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Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland

Entrepreneurs driving
tourism and hospitality

Edited by
James Hanrahan

Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland

**Entrepreneurs driving
tourism and hospitality**

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School of Business and Social Science
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Cover image: Guided standup paddle boarding on Leitrim's Shannon Blueway.

Image Credit: Leitrim Surf Company

For Alfie, the Bichon Frise who loved to SUP

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Foreword

Although it sounds more like an old Chinese proverb, noting that Irish tourism is experiencing interesting times is potentially something of an understatement. In terms of cross-border mobility and the relationship of Ireland to both the United Kingdom and the European Union the Brexit decision has created a period of enormous uncertainty for the Irish tourism industry which will undoubtedly last beyond this decade. Beyond Brexit there are broader challenges with respect to Ireland's international image as a destination. While on one side there are longstanding inferred brands for Ireland based on its image as a "clean and pleasant land" and the significance of the Irish diaspora, which have also been important for the actively managed brand of the country, there are also countervailing images surrounding women's rights as well as historical abuse by religious orders and state institutions. Indeed, some of the negative aspects of Ireland's image, at least from an international perspective, have only been reinforced by the recent investigation of the British actor and author Stephen Fry on potential charges of blasphemy. Although the Garda Síochána halted the investigation because they could not find enough people to be outraged over the actor's anti-God remarks on Irish television the case was nevertheless widely reported internationally and illustrates issues that many countries face with respect to the tensions between tradition and modernity and their portrayal in contemporary media.

The final level of challenge faced by Irish tourism is also faced by other countries and that is how it will cope with the latest industrial revolution of automation and AI at a time of enormous economic, social and environmental change. For a long time tourism has acted as a means to generate employment opportunities lost from the agricultural and manufacturing sector. Now tourism itself may begin to generate less

jobs as more “efficient” options become available in transport and accommodation. Indeed, in the longer term we may see the development of a “split” between cheaper automated services and value chains and more expensive, and labour intensive, highly personalised services.

These are issues that are a challenge not just for the tourism industry but the Irish tertiary and higher education research and teaching community as well, which is charged not only with providing an educated labour force especially at the management level, but also with providing relevant research for industry, policy-makers and the wider community. The range of papers and topics included in this volume demonstrate that THRIC and its tertiary stakeholders are clearly up to the task and also provide a clear message to government and industry that such research is not only vital but that it requires clear financial support if the tourism and hospitality industry is going to be assisted in adapting and responding to the challenging times ahead. Improvements in innovation, policy making, contribution to public and destination well being and sustainable consumption and development all depend on a strong tertiary tourism and hospitality research community with a commitment to knowledge transfer. This book clearly demonstrates that THRIC is engaged in meeting the challenges Irish tourism faces and will be critical for the future of the industry in the years to come.

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Introduction

Tourism continues to be invaluable to Ireland, in particular to rural peripheral areas. The opportunities and challenges facing Irish Tourism from climate change to peace and security are acknowledged in this the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The tourism industry worldwide continues to be an activity of global importance and significance. This multi-billion dollar enterprise remains one of the top performing industrial sectors in several economies throughout the world (Bojanic and Lo, 2016). When compared with 2015, the tourism industry's contribution to Irish Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose by 5.4% in 2016 to €4.7 billion, and is expected to grow by a further 3.4% per year to €6.6 billion by the year 2026 (WTTC, 2016). The tourism industry in Ireland had its best year in 2016, with sentiment across the sector now at levels not seen since the days of the so-called Celtic Tiger. Indeed, Fáilte Ireland (2016) states that tourism is now well placed to deliver significant employment and foreign earnings towards the year 2020 and beyond. However, with this level of anticipated growth, more demands will be placed on Ireland's tourism product and, in particular, its numerous and diverse spectrum of tourism entrepreneurs.

For Ireland to sustain this growth in tourism, and in order to protect the long term sustainability of the tourism product, all tourism entrepreneurs will need to adapt to a changing landscape, in particular as the European Union (EU) experiences the exit of a member state for the first time since its inception. Britain choosing to leave the EU involves the process popularly referred to as Brexit. The key role to Irish tourism of effective planning and management cannot be underestimated at this significant and uncertain juncture. By managing tourism in a sustainable way, we become better able to recognise the limits and capacities of our tourism resources,

and we are also better able to encourage tourism development that balances the immediate economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits, whilst also ensuring the long-term future for our European tourism industry (European Commission, 2013). Furthermore, Fáilte Ireland (2015) states that, '...the future of Irish tourism is inextricably linked to the quality of the environment. Scenic landscapes, coastlines, rivers and lakes, and cultural heritage are the bedrock upon which Irish tourism has been built.' Poorly-planned tourism can leave permanent footprints on the physical, social, cultural and economic environments of destinations (Dwyer and Edwards, 2010).

