

A framework for analysing the local authorities tourism planning in Ireland: A socio-cultural perspective

James Hanrahan¹ and Emmet McLoughlin^{2*}

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¹ Tourism Programme Chair, School of Business and Social Sciences Department of Marketing, Tourism and Sport, Institute of Technology Sligo, Ireland

² School of Business and Social Sciences, Department of Marketing, Tourism and Sport, Institute of Technology, Sligo, Ireland.

* Corresponding author

Abstract

Tourism inevitably takes people to new places while broadening their perception and knowledge of different cultures and environments. This informative process is an important function of the tourism industry. This study reports on results that form part a postgraduate research thesis, on the levels of planning for the socio-cultural impacts of tourism by local authorities in Ireland. Drawing on the theme of sustainable planning for tourism, the authors discuss the concept of socio-cultural sustainability as conveyed by current literature. In addition, the authors investigated every Irish Local Authority County Development Plan (CDP's), utilising a content analysis approach to identify the level of planning for the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in 2014. CDP's were found to lack any integration of sustainable tourism indicators, along with any codes of conduct for best practice. Also few local authorities were found to be supporting or implementing tourism certification schemes. All of which local authorities could use to improve their tourism plans from a socio-cultural perspective.

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Introduction

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism are essentially the costs in which a destination must be prepared to accept when developing tourism. According to Mason (2008) some of tourism's beneficial impacts on society include creation of employment, the rebirth of local arts and crafts and the revival of social and cultural

life of the local population. Despite this research has shown that tourism may have many detrimental effects on the society and culture of host areas. Issues such as, alterations in traditional family values, new economically powerful groups emerging, and cultural practices being adapted to suit the needs and wishes of tourists have, amongst

others been identified (Ap and Crompton, 1993; Johnson, Snepenger and Akis, 1994; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Cooper et al, 2008; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Hunter, 2011). This highlights the need for research in the area of socio-cultural sustainability within tourism.

The growth of mass tourism in the 1970's, together with poor planning approaches, along with the fundamental changes experienced by local communities has resulted in a proliferation of empirical and theoretical research (Teye, Sönmez and Sirakaya 2002; García, Vázquez and Macías, 2015). So much so, that to analyse all the studies in their entirety would be a difficult task if not impossible (Sharpley, 2014). Yet, Deery, Jago and Fredline (2012) explain it is crucial for industry, government tourism departments and agencies to understand how individuals within a host community as well as the host community overall perceives the benefits and disadvantages of tourism. This may be due in some cases to the potential hostile response to tourists if a balance is not achieved. It could be argued therefore that the future growth and development of tourism may damage many traditional cultures and societies if not planned sustainably.

This study focuses on Ireland and in particular the socio-cultural sustainability of its tourism industry. Ireland is widely recognised as a popular tourist destination having welcomed 6.7 million tourists in 2013. This resulted in €5.9 billion in revenue, and employment for 137,700 people (Fáilte Ireland, 2014a). Although the need to manage the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Ireland is widely acknowledged in scholarly literature (Kockel, 1994; Kneafsey, 1998; Cronin, 2003; Quinn, 2006; Healy, Rau and McDonagh, 2012) there is a need for more studies on tourism planning within Ireland, the focus of this study. The authors utilised a content analysis approach to analyse Local Authorities' County Development Plans (CDP) which are legally required, for the presence of policies and strategies to address the socio-cultural impact of tourism. The content analysis tool utilised the UNWTO's aims for sustainable tourism (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005) and the European Tourism Indicators System for Sustainable Management at

Destination Level (EC, 2013). These were tested and piloted to ensure the content analysis tool was robust and focused on established indicators for sustainable tourism. Experience has shown that tourism, like many other activities, can have both positive and negative impacts (Mathieson and Wall, 2006; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008, Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Stylidis, Biran, Sit and Szivas, 2014; Kim, Jun, Walker and Drane, 2015). As such, the need to plan for tourism, and its associated destinations has become in recent years a focus for Local Authority planners.

