networking, this research has identified that time constraints are a real issue and operating costs are a concern (see 4.2.4 and 4.3.3). If financial compensation of some sort were in place then providers may be in a position to secure personnel to represent them at networking events or to cover adventure activities in order for the owner or manager to attend.

There is an opportunity for the adventure tourism industry to capitalise on the regulation of the industry, to form a strong network of quality adventure tourism providers and to share ideas and network towards improving the industry for all involved.

An area for future research might be to document the establishment of an adventure tourism industry in Ireland alongside the regulations as they are introduced to assess the impact of regulation on adventure tourism providers. An action research project such as this could provide key qualitative findings about how adventure tourism providers adapt and manage changes in practice as a result of the regulation of the industry. This would also be an opportunity to examine a unique snapshot in the development of the industry.

There needs to be more concise and accessible information about what forms of networking exist and in what ways they can benefit businesses.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research was carried out in the southwest of Ireland and the richness of data from the limited scale of this research suggests that further research in other regions and at a national level would also be valuable to the industry. The adventure tourism industry is moving towards regulation, it is a key time for future researchers to document the process and monitor the establishing industry. The sociogram has provided a snapshot of unique qualitative data in this research and a more elaborate piece of research using this tool and network analysis has enormous potential to yield important data about networking behaviours among providers. There is a clear opportunity for future research to test the effectiveness of introducing a networking strategy specific to adventure tourism providers and assessing the outcome over a period of time. Research into the true economic value of adventure tourism to the rural economy would be another significant follow up piece of research.

Currently there is great emphasis on job creation in the cities of Ireland and emphasis on technology and innovation so it would be interesting to show in what ways tourism, especially adventure tourism, can contribute to the rural economy. Finally, many of the providers in this research spoke about the benefits of working in and taking part in adventure activities so one other future research area to be explored is the therapeutic value of adventure tourism for the participant, particularly in dealing with depression, anxiety and self image issues.

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Appendix A

Philip Stallard

School of Business, Computing and Humanities
North Campus, Institute of Technology,
Clash, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Email: [redacted]

Research Title: Enhancing the Irish Adventure Tourism Product through Networking

To whom it may concern,

My name is Philip Stallard and I am a Masters student in the Institute of Technology, Tralee. I am currently undertaking research in the joint areas of business networking and adventure tourism. As part of my research I will explore if, and in what ways, adventure tourism providers in the south west of Ireland network with each other and other parties. Given the vast changes that have occurred in Ireland and in the tourism sector since 2008, this research will give a vital snapshot of the successes and challenges for providers. The research will identify successful and appropriate strategies for networking and will also identify the barriers that may exist in blocking the creation of networks between providers.

I invite you to take part in a questionnaire which will form part of my primary research. At a later stage I will invite a small number of participants to take part in short interviews. Your decision to take part by returning the completed questionnaire is entirely separate from your decision to take part in an interview. Possible participants for interviews will be contacted at a later stage in the summer and you may withdraw at any time.

Please read and sign the Declaration of Consent part of the form before filling in the questionnaire. A stamped addressed envelope has been provided for you to return the questionnaire.

I can be contacted at any time using the details below; please do not hesitate should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Stallard

Declaration of Consent

In order to allow the information supplied by you to be used in this research please take a moment to read the following statements and sign below to indicate your consent.

- I agree to take part in the research of my own free will and on a voluntary basis.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any time by informing, without prejudice, the researcher.
- Research data will be collected from participants by two means; questionnaire and interview. I consent to take part in the questionnaire by signing and returning the completed document and I consent to be contacted about the possibility of taking part in a short interview.
- I agree for all data supplied by me to be used for the purpose outlined by the research.
- I understand that data will be retained in a confidential manner by the researcher.
- I understand that this research aims to be beneficial for the adventure tourism sector in Ireland and that my participation is not considered to be risky or damaging.
- I agree to supply data that is accurate and to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: ____________________________________

Date: ____________________________________

If you require a copy of the results of this research, please supply your email address in the space below:

Appendix B

Philip Stallard

School of Business, Computing and Humanities
North Campus, Institute of Technology,
Clash, Tralee, Co. Kerry
Email: [redacted]

Research Title: Enhancing the Irish Adventure Tourism Product through Networking

To whom it may concern,

My name is Philip Stallard and I am a Masters student in the Institute of Technology, Tralee. I am currently undertaking research in the joint areas of business networking and adventure tourism. As part of my research I will explore if, and in what ways, adventure tourism providers in the south west of Ireland network with each other and other parties. Given the vast changes that have occurred in Ireland and in the tourism sector since 2008, this research will give a vital snapshot of the successes and challenges for providers. The research will identify successful and appropriate strategies for networking and will also identify the barriers that may exist in blocking the creation of networks between providers.

I invite you to take part in a short interview about your business and your experience of the adventure tourism industry. Your decision to take part is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the research at any time.

Please read and sign the Declaration of Consent overleaf to ensure you are fully informed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on XXX XXXXXXX should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Stallard

Declaration of Consent

In order to allow the information supplied by you to be used in this research please take a moment to read the following statements and sign below to indicate your consent.

- I agree to take part in the research of my own free will and on a voluntary basis.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any time by informing, without prejudice, the researcher.
- Research data will be collected from participants by two means; questionnaire and interview. I consent to take part in an interview by signing this consent below.
- I agree for all data supplied by me to be used for the purpose outlined by the research.
- I understand that data will be retained in a confidential manner by the researcher.
- I understand that this research aims to be beneficial for the adventure tourism sector in Ireland and that my participation is not considered to be risky or damaging.
- I agree to supply data that is accurate and to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: ____________________________________

Date: ____________________________________

If you require a copy of the results of this research, please supply your email address in the space below:

Appendix C

Networking in Adventure Tourism

Questionnaire

Philip Stallard Dept. Business and Tourism, Institute of Technology, Tralee

The following questionnaire will ask you to supply some basic information about your business profile, training and supports within your business, and about the adventure tourism sector and the economy. Finally, there is a business network diagram attached with instructions. Please complete all sections and return together with a signed Declaration of Consent by **Friday 21st June 2013** using the stamped addressed envelope supplied.