The concept of sustainability is closely related to tourism planning (UNWTO, 2004) and continues to garner increased attention within academic circles (Dredge and Jenkins, 2011). Moreover, as stated, the UNWTO has designated 2017 as the year of sustainable tourism for development (UNWTO, 2017). The 'International Year of' accolade for 2017 aims to support changes in policies, business practices and consumer behaviour towards developing and supporting a more sustainable tourism sector, all of which can contribute effectively to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Accounting for 7% of worldwide exports, one in eleven jobs and 10% of the world's GDP, the tourism sector, if well managed, can foster inclusive economic growth, social inclusion and the protection of cultural and natural assets (UNWTO Press Release, December 2016). We as tourists are also travelling differently which, in itself, creates new challenges for tourism entrepreneurs. Every time we travel, we become part of a global movement that has the power to drive positive change for our planet and all people (Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General, 2015).

The annual conference on Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland brings together academics, industry representatives and policy-makers who debate and discuss key issues of concern within the Irish context of the tourism industry. This book is aimed at promoting the research culture among established and new tourism researchers who have written research papers for THRIC 2017. Essentially this book contains a comprehensive selection of THRIC research papers from across Ireland and internationally. Each chapter represents current tourism research taking place in Ireland at a time of flux within the overall research setting. Brexit is on the horizon with the British Prime Minister having already officially triggered Article 50, thereby launching two years of negotiations between the British government and the EU parliament, all of which will end with Britain leaving the EU in 2019. For decades, Ireland has depended on the British tourist market as the largest source of visitors to the island. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Tourism numbers 2012–2015**Tourism Numbers 2012 – 2015***Where did Ireland's tourists come from?*

Numbers (000s)	2012	2013	2014	2015
Britain	2,722	2,870	3,007	3,346
Mainland Europe	2,247	2,346	2,490	2,880
France	384	409	420	471
Germany	437	466	535	609
Italy	240	226	246	304
Spain	239	249	274	322
Netherlands	137	148	151	174
Belgium	82	95	99	121
Denmark	42	51	55	66
Sweden	70	72	60	64
Switzerland	78	73	84	105
Austria	46	51	57	53
Norway	48	50	50	58
Poland	159	152	140	161
All Other Europe	284	306	318	373
North America	940	1,039	1,146	1,294
USA	833	924	1,005	1,129
Canada	107	115	140	165
Rest of World	378	431	462	516
Australia, New Zealand & Other Oceania	158	192	191	205
Other Areas	219	240	271	312
Total Overseas	6,286	6,686	7,105	8,036
Northern Ireland ¹	1,299	1,572	1,708	1,492
Total out-of-state	7,585	8,258	8,813	9,528
Domestic trips ²	8,291	8,413	8,991	9,125

Source surveys are designed to measure area of residence groupings (bold figures). Figures in italics are indicative of approximate overall market size but do not provide a sufficient level of precision to accurately reflect absolute market size or trends over time.

Source: CSO/Fáilte Ireland/TSB, NISRA

Source adapted from: CSO/Fáilte Ireland/TSB, NISRA 2016

According to Fáilte Ireland (2017), Brexit dominates as a concern for tourism businesses going into 2017, mentioned as a matter of concern by 64% of respondents to the Tourism Barometer. Many businesses feel that British and Northern Ireland tourism demand will be dampened by the impact of the Brexit process, especially impacting on exchange rates in the short to medium term.

Commenting on the challenges of Brexit for the coming season, the Chairman of Fáilte Ireland, Michael Cawley, stated the following, *'The British market is set to be challenging in the near future, particularly given the weakening of Sterling. Indeed, in 2016, our own Fáilte Ireland research indicated that value for ratings amongst British visitors dipped from 58% to 50%. We will still target the British visitor, but tourism businesses who are overly reliant on that market should seek to diversify their trade. Furthermore, there is additional growth in access capacity anticipated from Europe and North America this season and there is great potential to grow further in those markets. It makes business sense: American and Europeans stay longer and spend more per capita. Europeans, particularly those in the Eurozone, are not subject to the vagaries of currency fluctuations and, thankfully, seem to really like what we have to offer in terms of visitor experiences'* (Fáilte Ireland 2017). Both countries have enjoyed open borders for many years, but now this all seems to be on the brink of change. Irish tourism entrepreneurs, who have just survived a serious recession, are again being tasked with adapting and utilising any and all shifts in travel patterns resulting from these fundamental changes to the structure of the EU. These tourism entrepreneurs are often the unsung heroes of local Irish communities, supporting local economies and regenerating tourism areas on the periphery of normal economic development. Furthermore, entrepreneurs need strong support and an advisory system in order to develop and improve businesses (Enterprise Ireland, 2016). The formation of entrepreneurial activity has become a government priority due to its potential to contribute to job creation and economic growth (Van Der Wagen & White, 2014). Irish tourism entrepreneurs often work together in clusters, but they can also join forces to create and offer a national tourism product to the world stage. Furthermore, it is one of our essential roles as academics to support this entrepreneurship through research and discourse on current relevant issues within the tourism industry domain.