So the question remains: Do Local Authorities in Ireland plan sustainably for the socio-cultural impacts of tourism? And if so, do they have robust and comprehensive policies to address intellectual and cultural property rights considered or protecting public rights of way? These solutions are important for both communities and forward tourism planners in Local Authorities as these answers can guide successful planning policies in the future. As such the purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge base on the levels of Local Authority planning for the socio-cultural impacts of tourism.

Literature review

In recent years the traditional focus of economic gains from tourism now appears to be not enough for attaining support from local communities. This support is essential for the success and sustainability of tourism (Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004; Pérez and Nadal, 2005; Sharpley, 2014). Murphy (1985) claims that these views generally originate from factors such as, the economic reliance on the tourism industry, the importance of the industry to the locality, together with the overall level of tourism development. Many authors have identified the importance and benefits of incorporating these views into the planning process (Murphy, 1985; Simmons, 1994; Gunn and Var, 2002; Spencer, 2010) as they give forward planners a greater understanding of the relevant impacts of tourism within the community (Doxey, 1975; Haywood, 1988; Mason, 2008). This supports the development of an effective, sustainable and long term local tourism industry as problems relating to local identity, accessibility and rights of way require

the development of effective and well-resourced policies by Local Authorities.

Firstly, in order to fully understand Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism in Ireland, we must define the role Local Authorities have in developing tourism. Early studies by Charlton and Essex (1996) argues that 'Local Authorities involvement in tourism has become established principally through the provision of local tourism infrastructure, the maintenance of an attractive environment through planning and development control, proactive policies to stimulate the private sector and the promotion and marketing of tourism'(Charlton and Essex, 1996, p.176). This definition highlights the role Local Authorities have in planning and development control and the development of proactive policies. There is a growing acceptance of sustainable development as an approach to tourism planning (Gunn and Var, 2002; Weaver, 2006; Hall, 2007; Connell, Page and Bentley, 2009; Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins, 2013). Under the Planning and Development Act 2000 and 2010, Local Authorities in Ireland are legally required to insure that their development plans include objectives for 'the integration of the planning and sustainable development of the area with the social, community and cultural requirements of the area and its population' (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2007). All of which are key elements when planning sustainably for tourism.

Developing tourism has been known to cause various economic, socio-cultural and environmental changes upon the host community (Lee, 2013; Stylidis et al, 2014), some more beneficial than others. Weaver and Lawton (2006) defines tourism as a socio-cultural interaction for both the guest and host. They go on to explain that a range of different stakeholders work together in the: "process of attracting, transporting, hosting and managing tourists and other visitors" (Weaver and Lawton, 2006). Therefore, participation together with the support of the local residents is imperative for the sustainability of tourism at any destination (Gursoy, Chi and Dyer, 2010). Even though the concept of stakeholders is becoming more important in tourism (Jamal

and Getz, 1999; Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher, 2005; Hall, 2007; Currie, Seaton and Wesley, 2009; Mowforth and Munt, 2009; Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins, 2013), it is the so called 'host-guest' relationship that is seen firstly by Smith (1977) and then by Sharpley (2014) as fundamental to any sustainable planning approach. The strength of this relationship, according to Reisinger and Turner (2002) could well determine the extent to which tourists have a successful or satisfying experience. On the other hand however, it can also determine the degree of impact, positive or otherwise experienced by host communities (Sharpley, 2014). Essentially the concept of participation according to Mowforth and Munt (2009:226) associated itself with "empowerment" and "sustainability". Furthermore, Miller and Twining-Ward (2005) explain that sustainable tourism indicators help in the understanding of social problems in a destination, while facilitating community participation in identifying sustainable development goals and suitable management strategies. Therefore, it is vital to examine the levels of sustainable socio-cultural planning undertaken by Local Authorities in Ireland.