Business Profile

1. Business Name

   ____

2. Location *(Town and County)*____

3. What size business is it?

   (Please tick one)

Small business	
Medium business	
Large business	

4. What best describes your position in the business? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Sole Owner	
Joint Owner/ Partner	
Manager	
Lead Instructor	
Marketing Staff	
Other (please specify)	

What attracted you to the Adventure Tourism Industry? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Activity previously a hobby	
Location	
Self-employment	
Quality of life	
Family business	
Financial gain	
Other (please specify)	

5a. What is your primary motivation to work in the Adventure Tourism Industry?

Activity previously a hobby	
Location	
Self-employment	
Quality of life	
Family business	
Financial gain	
Other (please specify)	

5. What Adventure Tourism activities do you offer? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Surfing		Canoeing		Rock climbing		Coasteering	
Windsurfing		Horse riding		Abseiling		Scuba diving	
Paddle boarding		Mountain biking		Hill walking		Kite surfing	
Kayaking		Cycling		Canyoning		Kite buggying	
Caving		High ropes course		White water rafting		Other (please specify)	
Sailing		Quad biking					

6a. What is your primary activity?

Surfing		Canoeing		Rock climbing		Coasteering	
Windsurfing		Horse riding		Abseiling		Scuba diving	
Paddle boarding		Mountain biking		Hill walking		Kite surfing	
Kayaking		Cycling		Canyoning		Kite buggying	
Caving		High ropes course		White water rafting		Other (please specify)	
Sailing		Quad biking					

6. What do you think distinguishes your business from other providers? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Unique product(s)	
Location	
Price/ value for money	
Packages offered	
High quality service	
Reputation	
Not sure	
Other (please specify)	

7. How many people are employed in your business, including yourself? *(Please indicate all that apply)*

Full-time *More than 30 hrs/wk*	
Part-time *Less than 30hrs/wk*	
Casual *To cover or supplement regular staff*	
Seasonal *At peak times of the year*	

Training and Supports

8. Are you a member of, or affiliated with any of the following? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Activity NGBs (National Governing Bodies)	
Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC)	
Tourism Authorities (e.g. Failte Ireland)	
Local/ Community Groups	
Other (please specify)	

9. Do you actively monitor developments in tourism research, plans, strategies and policy documents? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes		In what way?
No		Why not?

10. What supports, if any, has your business received?

____

____

____

11. Please describe any supports you feel would be beneficial to your business?

____

____

____

12. Have you (the owner/ manager) completed any of the following? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Accredited course in Tourism Studies	
Accredited course in Business/ Management	
Start your Own Business training	
Marketing/ Innovation in Business training	
Other *(Please specify)*	

13. Have you (the owner/ manager) attended courses provided by any of the following? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Partnership/ Network of local businesses	
Community group	
Failte Ireland	
Enterprise Board	
Chamber of Commerce	
Fás	
Institute of Technology or University	
Other (Please Specify)	

14. Have you (or the owner/ manager) undertaken Professional Leadership qualification in specific adventure activities? E.g. Single Pitch Award, Mountain Leader, Kayaking Instructor award etc...

Yes/ No_______________________

Please give details:____

15. Do you conduct in-house staff training in any of the following areas? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

First Aid	
Manual handling	
Health and Safety	
Fire Training	
Risk Management	
Children First/ Child Protection	
Other (please specify)	

16. What training, for you or your staff, do you feel would enhance your business?

____

____

____

17. In your local area or region, are you aware of any successful networking relationships between tourism providers? *Please describe*

____

____

____

18. Have you engaged in a networking relationship in the past? (*Please tick one box)*

(A networking relationship can be defined as one which is an agreed partnership between businesses with an aim of mutual benefit.)

Yes	
No	

19a. Have you taken part in an adventure based initiative (hub)?

Yes	
No	

19. Which of these most closely describes the networking relationship(s)? *(Please tick one box)*

Working informally with other businesses who have little in common apart from location	Clustering	
Businesses working together in an agreed manner in order to gain mutual advantage	Cooperation	
Working together for the purpose of long-term business advantages. Developing joint strategies for shared purposes.	Collaboration	
Cooperating with other businesses for a specific purpose but competing for business in other ways.	Coopetition	
Other (please describe)		

20. What types of business providers have you networked with? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Accommodation	
Transport	
Food and Beverage	
Other Adventure Tourism Providers	
Other (Please specify)	

21. What motivated or would motivate you to network with others?
Please rank these 1-5 where 1 is the most important, 5 is the least important.

Need for contact with other providers	Potential financial gain	Sharing of ideas and strategies	Complementary activities to my own	Creating an adventure tourism 'hub' in the local area

23. Did the networking experience benefit your business? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes, great benefit(s)	
Yes, minor benefit(s)	
I don't know	
No benefit(s)	
Negative effect(s)	

a) Please give further details:

____

____

____

24. What would you consider to be a barrier for networking? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Restricted by location	
No time	
No interest	
In competition with other providers	
Lack of coordination	
Other (Please specify)	

Adventure Tourism and the Economy

25. Considering the impact on your business of the economic downturn in Ireland, please state to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements;

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The economic downturn has negatively impacted my/ our business					
I/ We have noticed a decline in client numbers generally					
I/ We have noticed a decline in clients from abroad					
I/ We have noticed a decline in domestic clients					
The business' marketing budget has reduced					
I/ We have networked with other companies in order to share costs					
The business has reduced the amount/ extent of activities offered					
I/ We have had to become more innovative in order to attract clients					
I/ We have seen no change in my business					

26. Which of the following are currently the biggest barriers to your business? *(Please indicate the level of impact for each barrier by ticking one box)*

Barrier	High impact	Medium impact	Low impact
Government regulations			
Marketing			
Operating costs			
Tourism Infrastructure			
Seasonality			
Accessibility			
Geographic Isolation			
Supports (financial)			
Supports (networking)			
Other (please describe)			

27. Do you offer secondary services? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

Accommodation	
Transport	
Food/ Meals	
None	
Other (Please specify)	

28. Which of the following tourism themes, if any, do you think may complement your business? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

Food/ Culinary tourism	
Sports tourism	
Heritage and culture	
Eco/ Green tourism	
Rural/ Agri tourism	
Events based tourism	
Wildlife tourism	
Wellness tourism	
None	
Other (Please specify)	

29. Does your business have a marketing plan? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes, formal written plan	
Yes, informal unwritten plan	
No	

30. Which of these marketing methods do you use? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

Posters	
Flyers	
Trade shows/ Conventions	
Magazine/ Newspaper ads	
Social Media	
TV/ Radio ads	
None of the above	
Other (Please specify)	

31. Which of the following online resources do you use? *(Please tick as many as apply)*

Facebook	
Twitter	
LinkedIn	
Own company website	
None of the above	
Other (Please specify)	

32. Please indicate your gender. *(Please tick one box)*

Male	Female

33. Please indicate your age group. *(Please tick one box)*

18 -24	
25 – 39	
40 – 54	
55 – 64	
65+	

Your unique contribution to this research is of great value, thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. The information you have supplied here will be kept confidential.