With the pending uncertainty and changes posed by Brexit, it is important to note that tourism is a global industry, offering rich and diverse tourism products to new emerging markets on a local Irish stage. These products and services are unique and cannot be replicated in any other part of the world. In fact, the local place, Irish people and the perceived gentle pace of Irish life are all integral components of the overall Irish tourism offering. This creates an Irish tourist experience which is continually evolving and adapting, utilising technology such as user-generated content, allowing visitors to Ireland to share experiences and promote the country to new as well as existing markets. It is intended that the chapters in this book will inform the reader, contribute to enlightening and challenging our tourism stakeholders, while continuing this discourse on the future of the Irish tourism sector. Each chapter brings to light a specific issue or challenge in the Irish tourism industry, with topics ranging from tourism and bio-security threats, to the growth of the festival, Féile an Phobail, to exploring the potential of 'dark sky' tourism. All these chapters have contextualised the multi-faceted concerns of the tourism industry

from an Irish perspective, and offer research, ideas and analysis, all of which is designed to help guide academics, tourism providers and policy-makers alike, as we move into a new chapter in Irish tourism.

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PART 1: DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 1

Local Tourism Entrepreneurs as Drivers of Destination Competitiveness – Case Study of the Wild Atlantic Way

Dr Shirley Barrett

Joan Crawford

Introduction

Tourism continues to grow as a global industry and remains one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in terms of world economy. In a global context, tourism is recognised as a source of job creation and a catalyst for economic growth contributing, on average, 4.1% of gross domestic product (GDP), 5.9% of employment and 21.3% of service exports (OECD, 2016). For several decades, tourism has proven its capacity as an economic and social contributor to the fabric of rural communities, which are sometimes considered at-risk communities. In such locations, tourism can offer the potential for real income generation and tax revenues, acting as a substitution for employment opportunity which is more usually generated through commercial activity in urban areas. Brouder (2012a) points to tourism as a measure by which rural regions can overcome continuing decline and aid regional development. Muller (2011), however, considers that regional development through tourism is an unrealistic goal for many rural areas, one which could be more realistically executed as an element of a regional development strategy. Thus, tourism has the potential to be a catalyst for regional economic development, although the realisation of this potential is not always easy (Brouder, 2012).

Entrepreneurship and Tourism

A strategy for the creation of more diverse economies, particularly those with distinctive natural, cultural and heritage features, is one of entrepreneurship, innovation and tourism, according to Koster (2010). Frequently, destinations and tourism development rely on the entrepreneurial activity of individuals from the local area, community groups and local business people (Mottiar, 2016a) in order to overcome economic and geographical constraints. The rural Scottish Highlands area is a case in point, where locals acting as entrepreneurs used tourism as a coping opportunity to counteract the peripheral challenges posed by its rurality (Anderson, 2000, cited Brouder, 2012b). The Scottish Highlands is by no means an isolated case, however, as tourism is frequently considered as a new and alternative source of income, particularly in rural areas where communities are difficult to sustain (Saxena et al., 2007). The attractiveness of tourism can be attributed, in part, to its low entrepreneurial barriers for entry into a sector that is frequently seen as more appealing than a highly corporate competitive environment.

Recognition of the role of entrepreneurs is widely cited in currently available literature. Koh and Hatten (2002:21), consider the tourism entrepreneur as the '*persona causa*' of tourism development, while Ritchie and Crouch (2003) refer to the fundamental role of tourism entrepreneurs in developing tourism, a view shared by many in the tourism research community, for example: Ryan et al. (2012); Mottiar (2016b); Koh (2002); Kline and Milburn (2010); Johannesson (2012); and Koh (2002). However, there also exists an argument that, whilst tourism opportunity is prevalent, the tourism industry is defined by lower levels of 'entrepreneurial dynamism' when compared to other sectors (Morrison, 2006:192). Many tourism businesses are small, family-owned and family-run and, it is contended, operate from a place of personal rather than economic motivation (Brooker and Joppe, 2014; Morrison, 2006). While this contention may hold some truth, it must also be remembered that entrepreneurs, who are of a place and a community, will reinvest emotionally and financially in their area, thus contributing to regional identity and regional development (Kline et al. 2014).

In defining *entrepreneur*, the need for a broad definition is emphasised, one that captures the range of motivations which drives individuals, and thus defines an entrepreneur as,

'...an individual (or part of a group of individuals) who has created a new business venture within a place, to offer a new product or service, bundle of products or services, or price/value relationship that adds value to markets within that community.' (Fortunato, 2014:389)

This definition not only seeks to capture the many guises of entrepreneurs, but also applies cogently in a tourism context, where there exist 'multiple realities, cultures and contexts' in which entrepreneurs live and operate (Carmichael and Morrison, 2011:116).