The central role tourism has in regional and national development has been well recognised (McGehee and Andereck, 2004; Stylidis and Terzidou, 2014). This in turn has resulted in the development of specific tools to aid forward planners in developing sustainable tourism. For example, organisations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have long used indicators as both useful and reliable assessment tools for decisions makers. Local Authorities could utilise the newest set of sustainability indicators, the European Tourism Indicators System for Sustainable Management at Destination Level (ETIS) (EC, 2013) when developing tourism policies to measure and assess the socio-cultural impact tourism has on a particular destination. Criteria such as community/social impacts, gender equality, equality/accessibility and protecting and enhancing cultural heritage, local identity (EC, 2013) are all core indicators in measuring the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. The ETIS aims to monitor, manage and measure

sustainability performances at European destinations (Torres-Delgado and Palomeque, 2014) and is based on the concept of shared responsibility and the principle of joint decision making (EC, 2013; Torres-Delgado and Palomeque, 2014). The ETIS is a key initiative developed in response to the priority that Europe maintains its position as the leading tourism destination in the world.

Also, the UNWTO together with the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) developed the twelve aims for sustainable tourism (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005). These criteria were also incorporated into the content analysis tool. The 12 aims for sustainable tourism were developed in 2005 in order to provide governments with guidance and a framework for the development of policies for more sustainable tourism (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005). These aims are amalgamated into the three pillars of sustainability which according to several authors need to be sufficiently interrelated to achieve sustainability when planning for tourism (Swarbrooke, 1999; Byrd, Cardenas and Greenwood, 2008). The socio-cultural criteria under the UNWTO's aims are visitor fulfilment, local control, community wellbeing and cultural richness. These aims have delivered a beneficial baseline for planning sustainably for tourism since their inception in 2005. These tools and guidelines are considered important blueprints for Local Authorities to utilise in conjunction with relevant legislation in the tourism planning process.

Methodology

In Ireland, each Irish Local Authority is required under legislation (Planning and Development Act 2000 and 2010) to develop a County Development Plan (CDP) every six years. It is these CDP's that were the focus of this study.

Local government functions in Ireland are mostly exercised by thirty-one Local Authorities, termed County, City or City and County Councils. The area under the jurisdiction of each of these Local Authorities corresponds to the twenty-six of the traditional counties of the Republic of Ireland. It should be noted, however, that in 1994 Dublin County Council and the Corporation of Dún Laoghaire where merged to form three new Local

Authorities to serve County Dublin (Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin). This brings the total number of Local Authorities (County Councils) in Ireland to twenty nine, covering twenty six different counties and including the three administrative counties (in Dublin) which were all assessed for this study. By incorporating a content analysis approach, the authors were able to assess the twenty nine Local Authorities tourism policies. They all want to attract more tourism, how they do so can be found in their CDP's.

Content analysis was the primary quantitative analysis tool utilised in this paper, and while this represents quantification on a limited scale it still is anchored in the quantitative research paradigm. According to Zipf's law (1949) the assumption is that words and phrases mentioned most often are those reflecting important concerns in every communication. Therefore, quantitative content analysis can involve; frequencies, direction, intensity and space measurements (Sarantakos, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Jennings, 2010). However, a content analysis can extend far beyond plain word counts, for example keywords can be assessed in the context of their specific meaning in the text (Krippendorf, 2004). Further to this, it is important to note that quantitative research takes an analytic approach to understanding a number of controlled variables. Increasingly, tourism researchers are using content and textual analysis as a means of critical investigation when faced with textual forms of data, for example written documents such as tourism policies, tourism plans or even visual materials such as photographs and brochures. Muehlenhaus (2011) suggest that the content analysis approach was originally designed to help researchers discern patterns, themes, and repetition within and across numerous text documents.

Method

Local Authorities has a legal remit under the Planning and Development Acts 2000 and 2010 to plan for infrastructure, society, environment and economic development. Within these plans the CDPs have provided a section on tourism development for within their specific counties. This is the focus of this study.