Please supply a contact phone number and/ or email address in order to be contacted regarding the interview stage of this research:

Phone number:____

Email:____

PARTICIPANT CODE ☐☐☐☐☐

Network Analysis Sociogram

On the following graph please identify the businesses [other activity providers, local businesses, financial institutions, National Governing Bodies, tourism agencies, government or local enterprise supports etc...] that you come into contact in <u>any</u> capacity.

Please indicate this by drawing a circle on the diagram and write the name within the circle.

To show the importance of the business relationship to you or your business, please deliberately place the circle at level **1,2 or 3**.

<u>Level 1</u> lies closest to Your Business and so represents a **close** relationship

<u>Level 2</u> is further away and shows a **moderate** relationship

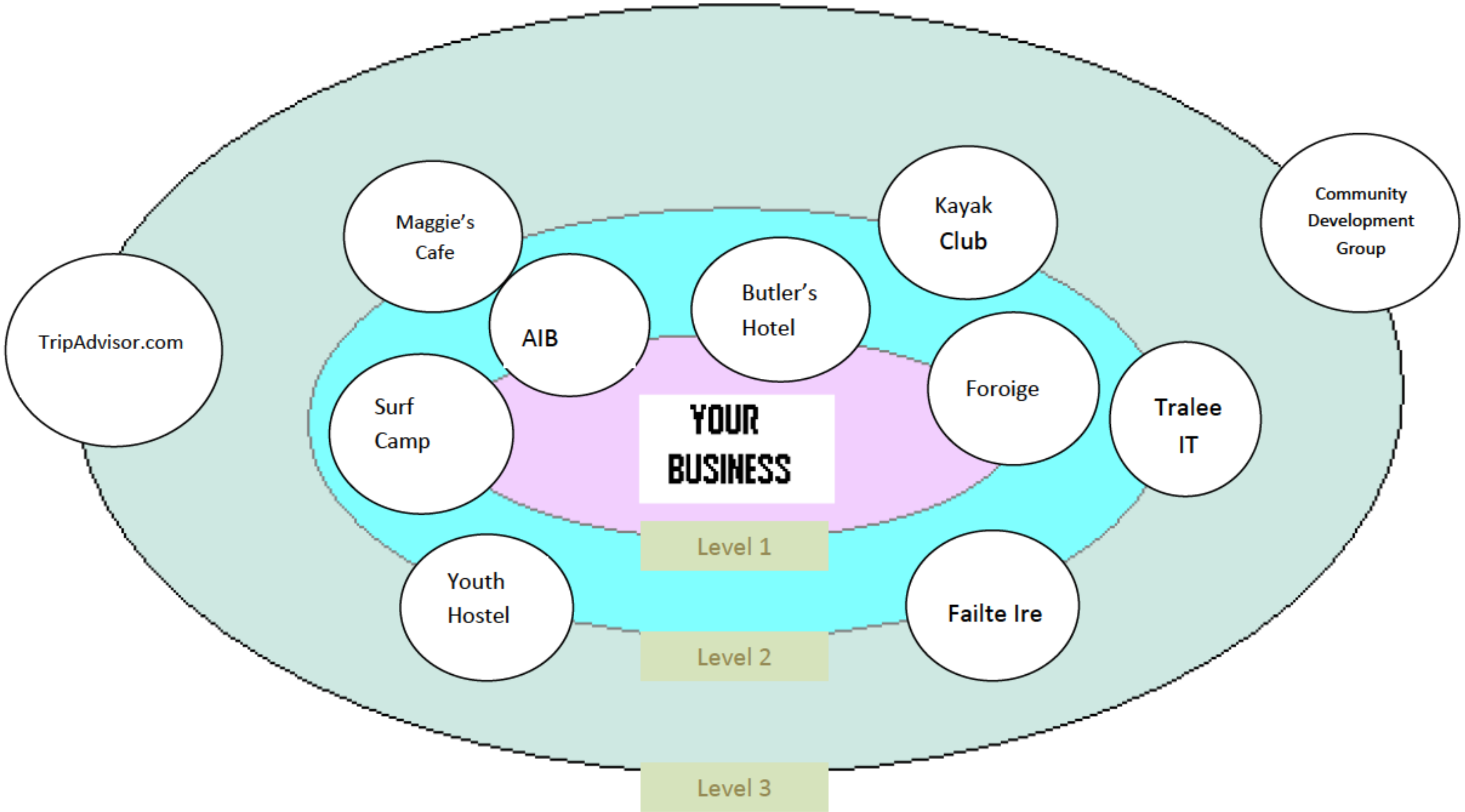
<u>Level 3</u> is furthest away and represents a **distant** relationship.

You may find it useful to make note of your business contacts before you begin. Please use the box below.

Note: only information supplied on the diagram overleaf will be used as data for the research.

Please see the sample provided on the next page.