Tourism in rural areas is characterised by small tourism businesses and entrepreneurs (Hall, 2005); (Komppula, 2005), generating a significant part of tourism supply and influencing the region's development beyond their individual contribution (Ryan et al., 2012). Persuasively, Fortunato (2014) refers to the richer contribution made by rural entrepreneurs which goes beyond that which can be measured in dollars. Furthermore, it is suggested that, without tourism entrepreneurs, the evolution of the tourism industry would be stymied, even in areas with rich resources (Koh and Hatten, 2002). Thus, as a key player in the shaping of destination development, small tourism businesses are significant in terms of economic potential and as a source of innovation (Thomas, 2005).

In deliberating two key elements of tourism entrepreneurship, specifically small business and new venture development, Ritchie and Crouch (2003) posit that destination development evolves from the influences of competition, cooperation, growth, risk-taking and innovation. Yet, weighing against these influences are the challenges that typically confront small tourism businesses. These include: owner-manager skills deficits, limited resources, limited access to core business disciplines, an inadequate capacity to network with other businesses in the sector and managerial weakness (Ateljevic, 2009, Tinsley and Lynch, 2008; Ritchie and Crouch, 2003).

The creation of an entrepreneurial climate, or e-climate, which is conducive to supporting rural tourism entrepreneurs, is evident in currently available literature. As one of the early proponents of the development of an e-climate, Koh (2002) suggests, in his community tourism entrepreneurship model, that the pace and success of tourism development is reliant on the supply of entrepreneurial people (SEP) and the quality of the entrepreneurial climate for tourism (QEC). In other words, where both the SEP and QEC are favourable, meaning 'the right type of people and the right type of condition', the more active the entrepreneurial level that is expected (Koh, 2002:34). Koh defines nine possible types of tourism communities, anchored by four types, as depicted in Table 1. The relevance of this typology lies in its characterisation of conditions that stimulate tourism enterprise activity. For example, communities with a high SEP would indicate a plentiful supply of indigenous tourism entrepreneurs. Similarly, a high QEC indicates a high-quality tourism investment climate where, among other considerations, local authorities may be inclined to be more supportive of the industry and may become actively engaged with enterprises in a supportive way.

Table 1: Four Types of Tourism Communities

Type of Community	Supply of Entrepreneurial People (SEP)	Quality of Entrepreneurial Climate (QEC)	Key Feature
Type 1	High SEP	High QEC	Abundant and diverse levels of touristic enterprises
Type 2	High SEP	Low QEC	Challenging environment weighs against the development of touristic enterprises
Type 3	Low SEP	Low QEC	Unfavourable climate and scarce supply of tourism entrepreneurs leads to low level of touristic enterprises
Type 4	Low SEP	High QEC	Scarce supply of indigenous entrepreneurs but favourable climate attracts entrepreneurs from outside the area

Around this time, Wilson et al. (2001) identified ten conditions regarded as being important for rural communities in terms of tourism development and entrepreneurship opportunity. These include the following: a complete tourism package; good community leadership; support and participation of local government; sufficient funds for tourism development; strategic planning; coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership; coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs; information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion; good convention and visitor bureaus and, ultimately, widespread community support for tourism.

Consolidating this prior research, Kline and Milburn (2010) more recently offered a practical framework within which to understand the community elements that support entrepreneurship. The following table depicts those elements which contribute to an e-climate.

Table 2: Ten Elements that Support Entrepreneurial Climate

Physical Infrastructure	Physical layout, good design and access
Financial Infrastructure	Financial resources to support the efforts of rural entrepreneurs, investment incentives
Human Capital	Access to trusted community capital
Business Support Services	Access to core business services, such as tax, marketing, legal, professional and accounting services
Networking and Social Capital	Opportunities to network and cooperate with other rural tourism entrepreneurs; mentoring programmes
Education, Training and Assistance	Information and technical assistance relating to tourism development/ promotion in a geographical context
Governance/ Leadership	Open and listening governance systems including economic development offices, local government, policy makers and leadership
Community Culture	An informed, engaged and inclusive community working for and on behalf of its members
Quality of Life Elements	Affordable housing and health, attractive natural resources and cultural opportunities
General Context	Size of community and local economy, stage of tourism development

Consequently, in contemplating the central role that tourism plays in many rural communities, as well as its employment and income generating capabilities in the wake of a declining agricultural industry, it is incumbent on rural tourism actors such as, for example, tourism entrepreneurs and supporting bodies, to coalesce and coordinate efforts in tourism development.