Table 1. Summary of criteria for assessing the socio-cultural sustainability of County Development Plans (CDP's)

What year does the CDP cover?
 Number of pages dedicated to tourism planning within the CDP
 Is there a specific tourism policy section in the CDP?
 Number of specific tourism policies within the CDP
 Number of tourism strategies to implement the tourism policies
 Tourism policies integrated within other areas of the CDP
 Is the tourism plan compliant with Strategic Environmental Assessment legislation 2004?
 European Tourism Indicator System
 Social equity
 Visitor fulfilment
 Local control
 Community wellbeing
 Cultural richness
 Intellectual and cultural property rights considered
 Codes of conduct/best practice examples
 Certification
 Industry regulation
 Sustainable tourism indicators integrated into plan
 Protects public rights of way
 Helps achieve archaeological and historic preservation
 Disabled provision mentioned in the plan
 Local satisfaction, ratio of tourists to locals
 Tourism disaster policy/plan
 Fáilte Ireland 'Historic towns in Ireland' 2010

Source: adapted from (UNWTO, 2001; UNEP/UNWTO, 2005; Hanrahan, 2009; Fáilte Ireland, 2010; EC, 2013).

The authors identified and analysed these CDP's along with visitor numbers to each County to determine the relationship between socio-cultural sustainability and effective policy implementation. This analysis centred on twenty three criteria based on existing theory and incorporating various model and guidelines developed by the industry such as the Aims of Sustainable Tourism (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005) and the European Tourism Indicator System (EC, 2013) shown in Table 1 below.

A content analysis approach as argued by Neuman (2006) lets the researcher reveal the content in a source of communication. Also a researcher can compare content across many texts and analyse it with quantitative techniques (i.e. charts and tables). As such, this study utilised this approach to identify the above twenty three criteria in Local Authorities development plans. Also this provided a framework for the constant comparison of plans. This framework was used to build the content analysis tool and was informed and developed using the principles from the UNWTO guidelines on Cultural Heritage and Tourism Development, (UNWTO, 2001); the 12 Aims of Sustainable Tourism, (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005); Hanrahan, (2009); Fáilte Irelands

guidelines on Historic Towns in Ireland, (Fáilte Ireland, 2010) and the socio-cultural indicators found in the European Tourism Indicator System, (EC, 2013). In order to secure a valid sample the authors had to carefully consider the sampling and section procedures for the study.

Sampling and Selection

Given that the aim of the study was to assess the level of planning for the socio-cultural impacts of tourism at a Local Authority level throughout the Republic of Ireland, the research involved a complete population of all 29 Local Authorities' CDP's.

Data Analysis

To facilitate constant comparison throughout the research process and to highlight any variations between the Local Authorities, the data was inputted into a content analysis tool for each development plan. The data from each category was then analysed and discussed in the context of current international literature and their connection with other Local Authority plans. This procedure of data analysis allowed the authors to use the content analysis tool (Table 1) to assess each Local Authority CDP. The data generated was then inputted into a

Table 2. Example of the planning matrix for assess Local Authority plans

Criteria assessed within analysis of CDP	Local authorities in Ireland (abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal)																												
	CW	CN	CE	CK	DL	D	Ds	FL	GY	KE	KD	KY	LS	LM	LK	LH	LD	MH	MO	MN	OY	RN	SO	Ts	Tn	WD	WH	WX	WW
Tourists arrivals 2013 (numbers in 000s)	167	207	779	1,9	468	5,3	5,3	5,3	1,7	411	267	1,5	125	135	628	173	97	272	591	123	82	110	315	195	129	467	170	684	398
Year of publication of the CDP	09	14	11	09	12	10	10	11	09	14	11	09	11	09	10	09	09	13	14	13	09	14	11	09	10	11	14	13	10
Volume dedicated to tourism planning within CDP	7	12	12	11	6	1	1	9	3	6	6	16	11	8	5	8	5	7	1	4	9	6	5	2	6	9	10	19	21
Specific tourism policy section	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Number of tourism policies/objectives within CDP	4	30	11	9	17	2	7	37	15	5	28	59	28	7	13	19	11	15	3	35	11	27	12	7	6	29	26	34	34
Number of tourism strategies	1	1	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	6	3	0	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	7	9

Note: Y-Yes, N-No, 0- Not mentioned in CDP, 1- Basic provision made in CDP, 2- Comprehensive provision made in detail of CDP with associated budget and timeframe for implementation

planning matrix for assessing the socio-cultural sustainability of Local Authority plans (Table 3). An example of this is illustrated and explained in (Table 2).