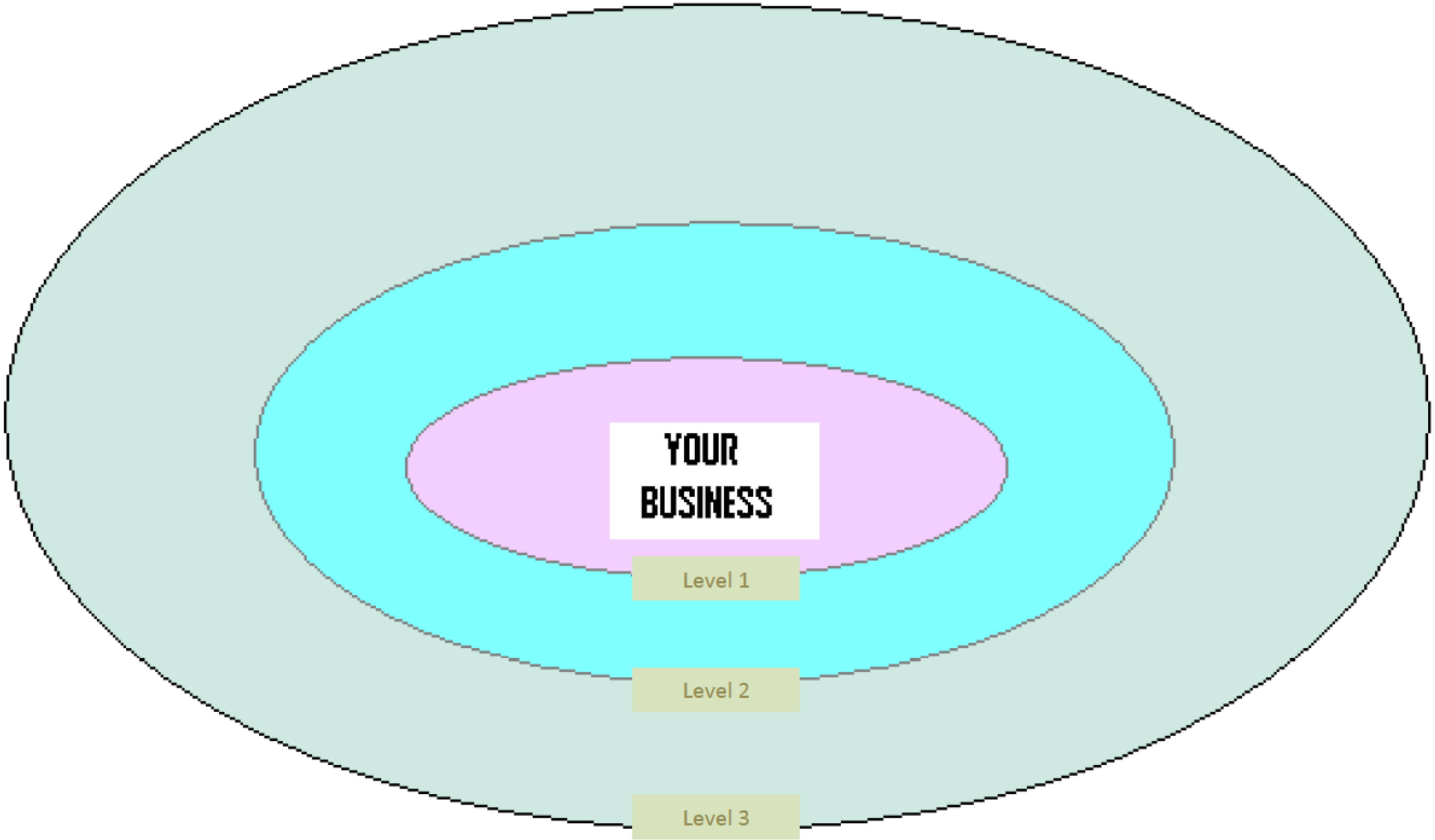
SAMPLE



This sample shows;
Level 1 (important or close) relationships with Surf Camp, AIB, Butler's Hotel and Foroige. These circles have been placed on the Level 1; inside orbit.
Level 2 (moderate) relationships with the Youth Hostel, Maggie's Cafe, Kayak Club, Tralee IT, and Failte Ireland. These have been placed along the Level 2; middle orbit.
Level 3 (distant) relationships with the Community Development group and TripAdvisor.com. These have been placed along the Level 3; outer orbit.

PARTICIPANT CODE ☐☐☐☐☐

Please now complete the network diagram for **your business** by listing and placing your close, moderate and distant business networks in circles along levels 1, 2 or 3 on the diagram below.



Appendix D

Enhancing the Irish Adventure Tourism Product

Adventure Tourism Provider Interview (semi-structured) Questions

1. Would you give me a little about yourself and how long you've been operating in the area/ Ireland?
2. What attracted you to the adventure tourism industry?
3. What sets you and your business apart from others in the industry?
4. What supports/ training does your business need in order to compete in this industry?
5. Have you tried networking?
    a. If so, what was your experience?
    b. If not, why not?
6. What would be your main motivation to network?
7. What is 'innovation' to you with regards to the adventure tourism industry?
8. What are the biggest barriers to the success or development of your business currently?
9. Would you be willing to take part in creating an adventure tourism hub or adventure tourism destination in the local area?
10. How important is social media in networking?
    c. Does it replace physical networking?
11. Is the seasonality of adventure tourism a barrier to successful networking?
12. What have been your positive and negative experiences of operating an adventure tourism company in your area/ Ireland?
13. If you could offer any advice to a new company starting up, what would it be?
14. How would you define Adventure Tourism?
15. How would you define Networking?
16. What changes have you noticed in the adventure tourism industry?
17. What future trends and developments can you see emerging in the adventure tourism industry?
18. Have you anything else you would like to add to this research?

Appendix E

Statistical Data, Chapter 4 Findings and Discussion

Fig. 4.1.1a Breakdown of Participating Providers – Questionnaire.

Q2 Business location

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Kerry	18	34.6	34.6	34.6
Cork	15	28.8	28.8	63.5
Limerick	8	15.4	15.4	78.8
Clare	11	21.2	21.2	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.1c Primary Activities of Providers

Activities Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Kayaking	2	4.0%	4.0%
Surfing	15	30.0%	30.0%
Mountain biking	6	12.0%	12.0%
Rock climbing	4	8.0%	8.0%
Hill walking	4	8.0%	8.0%
Scuba diving	2	4.0%	4.0%
Horse riding	4	8.0%	8.0%
Kite surfing	2	4.0%	4.0%
Windsurfing	2	4.0%	4.0%
Sailing	9	18.0%	18.0%
Total	50	100.0%	100.0%

Fig. 4.1.1d Secondary Services Offered by Providers

Q27 Do you offer secondary services?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Accommodation	26	50.0	50.0	50.0
Transport	4	7.7	7.7	57.7
Food/meals	6	11.5	11.5	69.2
None	16	30.8	30.8	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.2a Activity Providers' Motivations

Q5 Primary reason for being attracted to the industry

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Activity previously a hobby	24	46.2	46.2	46.2
Location	13	25.0	25.0	71.2
Quality of life	5	9.6	9.6	80.8
Financial gain	4	7.7	7.7	88.5
Family business	6	11.5	11.5	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.2b Attraction to adventure tourism industry by location; male and Fig. 4.1.2c Attraction to adventure tourism industry by location; female

Q32 Gender * Q5 Primary reason for being attracted to the industry Crosstabulation

		Q5 Primary reason for being attracted to the industry					Total
		Activity previously a hobby	Location	Quality of life	Financial gain	Family business	
Q32 Gender	Male	20	8	4	4	3	39
	Female	4	5	1	0	3	13
Total		24	13	5	4	6	52

```
expected: contingency table

        A          B          C          D          E

1     18.0       9.75       3.75       3.00       4.50
2     6.00       3.25       1.25       1.00       1.50
```

The given table has probability 2.2E-03
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.235$

Fig. 4.1.3a What Sets Your Adventure Tourism Business Apart?