Destination Competitiveness

Crucial to the management of tourism destinations is the core task of achieving and sustaining destination competitiveness. Gomezelj and Mihalic (2008:294) point to the correlation between the success of a tourist destination and how well it is managed by tourism stakeholders, especially 'government and tourism industry managers'. A central tenet of competitiveness is the tourist destination's ability to create added value, through five key determinants: destination policy; planning and development; destination management; core resources and attractors, as well as other supporting factors and resources (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). In his more recent research into determinant attributes, Crouch (2011) refers to one of the challenges to managing destination competitiveness as being the differing goals of public policy and private enterprise in tourism development and how these goals must align to attain

competitiveness. Given the diverse stakeholders involved in regional development and, more specifically, tourism development, the argument for a focused attainment of tourism goals in sustaining local and regional economies is justified.

Destination Marketing Organisations

Research into tourism destination competitiveness recognises the key roles of both entrepreneur and tourism management organisations in destination competitiveness. Tourism management organisations are routinely described as destination marketing organisations (DMOs). Ritchie and Crouch (2003) refer to the critical role of DMOs in supporting small tourism business, as well as how fundamentally important good leadership and a coordinated approach are to the creation of a competitive and sustainable tourism destination. Bornhorst et al. (2010) point to the specific areas of activity of the DMO, including the coordination of tourism elements, leadership and advocacy, development of the tourism destination, provision of visitor services and, importantly, as a key liaison to assist external organisations that will generate tourism demand. Thus, the primary focus of DMO activity is in offering a valid and relevant service to and in support of its internal stakeholders.

Morrison (2003), however, cites a mismatch on the part of public sector tourism support agencies in meeting market needs and perceived expectations. Her research finds that there is a failure on the part of such agencies in the provision of supply-side interventions, which are frequently geared more towards large firm business models and, thus, fail to get into the small tourism business mind-set. In addition, a mass market approach to provision fails to raise awareness among tourism businesses of the existence and relevance of tourism-specific training programmes, which in turn, leads to diminished support of businesses.

Therefore, in considering the role of the DMO in destination competitiveness, it is essential to develop a full understanding of the determinants of DMO success. Research conducted by Bornhorst et al. (2010), define four distinct themes contributing to DMO success:

- (i) Internal stakeholder relations
- (ii) Operational activities
- (iii) Resources, and
- (iv) Performance measures.

Response from various stakeholder groups identified partnership, collaboration, visibility within the community and partnership marketing as being most important and, underpinning all these factors, the importance of relationship management by the DMO with stakeholders in the tourist destination. This is not to suggest that

the responsibility for destination competitiveness is the exclusive remit of the DMO. Rather, the overall competitive advantage of the destination requires all stakeholders to coordinate efforts for the benefit of the destination and not solely for individual gain (Wang and Krakover, 2008). Undeniably, minor tourism entrepreneurs are seen to have a clear and critical role in destination development (Mottiar and Tucker, 2007). However, the importance of the leadership role of the DMO in developing cooperative relationships with stakeholders in the tourism destination cannot be overemphasised (Zach, 2012, Wang and Krakover, 2008).

Research Approach

This chapter explores the relationship between local tourism entrepreneurs and public agency actors as partners in the pursuit of destination competitiveness. Using the Wild Atlantic Way, and specifically County Donegal, as a tourism destination, the focus is on the experiences of local tourism entrepreneurs as enablers of success, as well as their perception of the role of public agencies in supporting this entrepreneurial effort. County Donegal was chosen on the basis that it is part of the Wild Atlantic Way, was recently voted the 'coolest place on the planet' by National Geographic Traveller, and is considered to be 'a real sweet spot – off-radar and hard to access, but on the cusp of a breakthrough' (Riddell, cited Digby, 2016).

A quantitative research approach was employed, involving a survey of tourism activity and tourism attraction providers in County Donegal. The survey was emailed to 136 providers, with follow-up telephone calls prior to the deadline, in order to increase response returns. In total, 41 responses were received, representing a 30% response rate. Each of the respondents is an active tourism provider in County Donegal.

Type of Tourism Provider	%
Tourism attraction	60
Tourism activity	51

Respondents were surveyed about the following: their knowledge and experience of the tourism supports made available to them through the Fáilte Ireland Enterprise Development Division; their participation in such initiatives; their perceptions of the supports made available to them through public sector agencies; and the challenges faced by tourism businesses in Donegal.

Context

As an industry, tourism is one of the most important economic sectors in Ireland, worth over €8 billion annually. In volume terms, 2016 was a record year for the number of visitors to Ireland, with an estimated 8.8 million visitors, an increase of 10% on the previous year. Ireland generated an estimated €6.2 billion from overseas tourism in 2016, and the amount of money spent by international visitors grew by up to 9% to reach €4.7 billion (ITEC 2017). Notwithstanding the uncertainty posed by Brexit, tourism has been a significant growth industry and a major contributor to Ireland's overall economic renewal. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2016 figures show that 20,000 new jobs were created in the Irish tourism industry in 2016, which now employs over 230,000 people throughout the country (OECD, 2016). The characterisation of tourism in Ireland tends towards small and primarily indigenously-owned businesses. Ireland's key strengths and unique selling points (USP) are its natural environment and cultural heritage, which are integral to the overall tourism experience.