As can be seen above, the twenty nine Local Authorities displayed in the matrix are abbreviated by the first and last letter of the county they represent. Also, figure one helps to illustrate how Local Authorities varied on the categories assessed. For example, the first and last letter of County Clare is abbreviated by "CE". Clare received 779,000 tourists in 2013. Its most recent CDP was published in 2011 and it dedicated twelve pages to tourism. A content examination found Clare had a specific tourism policy section which contained eleven tourism policies and six strategies for implementation.

Results and Discussion

The principal areas that emerged from within the analysis are discussed in context of Local Authority CDPs across Ireland. The content analysis approach aims to examine the relationship between visitor arrivals, depth of tourism policies and the adoption of national and international guidelines for managing the socio-cultural impacts associated with tourism.

Analysis shows that twenty seven (93%) CDP's were found to contain a specific tourism policy section, six (21%) had no strategies in place to aid in policy implementation. Moreover, sustainable tourism indicators take into account the many interpretations of sustainable tourism (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005) and are of particular

importance in strategic planning and policy making (Rosenström and Kyllonen, 2007; Casser, et al, 2013). However, the content analysis found that one CDP had sustainable indicators in place to help Local Authorities in relation to the sustainability of new developments. But no Local Authority was found to reflect the indicator systems which directly apply to Ireland such as the DIT-ACHIEV Model of Sustainable Tourism Management (Flanagan et al, 2007) or the European Tourism Indicator System (EC, 2013). Core indicators found in the ETIS such as community/social impact, gender equality, equality/accessibility and protecting and enhancing cultural heritage help destinations measure and monitor their sustainability management processes, while also enabling them to share and benchmark their progress and performance in the future (EC, 2013). Furthermore, indicators are a cost effective method that act as an early warning system to initiate improved planning and management strategies (Griffin, et al, 2012) and without their implementation, Local Authorities may find it hard to prevent irreversible socio-cultural impacts tourism development may have.

As Ireland is a member of the EU, Local Authorities now face greater policy structures. These have resulted in multi levels of governance (Bache and Flinders, 2004) which in turn has effects for successful policy implementation. For several years now, organisations such as the UNEP and the UNWTO are all having a growing influence in

tourism governance (Hall, 2007). The content analysis of Local Authorities CDP's illustrates that policies formulated at higher levels are not being put into practise on the ground by Local Authorities. Take the Aims of Sustainable Tourism for example; both the UNEP and the UNWTO (2005) formulated a list of specific

aims for sustainable tourism. Factors such as social equity, visitor fulfilment, local control, community wellbeing and cultural richness are all required to be address when planning for tourism. However, a content analysis of Local Authorities CDP's has discovered that no CDP's sufficiently reflected the aims of

Table 3. Planning matrix for assessing the socio-cultural sustainability of LA plans