Q7 What distinguishes your business from others?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unique product	9	17.3	17.3	17.3
Location	15	28.8	28.8	46.2
Packages offered	6	11.5	11.5	57.7
Reputation	5	9.6	9.6	67.3
High quality service	17	32.7	32.7	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.4a Barriers to Business Success/ Development - Questionnaire

Barriers to the business frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Barriers to the business	Q26a Government barrier	12	7.2%	28.6%
	Q26b Marketing barrier	18	10.8%	42.9%
	Q26c Operating costs barrier	30	18.1%	71.4%
	Q26d Tourism infrastructure barrier	16	9.6%	38.1%
	Q26e Seasonility barrier	28	16.9%	66.7%
	Q26f Accessibility barrier	8	4.8%	19.0%
	Q26g Geographic isolation	8	4.8%	19.0%
	Q26h Financial supports	30	18.1%	71.4%
	Q26i Networking supports	16	9.6%	38.1%
Total		166	100.0%	395.2%

Fig. 4.1.5a Location cross referenced with ‘motivated by location’

Q2 Business location * Q5b Motivated by location Crosstabulation

		Q5b Motivated by Location		Total
		Yes	No	
Q2 Business location	Kerry	8	10	18
	Cork	4	11	15
	Limerick	5	3	8
	Clare	4	7	11
Total		21	31	52

```
expected: contingency table

       A          B

1    7.27       10.7
2    6.06       8.94
3    3.23       4.77
4    4.44       6.56
```

The given table has probability 5.7E-03
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.418$

Fig. 4.1.5a Location cross referenced with ‘motivated by location’

Q2 Business location * Q5b Motivated by location Crosstabulation

		Q5b Motivated by location		Total
		Yes	No	
Q2 Business location	Kerry	8	10	18
	Cork	4	11	15
	Limerick	5	3	8
	Clare	4	7	11
Total		21	31	52

```
expected: contingency table

       A          B

1    7.27       10.7
2    6.06       8.94
3    3.23       4.77
4    4.44       6.56
```

The given table has probability 5.7E-03
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.418$

Fig. 4.1.5b Location cross referenced with location as barrier

Q2 Business location * Q24a Is location a barrier to networking? Crosstabulation

		Q24a Is location a barrier to networking?		Total
		Yes	No	
Q2 Business location	Kerry	4	14	18
	Cork	3	12	15
	Limerick	3	5	8
	Clare	2	9	11
Total		12	40	52

```
expected: contingency table

        A          B

1    4.15       13.8
2    3.46       11.5
3    1.85       6.15
4    2.54       8.46
```

The given table has probability 2.1E-02
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.807$

4.1.6a Marketing methods used by providers

Marketing Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Posters	26	15.0%	50.0%
Flyers	40	23.1%	76.9%
Tradeshows/conventions	18	10.4%	34.6%
Newspaper ads and magazines	28	16.2%	53.8%
Social media	46	26.6%	88.5%
TV/ radio ads	6	3.5%	11.5%
Online (other)	9	5.2%	17.3%
Total	173	100.0%	332.7%

Fig. 4.1.6b Marketing barrier, by county

Q2 Business location * Q26b Marketing barrier Crosstabulation

Count

		Q26b Marketing barrier			Total
		High impact	Medium impact	Low impact	
Q2 Business location	Kerry	5	9	4	18
	Cork	6	7	2	15
	Limerick	3	5	0	8
	Clare	4	5	2	11
Total		18	26	8	52

```
expected: contingency table

        A          B          C

1    6.23       9.00       2.77
2    5.19       7.50       2.31
3    2.77       4.00       1.23
4    3.81       5.50       1.69
```

The given table has probability 5.5E-04
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.900$

Fig. 4.1.7a Breakdown of Providers' Membership of Support Organisations

Q9 Membership of organisations

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Activity NGB	32	61.5	61.5	61.5
Tourism authorities	11	21.2	21.2	82.7
Local/Community groups	5	9.6	9.6	92.3
Irish Tourism Confederation	3	5.8	5.8	98.1
None	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.7b Business Supports Received

Q11 Business supports received

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Financial	16	30.8	30.8	30.8
Mentoring	12	23.1	23.1	53.8
Training	1	1.9	1.9	55.8
Business development	5	9.6	9.6	65.4
None	18	34.6	34.6	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.7c Business Supports Needed

Q12 Business supports required

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Marketing	19	36.5	36.5	36.5
Mentoring	8	15.4	15.4	51.9
Accounting	3	5.8	5.8	57.7
Online resources	15	28.8	28.8	86.5
None	7	13.5	13.5	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.7d Business supports required per county

Q2 Business location * Q12 Business supports required Crosstabulation

		Q12 Business supports required					Total
		Marketing	Mentoring	Accounting	Online resources	None	
Q2 Business location	Kerry	6	3	0	8	1	18
	Cork	6	2	2	2	3	15
	Limerick	1	1	1	4	1	8
	Clare	6	2	0	1	2	11
Total		19	8	3	15	7	52

expected: contingency table

	A	B	C	D	E
1	6.58	2.77	1.04	5.19	2.42
2	5.48	2.31	0.865	4.33	2.02
3	2.92	1.23	0.462	2.31	1.08
4	4.02	1.69	0.635	3.17	1.48

The given table has probability 7.8E-08
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.284$

Fig. 4.1.8 Impact of [a lack of] Financial Supports on the Adventure Providers' Businesses. (%)