More recently, the Wild Atlantic Way destination brand was developed with the specific objective of representing a unifying proposition for tourism in the West Coast of Ireland. The Wild Atlantic Way stretches for 2,500kms, from the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal to Kinsale in West Cork, and is the longest defined coastal touring route in the world. The strength of the brand has garnered global attention and has enjoyed considerable success in terms of increasing visitor numbers, as well as an increase in the amount of money they spend. The strategic aim of increasing tourist engagement with tourism experiences and communities in a wider geographical area along the west coast of Ireland has, to date, been effective. However, to sustain this growth trajectory of the Wild Atlantic Way brand, Fáilte Ireland needs to positively and actively promote the creation of new experiences in order to extend the length of time visitors stay, which in turn generates a greater economic impact. The entrepreneurial efforts of tourism businesses, both existing and new, will provide the impetus for this growth.

The two agencies responsible for Tourism in Ireland are Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority, whose remit is to support the tourism industry and work towards sustaining Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourism destination. It is tasked with providing a range of practical business supports to help tourism businesses better manage and market their products and services. Fáilte Ireland must also liaise with other state agencies and representative bodies, at local and national levels, to effectively implement and champion positive and practical strategies that will benefit Irish tourism and the Irish economy. In marketing terms, Fáilte Ireland has responsibility for domestic marketing and must also manage a network of nationwide tourist information centres that provide help and advice for visitors to Ireland.

Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a holiday and business tourism destination. It has a presence in 23 markets and aim to reach a global audience of up to 600 million people each year. Tourism Ireland is accountable to the North South Ministerial Council, with funding provided by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, as well as the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland, all of which forms part of the Good Friday Agreement (1998).

In conjunction with these two main tourism bodies is the involvement of local government in tourism development. The role of local government has expanded to include the provision of infrastructure, the development of tourist attractions, support for festivals and events and the implementation of tourist marketing plans at county level (Local Government Management Agency, 2017). The participation of local authorities is not insignificant and should not be underestimated. In March 2017, each local authority launched *Tourism Strategy Statements and Workplans* which are aligned to local, regional and national strategies and plans and, in particular, the Regional Action Plans for Jobs and the Government's tourism policy, 'People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025'. Between 2011 and 2016, the local government sector leveraged a total capital investment of €170.9 million in tourist attractions, with €73.3 million of this investment being made by local authorities, while the matching €97.6 million capital was made by other stakeholders, such as Fáilte Ireland and DTTAS. This investment supported 259 attractions and plans are advancing for a further 121 new tourism products. Over 1,400 events and festivals are supported by local authorities every year, contributing collectively to the local economy.

According to Fáilte Ireland, the collaborative partnership between themselves and local government has been successful in delivering capital projects in County Donegal. Local authorities have aligned their tourism strategy to national development plans and now liaise with Fáilte Ireland on all elements of product development and marketing to ensure that there is no duplication of activity. In County Donegal, an additional number of agencies are also involved in tourism marketing. These include: Donegal Tourism, Inishowen Tourism and Bundoran Tourism. In the case of Donegal Tourism, which was established in 2002 under the auspices of the former Donegal County Development Board, and in partnership with Donegal County Council, it co-ordinates tourism marketing activity in County Donegal and draws its membership from a number of organisations/bodies which include: Donegal County Council, the Irish Hotels Federation, Inishowen Tourism Ltd and Fáilte Ireland North West.

Notwithstanding the positive findings that can be drawn from the extant public sector activity in County Donegal, it could be argued that the lack of a single focal point to drive tourism development and marketing could have the potential to cause confusion for tourism businesses. At a government departmental level, it would appear that the individual agencies are very clear about their specific portfolios.

However, although there is a contention that duplication of public sector effort does not occur, the high level of structural fragmentation calls into question the transparency and efficacy of current tourism structures acting for tourism businesses.

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion of this research will be presented according to the main themes of the survey, which were influenced by an analysis of the key issues emerging from prior research into the role of local tourism entrepreneurs in the development of tourism and destination competitiveness.

i. Awareness of, and participation in, business support interventions

Fáilte Ireland’s Enterprise Development Division provides a range of supports to facilitate business growth and build business and revenue capabilities. The existence of a division to support enterprise in tourism is arguably a demonstration of sound governance and leadership structures to support tourism development. The range of supports provided by the Enterprise Development Division is delivered, principally, through workshops, supplemented by webinars, podcasts and management programmes. In order to establish the level of awareness among tourism businesses of the existence of these supports, respondents were first asked which of the supports they had *heard* about and second, their level of *participation* in the support interventions. Interestingly, almost double the number of respondents answered the question relating to ‘awareness of support’ than answered the question relating to ‘participation in supports offered’, which may indicate a much lower participation level than awareness level among tourism businesses.