Criteria assessed within analysis of CDP	Local authorities in Ireland (abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal)																												
	CW	CN	CE	CK	DL	D	Ds	FL	GY	KE	KD	KY	LS	LM	LK	LH	LD	MH	MO	MN	OY	RN	SO	Ts	Tn	WD	WH	WX	WW
Tourists arrivals 2013 (numbers in 000s)	167	207	779	1,9	468	5,3	5,3	5,3	1,7	411	267	1,5	125	135	628	173	97	272	591	123	82	110	315	195	129	467	170	684	398
Tourism revenue 2013 (€MN)	42	54	176	628	127	1,596	1,596	1,596	456	59	64	370	29	32	166	61	19	58	154	28	27	25	83	45	30	98	80	167	105
Year of publication of the CDP	09	14	11	09	12	10	10	11	09	14	11	09	11	09	10	09	09	13	14	13	09	14	11	09	10	11	14	13	10
Volume dedicated to tourism planning within CDP	7	12	12	11	6	1	1	9	3	6	6	16	11	8	5	8	5	7	1	4	9	6	5	2	6	9	10	19	21
Specific tourism policy section	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Number of tourism policies/objectives within CDP	4	30	11	9	17	2	7	37	15	5	28	59	28	7	13	19	11	15	3	35	11	27	12	7	6	29	26	34	34
Number of tourism strategies	1	1	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	2	1	2	6	3	0	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	7	9
Tourism policy integrated in other areas	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tourism policies SEA compliant	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
European Tourism Indicator System	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Social equity	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Visitor fulfilment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local control	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Community wellbeing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural richness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intellectual and cultural property rights considered	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Codes of conduct/best practice examples	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tourism certification	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Industry regulation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sustainability indicators integrated into plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Protects public rights of way	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Disabled provision mentioned in the plan	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local satisfaction, ratio of tourists to locals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tourism disaster policy/plan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fáilte Ireland 'Historic towns in Ireland' 2010	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note: Y-Yes, N-No, 0-Not mentioned in CDP, 1-Basic provision made in CDP, 2-Comprehensive provision made in detail of CDP with associated budget and timeframe for implementation

UNEP/UNWTO's social-cultural criteria as part of overall tourism policy. Any destination can use these criteria as a guide to becoming culturally, and socially sustainable.

Examination of CDP's has found that certain Local Authorities had policies on industry regulation and certification. Regulation however, requires a high level of discipline to succeed and tourism like any other industry is not according to Butler (1991:208) 'expected on its own accord to be responsible'. It can be seen that a number of Local Authorities in Ireland are not taking adequate steps towards regulating and managing the social-cultural impacts of tourism within their respective counties.

The increase in recreation tourism to Ireland, and in particular walking tours, has highlighted a contentious issue at the moment for Local Authorities. Several authors explain that pleasing landscapes and opportunities to see wildlife are important influencers in trip decision making (Page and Dowling, 2002; O'Connor, Campbell, Cortez and Knowles, 2009; Curtin, 2013). Furthermore, of the 6.7 million international arrivals to Ireland in 2013, 742,000 specified hiking and cross country walking as their main activity while on holiday (Fáilte Ireland, 2014b). However, none of the 26 (90%) Local Authorities that mentioned protecting public rights of way had supplemented these policies with comprehensive detail, together with associated budgets and timeframe for implementations. A further emphasises on the role of participation in the planning process for tourism (Aas, Ladkin, and Fletcher, 2005; Currie, Seaton, and Wesley, 2009; Hall, 2007; Jamal and Getz, 1999; Mowforth and Munt, 2003; Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins, 2012) by Local Authorities in addressing the concerns of various interest groups such as Keep Ireland Open (KIO), Irish Farmers Association (IFA) and local walking groups is one approach for developing strong robust policies for protecting public rights of way.

The relationship between people with disabilities and tourism has started to receive increasing academic and government attention over the last decade (Daruwalla and Darcy,

2005). Although current research regarding this area has been limited (Burnett and Bender, 2001; Darcy, 1998; Israeli, 2002; Ray & Ryder, 2003; Ozturk, Yayli and Yesiltas, 2008), travel and tourism is a right of all citizens (McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2014). Ireland received 6.7 million visitors in 2013, generating €5.9 billion in revenue for the economy (Fáilte Ireland, 2014b). Local Authorities need to protect the disabled visitor in order to provide a meaningful experience, while also maintaining Ireland's position in the tourism market. A content analysis of Local Authority CDP's discovered that three Local Authorities mentioned the provision for the disabled visitor within tourism policy. But further analysis discovered that these policies lacked any sufficient detail such as timeframes for implementation or budget and staff allocations. According to Ray & Ryder (2003) people with disabilities have more money to spend than is often thought; thus they have become an important niche market within the tourism industry (Bizjak, Knezevic and Cvetreznik, 2011). As can be seen in Table 3 (below), numerous counties received well over 500,000 visitors, yet had no mention of disabled provision within tourism policy whereas Local Authorities in counties Cavan (CN), Fingal (FL) and Galway (GY) had mentioned the provision for the disabled visitor, but failed to include comprehensive detail such as timeframes for implementation and tasks designations. Equality and accessibility is a core indicator of the ETIS and if Local Authorities in these counties wish to maintain or enhance their tourism markets, robust and detailed policies are needed to in regards to the disabled visitor.