Q26h Financial supports

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High impact	30	57.7	57.7	57.7
Medium impact	18	34.6	34.6	92.3
Low impact	4	7.7	7.7	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.1.9a Types of training undertaken by providers

Courses Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Completed course in Tourism	13	23.2%	31.7%
Completed course in Business	12	21.4%	29.3%
Completed Start your own Business course	24	42.9%	58.5%
Completed course in Marketing	7	12.5%	17.1%
Total	56	100.0%	136.6%

Fig. 4.1.9b Training providers whose training the activity providers attended

Attended Courses Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Attended course held by Local Business Network	8	9.3%	21.6%
Attended course held by Failte Ireland	14	16.3%	37.8%
Attended course held by Fás	29	33.7%	78.4%
Attended course held by Enterprise Board	18	20.9%	48.6%
Attended course held by 3rd level institution	17	19.8%	45.9%
Total	86	100.0%	232.4%

Fig. 4.1.9c Staff training needs

Q17 What training for your staff would enhance your business?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
More activity qualifications	10	19.2	19.2	19.2
Leadership qualifications	5	9.6	9.6	28.8
Marketing	12	23.1	23.1	51.9
Social media	10	19.2	19.2	71.2
Business training	15	28.8	28.8	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.2.3a Breakdown of Staff Levels by Adventure Tourism Provider

Q8a No of part time staff

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	11	21.2	21.2	21.2
1	31	59.6	59.6	80.8
2	4	7.7	7.7	88.5
3	1	1.9	1.9	90.4
4	2	3.8	3.8	94.2
5	1	1.9	1.9	96.2
6	1	1.9	1.9	98.1
15	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Q8b No. of full time staff

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
1	24	46.2	46.2	50.0
2	19	36.5	36.5	86.5
3	3	5.8	5.8	92.3
4	3	5.8	5.8	98.1
8	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Q8c No. of casual/ seasonal staff

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	12	23.1	23.1	23.1
1	14	26.9	26.9	50.0
2	16	30.8	30.8	80.8
3	3	5.8	5.8	86.5
4	1	1.9	1.9	88.5
6	1	1.9	1.9	90.4
7	1	1.9	1.9	92.3
8	1	1.9	1.9	94.2
15	1	1.9	1.9	96.2
16	1	1.9	1.9	98.1
17	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.2.3b As a result of the economic downturn, the business has reduced the amount of activities offered

Q25f Business has reduced the amount of activities offered

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
Agree	6	11.5	11.5	15.4
Neither	27	51.9	51.9	67.3
Disagree	8	15.4	15.4	82.7
Strongly disagree	9	17.3	17.3	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.2.4 Impact of tourism infrastructure as a barrier, by county

Q26d Tourism infrastructure barrier

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High impact	16	30.8	30.8	30.8
Medium impact	28	53.8	53.8	84.6
Low impact	8	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.2.5 In-house staff training held by the providers

In-house Training Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Do you conduct first aid training?	39	41.5%	79.6%
Do you conduct health and safety training?	21	22.3%	42.9%
Do you conduct fire training?	14	14.9%	28.6%
Do you conduct risk management training?	20	21.3%	40.8%
Total	94	100.0%	191.8%

Fig. 4.2.6a Do you monitor developments in the adventure tourism industry?

Q10 Do you monitor developments in the industry?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	32	61.5	61.5	61.5
No	20	38.5	38.5	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.2.6b Providers who have taken part in an adventure hub initiative

Q19Have you been part of an adventure based initiative (hub)?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	23	44.2	44.2	44.2
No	29	55.8	55.8	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.2.6c Participation in adventure hub by county

Q2 Business location * Q19Have you been part of an adventure based initiative (hub)? Crosstabulation

		Q19 Have you been part of an adventure based initiative (hub)?		Total
		Yes	No	
Q2 Business location	Kerry	8	10	18
	Cork	6	9	15
	Limerick	4	4	8
	Clare	5	6	11
Total		23	29	52

```
expected: contingency table

        A          B

1     7.96       10.0
2     6.63       8.37
3     3.54       4.46
4     4.87       6.13
```

The given table has probability 2.0E-02
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.979$

Fig. 4.2.7 Other niche tourism markets that may complement the adventure activity providers' product.

Complementary markets Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Food tourism	18	9.6%	34.6%
Sports tourism	26	13.8%	50.0%
Heritage/ culture tourism	24	12.8%	46.2%
Eco/ green tourism	32	17.0%	61.5%
Rural/ agri tourism	16	8.5%	30.8%
Events based tourism	22	11.7%	42.3%
Wildlife tourism	30	16.0%	57.7%
Wellness tourism	20	10.6%	38.5%
Total	188	100.0%	361.5%

Fig. 4.3.2a Motivations 'most important' to providers

Motivations to Network Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Need for contact with other providers	8	15.4%	15.4%
Potential financial gain	18	34.6%	34.6%
Sharing of ideas and strategies	6	11.5%	11.5%
Complementary activities to my own	6	11.5%	11.5%
Creating an adventure tourism hub in the local area	14	26.9%	26.9%
Total	52	100.0%	100.0%

Fig. 4.3.3a Barriers to networking

Barriers Networking Frequencies

	Responses N	Responses Percent	Percent of Cases
Location	12	11.2%	25.0%
Time	29	27.1%	60.4%
Lack of interest	7	6.5%	14.6%
Competition with other providers	16	15.0%	33.3%
Lack of coordination	32	29.9%	66.7%
Lack of trust	11	10.3%	22.9%
Total	107	100.0%	222.9%

Fig. 4.3.3b Lack of interest as a barrier to networking, by county

Q24c Is a lack of interest a barrier to networking? * Q2 Business location Crosstabulation

		Q2 Business location				Total
		Kerry	Cork	Limerick	Clare	
Q24c Is a lack of interest a barrier to networking?	Yes	1	2	1	3	7
	No	17	13	7	8	45
Total		18	15	8	11	52

```
expected: contingency table

        A          B          C          D

1     2.42       2.02       1.08       1.48
2     15.6       13.0       6.92       9.52
```

The given table has probability 1.9E-02

The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.392$

Fig. 4.3.3c Time as a barrier to networking, by county

Q24b Is time a barrier to networking? * Q2 Business location Crosstabulation

		Q2 Business location				Total
		Kerry	Cork	Limerick	Clare	
Q24b Is time a barrier to networking?	Yes	10	8	6	5	29
	No	8	7	2	6	23
Total		18	15	8	11	52

```
expected: contingency table

        A          B          C          D

1     10.0       8.37       4.46       6.13
2     7.96       6.63       3.54       4.87
```

