

# A LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE PLANNING FOR TOURISM IN IRELAND WITH A FOCUS ON TOURISM INDICATOR SYSTEMS

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## Introduction

Sustainability is now an essential word in the vocabulary of modern planning and development. Sustainable development is the key principle that underpins the Irish planning process. Due to their legal powers under the Planning and Development Acts (2000-2015) and Planning and Development Regulations (2001-2013), Local Authorities across Ireland play an essential role in sustainable planning for tourism within their respective Counties.

The rapid increase in tourism arrivals to Ireland in recent years has had major implications for planning. Yet, there has been limited research on sustainable planning for tourism in Ireland focusing on Local Authorities. This research bridges this gap in knowledge by providing the first nationwide longitudinal analysis of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in Ireland together with their use of tourism indicator systems.

The principle aim of this doctoral research is to provide a snap shot in time of the current state of sustainable planning by Local Authorities in 2016 compared to 2006. However, when it comes to making planning decisions, indicator systems play a significant role. Therefore this current research made a further contribution to knowledge by examining the use of tourism indicator systems by Local Authorities when planning for tourism.. Furthermore, the data and findings will be utilised to develop a planning tool-kit, together with a checklist that can be used by Local Authorities when developing future County Development Plans (CDP's).

## Research Aims

- 1) To determine, by way of a longitudinal study, the provision of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in Ireland, with a specific focus on the tourism component of CDP's.
- 2) To examine the application and implementation of tourism indicator systems by Local Authorities in the tourism planning process in Ireland



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## Methodological Approach

- This current study utilised two separate frameworks grounded in theory on sustainable planning for tourism and tourism indicators
- A nationwide quantitative content and textual analysis of every Local Authority CDPs in Ireland
- Qualitative semi-structured interviews with senior planners in all twenty eight Local Authorities
- All twenty eight Local Authority CDPs were analysed and every senior planner was interviewed giving this research a complete sample.
- The data generated from the strategic open ended questionnaires was imported for analysis into SPSS software
- The data was then coded with the help of the NVivo



## Results and Analysis

- This longitudinal analysis of sustainable planning by Local Authorities has identified a significant gap in the tourism planning process.
- While the provision for sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in 2016 was significantly higher, compared to 2006. However, it was found that a lack of robust tourism policies, together with budgets, staff resources and realistic timelines for implementation were the main barrier for effective sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities
- This research has identified that no current CDP benefited from implementing the DIT ACHIV Model (2012), the GSTC (2013) and the ETIS (2016) tourism indicator systems. Without the use of such indicator systems, forward planners are denied valuable information they require in order to sustainably plan for tourism within their respective Counties.

## Conclusion

- While there has been an increase nationwide in the level of sustainable for tourism, this current study has found that crucial areas in the sustainable planning for tourism still have not been addressed by Local Authorities
- Results from this nationwide longitudinal analysis suggests that there is a clear need for solutions to help with the development and implementation of polices for the sustainable planning of tourism by Local Authorities

## Peer Reviewed Publications

- McLoughlin, E and Hanrahan, J. (2015) A Framework for Analysing the Local Authorities Tourism Planning in Ireland: A Socio-Cultural Perspective, *European Journal of Tourism Research*, vol.11, 73-87
- McLoughlin, E, Conaghan, A and Hanrahan, J (2016) A Model for the Transition towards the Sustainable Management of Tourism Destinations in Ireland, *International Journal for Responsible Tourism* [In Press]
- McLoughlin, E and Hanrahan, J. (2015) Local Authority Tourism Planning in Ireland: An Environmental Perspective, *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, vol. 7
- McLoughlin, E and Hanrahan, J. (2015) Planning for the Economic Impacts of Tourism in Ireland: A Local Authority Perspective, *Journal of Tourism Analysis*, vol. 20(6), 665-676
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