The findings from this study has however, found that some Local Authorities are addressing the socio-cultural impacts associated with tourism within their CDP's. However, this progress can be weakened as these policies were lacking sufficient detail such as budget and staff allocations, along with practical timeframes for implementation. Liu (2003) explains that there is a need to develop policies that are practically feasible to implement, while also being theoretically sound. For example, Fingal (FL) situated in the lucrative Dublin tourism market received approximately 5 million visitors in 2013,

generating €1.5 billion in revenue, and Galway (GY) a well-known tourism destination received 1.7 million visitors, generating €456 million, all had tourism policy sections. However they had no strategies to help implement these tourism policies. Further analysis found that no Local Authority had any specific budget allocated or time frame identified for specific implementation. While several authors make the argument for having adequate task designations, budgets and time frames for effective policy implementation (Mason, 2008; Hanrahan, 2009; Mowforth and Munt, 2009), without effective means to translate ideas into actions, Local Authorities run the risk of having their socio-cultural sustainable policies for tourism becoming irrelevant.

Conclusion

This paper examines the relationship between the levels of socio-cultural sustainability in the tourism planning process by Local Authorities in Ireland along with revenue generated and visitor arrivals in each particular county. To achieve this, a content analysis approach was employed. This study focuses on the twenty nine Local Authorities and their published CDP's which are legally required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 and 2010.

Tourism development does affect local communities in varying degrees. It is important for Local Authorities to identify these potential problems and develop policies and strategies for the future. Proactive and sustainable policies here should enable Local Authorities to harness their particular counties economic potential in regards to tourism while protecting the local community from the adverse impacts tourism development may bring. Findings highlight that the socio-cultural policies and strategies within Local Authorities CDP's were found to be lacking and do not sufficiently reflect the provision identified within tourism indicator systems, most notably the DIT-Achieve Model (Flanagan et al, 2007) and the European Tourism Indicator System (EC, 2013). In future CDP's it may be beneficial for Local Authorities to reflect these indicator systems in order to develop time specific well-resourced socio-cultural policies and strategies. Sustainable tourism is tourism that is open to all and breaks down barriers to access. The

authors identified that despite several counties generating sufficient revenue from tourism, they failed to provide access to the disabled visitor. Three Local Authorities were highlighted as not having strong, well-resourced and time specific policies in accommodating the disabled visitor. Also, the authors illustrate that there exists a transparent relationship between tourism revenue and the quality and depth of socio-cultural tourism policies found within Local Authority CDP's. The fundamental first step towards socio-cultural sustainability in a destination is to have strategies for implementing policies for tourism development. Two Local Authorities with responsibility for tourism in two well established destinations were found to have no strategies for implementing their socio-cultural tourism policies.

This study is not without limitations and opportunities for future research. This study is limited as it focuses only on Local Authorities and their legally required CDP's. However, as some Local Authorities CDP's cover different timeframes, one possible avenue for future research, utilising the socio-cultural framework from this study, may be to examine future Local Authority plans, thus facilitating a longitudinal analysis.

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APPENDIX

Table 4. *Summary of abbreviations for counties used in analysis matrix*

CW	Carlow
CN	Cavan
CE	Clare
CK	Cork
DL	Donegal
D	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
Ds	South Dublin
FL	Fingal
GY	Galway
KE	Kilkenny
KD	Kildare
KY	Kerry
LS	Laois
LM	Leitrim
LK	Limerick
LH	Louth
LD	Longford
MH	Meath
MO	Mayo
MN	Monaghan
OY	Offaly
RN	Roscommon
SO	Sligo
Ts	Tipperary South
Tn	Tipperary North
WD	Waterford
WH	Westmeath
WX	Wexford
WW	Wicklow