The given table has probability 1.0E-02

The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.668$

Fig. 4.3.4a Networking experience, by county

Q19a Have you engaged in networking in the past? * Q2 Business location Crosstabulation

		Q2 Business location				Total
		Kerry	Cork	Limerick	Clare	
Q19a Have you engaged in networking in the past?	yes	14	13	6	8	41
	no	4	2	2	3	11
Total		18	15	8	11	52

```
expected: contingency table

        A          B          C          D

1    14.2       11.8       6.31       8.67
2    3.81       3.17       1.69       2.33
```

The given table has probability 2.5E-02
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.818$

Fig. 4.3.4c Networking with Accommodation Providers
Fig. 4.3.4d Networking with Transport Providers
Fig. 4.3.4e Networking with Food/ Beverage Providers
Fig4.3.4f Networking with Other Adventure Tourism Providers
Fig. 4.3.4g Networking with Education Providers

Activities*Networked with Crosstabulation

		Accommodation providers	Transport providers	Food/beverage providers	Other adventure tourism providers	Educational providers	Total
Kayaking	Count	1	1	1	2	0	2
	% within $Activities	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	0.0%	
Surfing	Count	7	6	8	7	3	13
	% within $Activities	53.8%	46.2%	61.5%	53.8%	23.1%	
Mountain biking	Count	2	2	1	3	1	4
	% within $Activities	50.0%	50.0%	25.0%	75.0%	25.0%	
Rock climbing	Count	1	1	2	4	1	4
	% within $Activities	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	100.0%	25.0%	
Hill walking	Count	4	2	3	4	1	4
	% within $Activities	100.0%	50.0%	75.0%	100.0%	25.0%	
Scuba diving	Count	1	1	1	1	1	2
	% within $Activities	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	
Horse riding	Count	3	1	1	2	2	3
	% within $Activities	100.0%	33.3%	33.3%	66.7%	66.7%	

Kite surfing	Count	2	1	0	1	0	2
	% within $Activities	100.0%	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	
Windsurfing	Count	1	0	0	2	0	2
	% within $Activities	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	
Sailing	Count	7	4	3	6	1	8
	% within $Activities	87.5%	50.0%	37.5%	75.0%	12.5%	
Total	Count	29	19	20	32	10	44

```
expected: contingency table

       A        B        C        D        E

1    1.10    0.882     1.10     1.47    0.441
2    6.84     5.47     6.84     9.12     2.74
3    1.99     1.59     1.99     2.65    0.794
4    1.99     1.59     1.99     2.65    0.794
5    3.09     2.47     3.09     4.12     1.24
```

The given table has probability 9.3E-08
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 1.000$

```
expected: contingency table

       A        B        C        D        E

1    1.67    0.833    0.595     1.43    0.476
2    3.00     1.50     1.07     2.57    0.857
3    1.33    0.667    0.476     1.14    0.381
4    1.00    0.500    0.357    0.857    0.286
5    7.00     3.50     2.50     6.00     2.00
```

The given table has probability 2.8E-06
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.991$

Fig. 4.3.5 Types of networking carried out by providers

Q20 Which of the following best describes the networking relationship?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Clustering	14	26.9	26.9	26.9
Cooperation	7	13.5	13.5	40.4
Collaboration	7	13.5	13.5	53.8
Coopetition	14	26.9	26.9	80.8
N/a	10	19.2	19.2	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.3.7 Providers' perceptions of networking benefits

Q23 Did the networking experience benefit your business?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Great benefits	14	26.9	26.9	26.9
Minor benefits	20	38.5	38.5	65.4
I don't know	10	19.2	19.2	84.6
No benefits	8	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.3.9 Networking supports [lack of] as a barrier to business success

Q26i Networking supports

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High impact	16	30.8	30.8	30.8
Medium impact	26	50.0	50.0	80.8
Low impact	10	19.2	19.2	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Fig. 4.3.9b Impact of networking supports [lack of], by county

Q26i Networking supports * Q2 Business location Crosstabulation

		Q2 Business location				Total
		Kerry	Cork	Limerick	Clare	
Q26i Networking supports	High impact	5	4	3	4	16
	Medium impact	11	8	4	3	26
	Low impact	2	3	1	4	10
Total		18	15	8	11	52

expected: contingency table

	A	B	C	D
1	5.54	4.62	2.46	3.38
2	9.00	7.50	4.00	5.50
3	3.46	2.88	1.54	2.12

The given table has probability 1.8E-04
The sum of the probabilities of "unusual" tables, $p = 0.633$

Fig. 4.3.11 Providers use of online resources

Online resources Frequencies

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Online resources	2	1.3%	3.8%
Facebook	50	33.3%	96.2%
Twitter	27	18.0%	51.9%
LinkedIn	21	14.0%	40.4%
Own website	50	33.3%	96.2%
Total	150	100.0%	288.5%

Appendix F

Interview Record

Watersports Provider, Kerry

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quote 15 Motivation – previous hobby Meeting like minded providers, twinning Passion, unique location, tailored package no traffic Supporting family Long hours, running costs Unqualified providers Health and Safety Financial support /training, LEADER Wild Atlantic Way Failte Ireland training Quality product/ service Marketing strategy advice	Quotes 17, 18, 23, 26 Stand Up Paddleboarding Good local food and accommodation necessary Hub- caution- depends on those involved and mutual mindset Hub experience – died out, not just adventure Cowboy operators – impossible to compete – undercutting because fewer costs New markets necessary Advice to research the market	Quotes 42, 48, 52, 55, 56, 57, 61, 70 Motivated to network – grow the business, local development, new markets, connect with other providers, matching with other products Off season- prepare for high season Networking LEADER

Surfing Provider, Kerry

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quotes 2, 4, 12 Motivation – previous hobby Fresh air Marketing to local school IT skills deficit, running costs Off season course req'd – SYOB, LEADER Quality product/ service, tailored package Unique location	Surfing is now used to combat stress Advice to plan	Quotes 41, 44, 46, 63 Motivated to network for support from within the industry Off season – take time out