Type of Support	Awareness	Participation
Wild Atlantic Way 'Extending the Season' workshop	76% 29	45% 9
'Strategic Sales' workshop	21% 8	5% 1
'Revenue and Distribution Management' workshop (Attractions and Activity Providers)	11% 4	5% 1
Webinars (e.g. 'Tracking and analysing your online traffic')	42% 16	30% 6
Podcasts (e.g. Food Tourism Insights Oct 2016)	16% 6	10% 2
Content Development (for your website)	21% 8	40% 8

Type of Support	Awareness	Participation
Wild Atlantic Way Champions Workshops 2017	58% 22	50% 10
Capability Building Workshops (e.g. 'Connecting and engaging with your visitor attractions')	5% 2	0% 0
Management Programmes (e.g. 'Maximise performance by developing and implementing standards')	13% 5	10% 2
Number of responses received	38	20

ii. Support received from other sources

Respondents were asked whether their business currently receives support from other sources, including the Local Enterprise Board and Donegal County Council. Only 17 out of 41 respondents answered this question, with half of all respondents indicating another source of support other than the Local Enterprise Board and Donegal County Council. Udaras na Gaeltachta was cited as one source of support and another respondent cited project grant aid received from the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. All other respondents in the 'Other' category indicated that no other support is received by their business. The low response rate to this question may indicate a lack of awareness on the part of tourism businesses about the role of local government in tourism development. This is not an entirely unexpected finding given the diffusion of responsibility across public sector agencies for tourism development activity in County Donegal. Crouch's (2011) assertion of the challenge of differing goals of public policy and private enterprise in attaining destination competitiveness, has some relevance here. Where multiple agency involvement exists, delineation of specific responsibility must be transparent if stakeholders are to trust and engage with each other, and if mutually beneficial goals are to be aligned.

Support from other sources–	Responses
Local Enterprise Board	13% 2
Donegal County Council	47% 7
Other (please specify)	53% 8
	17

iii. Perceptions of the level of support received from public sector agencies

A key aim of this research was to gauge not just the extant awareness of, and participation in, available business supports, but also to gain insight into the perceptions held by tourism businesses of the level of support offered by public sector agencies. The findings revealed that perceptions of support received from the Local Enterprise Board are broadly in line with the low numbers reporting this agency as a source of support. Donegal County Council was perceived as providing the highest level of support, with a general awareness of existing supports from Fáilte Ireland being reasonably well distributed across all support categories. This is an interesting finding, given that Fáilte Ireland is the lead agency for tourism development in County Donegal. A mitigating factor here may be the availability of resources (Ateljevic, 2008; Wilson et al. 2001), also referred to as financial infrastructure (Kline and Milburn, 2010). The ability of the County Council to make available significant capital investment for tourist attractions may broaden its perceived level of support over that of Fáilte Ireland, which conversely has limited financial resources at its disposal to distribute at local level.

	No support	Low level of support	Moderate level of support	Moderately high level of support	High level of support	Total	Weighted Average
Fáilte Ireland	12% 5	27% 11	27% 11	17% 7	17% 7	41	3.00
Local Enterprise Office	45% 18	33% 13	15% 6	3% 1	5% 2	40	1.90
Donegal County Council	5% 2	15% 6	26% 10	10% 4	44% 17	39	3.72

iv. Biggest challenges faced by tourism businesses in County Donegal

Another research aim was to identify what key challenges tourism businesses consider to be affecting them in their ability to grow and compete in their tourism field. Citation of seasonality and geographical location as challenges was expected, likewise the uncertainty facing the County Donegal tourism industry arising from Brexit. Another challenge identified by respondents is the difficulty in retaining tourists for longer stays. Other challenges cited by respondents included poor infrastructure; high VAT rate; low skill levels of local staff; lack of infrastructure for cyclists and walkers, such as dedicated cycling and walking paths; lack of or limited access to broadband Internet connection; transport links; and inadequate staffing levels. These challenges support Koh’s (2002:34) contention of the need for

favourable SEP and QEC, which simply means ‘the right type of people and the right type of condition’ to support an active entrepreneurial climate.

A number of these challenges can be regarded as legacy issues that require national attention and funding, such as improvements to the roads infrastructure and the widespread availability of high speed broadband. These are challenges shared by regions throughout the Wild Atlantic Way, and which frequently militate against the tourism entrepreneur in establishing and growing a business base. National government has an active role in policy development and, indirectly, in setting social and economic standards (Ateljevic, 2009). However, local public sector agencies have arguably little power to effect change other than through lobbying and the political influence of local politicians.

