**Promoting Literary Tourism in Ireland: Examining Motivations for International Visits**

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**Abstract**

Tourism is an activity of global importance and significance and since travel restrictions were gradually lifted, this multi-billion-dollar enterprise has continued to be one of the major performing industrial sectors in several economies throughout the world. Literary tourism occurs when specific authors and/or their literary works become so popular that people are motivated to visit those locations associated with the author or their published works (Busby and Klug, 2001; Hoppen, Brown, and Fyall, 2014). While literary tourism has a long history traceable to the seventeenth century (O’Connor and Kim, 2014), in the Republic of Ireland the connection between award-winning Irish literature and international tourists’ motivations to the West Coast remains an under-researched area.

A quantitative research approach works well for studies that require objective measurements.

Exploring the role that Irish literature might have when it comes to visiting Ireland requires objective measurements, which suits a quantitative approach (Hanrahan and McLoughlin, 2015). Therefore, the authors developed an online quantitative questionnaire through Qualtrics consisting of thirty-four questions around well-known Irish authors and reasons to visit. Besides, quantitative research instruments are a popular method for investigating attitudes and actions in tourism research (Denscombe, 2017; McLoughlin et al, 2018). Several social media groups that reflected the nature of the study and several tour operators that focused on Irish culture, heritage and literature were all identified and agreed to facilitate the distribution of the questionnaire. This resulted in a total of eighty-one (n=81) responses. All data were analysed to help identify key issues and themes.

Results from this exploratory study illustrate how literary tourism on the West Coast of Ireland provides a fertile economic opportunity. While most respondents stated that they visited Ireland for holiday, leisure, and recreation purposes. Irish literature was found to play a very important role as a motivator to visit Ireland, with their own images from Irish literature evoked by visiting the west coast of the Republic of Ireland. It was also found that some authors—such as W.B. Yeats and Sally Rooney, for instance—have already led to increased interest in the geography of the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s western counties. Future research will undertake in-person interviews with tourists and residents while also helping to identify success factors in tourism uplift relating to literary tourism and strategies for exploiting literary tourist economic opportunities that arise.

Keywords: Literary tourism, travel motivations, Ireland, sustainable economic growth

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