Diving and Surfing Provider, Kerry

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Intern Mentor Meeting people	Quote 33 Kerry airport an important infrastructural resource Hub – faded out and diluted by	Quote 65 Motivated to network- grow business, new markets, support from within industry

Preparation work, running costs Specialist product, tailored package Staff time used up in marketing Quality product/ service Enterprise board, Financial support /training , LEADER Failte Ireland training	non activity providers Customer expects a bargain due to voucher deals and undercutting Running costs up, profit margin down Weather can affect season but means you must 'go the extra mile' Advice: work hard	LEADER

Rock Climbing Provider A, Kerry

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quotes 11, 14 Motivation – previous hobby Passion, unique location, tailored package, twinning Financial strain, running costs Risky self employment, Financial support /training, LEADER Health and safety IT skills deficit	Good local food and accommodation important Cowboy operators – physical risk to customers, professional risk for genuine providers, undercutting Advice- cash flow imperative	Quote 45 Clients are more easily accessible through Facebook LEADER

Rock Climbing Provider B, Kerry

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Motivation – previous career ended, hobby Failte Ireland mentoring Mentor Passion Quality product/ service, tailored package, twinning Culture and history Meeting people Specialist product Financial support /training , LEADER	Kerry airport important Mainly international clients Hub – with caution, diluted, national tourism strategy Clients seek self catering, B&B and home stay accommodation Advice- enjoy it Tourism Ireland good resource	Quote 39 Motivated to network – meet other providers, twin products LEADER

Rock Climbing Provider C, Kerry

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Motivation – previous hobby tailored package, twinning Off season course req'd – SYOB Voucher deals threat Health and safety Weather Professional marketing plan IT skills deficit, Financial support /training , LEADER	Voucher promotions New markets Advice- cash flow and planning essential	Quote 50 Motivated to network – new markets, support from within industry

Mountain Biking Provider A, Limerick

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quotes 8, 9 Motivation – previous hobby Passion, unique location, tailored package, twinning Paid for enjoyment Unqualified providers threat, running costs high Self-employment no safety net, Financial support /training Mentor	Quote 19 Trails Hubs- good but time consuming, need national tourism strategy Advice- enjoy it and show passion	Quotes 51, 68 Motivated to connect with providers and for support LEADER

Hill Walking Provider, Limerick

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quotes 5, 10 Motivation – previous hobby Passion, tailored package, twinning Buzz of teaching skills Financial strain, Self-employment no safety net Running costs, Financial support /training Long hours Preparation work	Quotes 22, 25, 34 Smaller profit margins Hub – cautious, tourism strategy needed, purpose must be focussed Clients are more adventurous Advice- know the market, plan and ensure cash flow	Quotes 38, 58, 60 Motivated to network- new markets, clients, compete for bigger projects jointly, twinning Off season – plan and prepare

Mountain Biking Provider B, Limerick

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quote 6 Motivation – previous hobby Passion, unique location, tailored package Quality product/ service Financial strain, running costs, Self-employment no safety net Location- higher costs Grant applications, LEADER Failte Ireland training, Financial support /training	Quote 30 Trails and cycleways Hubs – too many meetings Advice- enjoy it	 Motivated to network – grow business, new markets, connect with other providers

Hill Walking Provider, Cork

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quote 13 Motivation – previous hobby Preparation work, high running costs, Financial support /training Weather Planning out of season Specialist product, twinning	Quote 35 Promoting other attractions locally benefits everyone Mainly international clients Hub- unsure of effectiveness Undercutting – living social vouchers Advice- work hard	Quotes 40, 47, 71 Motivated to network- find out what competitors are doing Share costs

Kayaking Provider A, Cork

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Fresh air Motivation – previous hobby Unqualified providers, running costs, Financial support /training IT skills deficit W. Cork Development Partnership	Quote 21 New markets Advice- plan as best you can	Motivated to share costs, grow business and for support

Kayaking Provider B, Cork

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quotes 3, 7 Motivation – previous hobby Quality product/ service Passion, unique location Flexibility – self employment Provide for family Health and safety Wild Atlantic Way Off season course req'd – SYOB Mentor	Quote 24 Promoting amenities in the area is important hub – all meetings, no action Cowboy operators – tainting industry, poor equipment, poor service/product Advice- enjoy, work hard	Quote 37 Motivated to network- marketing ideas, support from within industry, Baltimore Marketing Group Sailing and Watersports Network Kinsale Chamber of Tourism LEADER

Rock Climbing and Kayaking Provider, Clare

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quote 1 Motivation – previous hobby	Quote 29 Good local accommodation	Quotes 53, 59 Motivated to network- grow business, new

Passion Fun industry Weather Quality product/ service, tailored package Recommends others Web design support req'd Enterprise board support Failte Ireland training Self-employment no safety net, running costs barrier, LEADER	and food important Competition is good, it keeps you on your toes New markets Advice- research the markets Adrenaline Clients looking for a bigger experience, not lessons Hub- good but not sustainable	clients, marketing Outdoor Education Ireland Network LEADER

Surfing Provider A, Clare

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
Quote 16 Motivation – previous hobby Fresh air, unique location, twinning Competitiveness Local council support req'd	Quotes 31, 32 Improved roads Customer wants more from experience Advice- cash flow	Quotes 36, 49, 64, 66, 67 Motivated to Network – new markets, marketing, sharing costs Social media- versatile Off season- take time out Burren Ecotourism Network

Surfing Provider B, Clare

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
   Motivation- previous career ended, hobby Passion, location Quality product/ service, tailored package, twinning Off season course req'd – SYOB, Financial support /training Competitiveness Free transport Vehicle as marketing tool Wild Atlantic Way	Quotes 27, 28 Improved roads Competition – good to challenge, innovation, fresh ideas. Advice- have fun	Quotes 43, 54, 69 Motivated to network- community, rural development, sharing costs, support Off season – network Networking is important for small communities

Diving Provider, Clare

Codes 4.1 AT Provider/ Business	Codes 4.2 AT Industry	Codes 4.3 Networking in AT
   Motivation – previous career ended, hobby Passion Enjoy landscape	Quote 20 Weather can affect season Vouchers like Groupon are damaging to industry Create tours by working with	Quote 62 Motivated to network- grow business, connect with others, offer more products East Clare Tourism Network LEADER

Supporting family Financial strain, running costs, Financial support /training Voucher deals Planning out of season Specialist product IT skills deficit	other providers New markets	