Challenges	Responses–
Price competitiveness	0% 0
Seasonality	20% 8
Uncertainty surrounding Brexit	10% 4
Geographical location	10% 4
Transport links	2% 1
Lack of knowledge about how to grow your business	5% 2
Lack of support from Fáilte Ireland in trying to grow your business	5% 2
Not enough tourism business in your region to attract tourists for longer stays	22% 9
Please add any other challenges not listed above.	27% 11
Total number of responses	41

v. Fáilte Ireland Actions to Facilitate Success

When respondents were asked what they would like Fáilte Ireland to do in order to facilitate the success of tourism businesses, many responded that the two key issues which ranked among the highest factors of importance to them were: building online marketing capabilities, and building networks within the tourism community. The importance of collaboration and network development is a recurring theme in

available tourism literature (Dredge, 2004; Bornhorst et al., 2010; Kelliher et al., 2009) and the vital role networking has for tourism entrepreneurs (Wilson et al. 2001; Kline and Milburn, 2010). Interestingly, access to training was considered by respondents to be a low priority for their respective tourism businesses. The effectiveness of currently available training provision was raised by another respondent who indicated that, *'the training days are a nice idea, but ineffective'*. Among other suggestions for support was the need for, *'appropriate training support'*, which may indicate that current training opportunities provided by Fáilte Ireland are not meeting the needs of all tourism businesses.

The need for the development of greater infrastructure for tourist activities was also cited by a respondent as an enabler of tourism development and success. Although natural and cultural resources are an important attraction for tourists visiting the Wild Atlantic Way, the need for a more varied choice of attractions and activities is also critical to retain visitors for longer stays. An additional means of achieving this is suggested by one respondent as being through collaboration with the Causeway Coast in Northern Ireland, *'...so tourists have a longer route and stay longer'*. This finding draws parallels with the work of Ritchie and Crouch (2003) who point to the need for destinations to create added value through, for example, core resources and attractors, in order to achieve destination competitiveness.

A recurring issue in respondents' commentaries was the efficacy of the approach currently adopted in relation to tourism development in County Donegal. One respondent notes that,

'...if Fáilte Ireland are to help failing businesses and increase tourism it would be best to start from the beginning. First of all, understand what it is you are marketing, images of empty coastlines, surfers and fishermen with the odd pub thrown in is great [sic]. Does anyone on the team actually surf, fish or walk or run a pub? Let us show you really how good it is here and also the problems we are facing [sic]. Then you can at least market the good knowing that you're helping or using resources in the right way [sic]...'

This reaffirms the idea of a mismatch between the approach taken by public sector tourism support agencies towards meeting market needs and expectations (Morrison, 2003). Where the market is dominated by small tourism businesses, a mass market approach in providing support will likely fail in meeting the needs of tourism business.

Actions to facilitate success–	Responses–
Provide access to training	3% 1
Help to build networks within the tourism community	24% 9
Provide advice and guidance for business start-ups	3% 1
Marketing expertise online/offline	32% 12
Identify best practice for businesses	5% 2
Ways to maximise business revenue	11% 4
Please add other suggestions:	24% 9
Total number of responses	38

vi. Satisfaction with support received from Fáilte Ireland

Given the importance of the partnership that exists between Fáilte Ireland and tourism businesses in general, a final measure was to quantify the level of satisfaction among tourism providers of the support offered by Fáilte Ireland. Over half of the respondents indicated that they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the level of support provided and, while this does not indicate widespread satisfaction, it does indicate that a reasonable proportion of the respondents do value the support being provided. It is important to acknowledge that the work undertaken by Fáilte Ireland at a local level in County Donegal is for the benefit of tourism stakeholders. High levels of satisfaction from all stakeholders may not be easily achieved given the diverse range of tourism interests and, thus, the diverse range of needs that are to be satisfied.

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total	Weighted Average
22%	32%	29%	14.63%	2.44%	41	2.44
9	13	12	6	1		

Conclusion

Small tourism entrepreneurs form a vital part of the tourism system and, until recently, they have remained relatively under-researched (Komppula, 2014). Tourism is recognised as an instrument for regional development and, while the individual contribution of small tourism business to revenue and employment generation is modest, the collective impact has helped to reduce the negative impacts of rural decline (Ateljevic, 2009). Thus, it is in the interest of all tourism stakeholders to secure its continuing contribution to local economies.

If tourist destinations are to achieve and sustain competitiveness, there needs to be a coordinated approach on the part of all stakeholders. It should not be the sole task of public sector tourism agencies to further the agenda of destination development and competitiveness. Rather, destination competitiveness must be the remit of all stakeholders using a coordinated approach, one where a leadership role to develop stakeholder relationships is assumed by the lead public sector agency. In the case of County Donegal, however, the range of public sector involvement in tourism development would appear to have diminished the clarity with which tourism businesses view and understand the roles of these supporting bodies. The effective management of destination development is a key factor, and a recommendation of this research is that the roles and responsibilities of public sector tourism agencies should be clearly articulated to tourism businesses. Anecdotal evidence suggests that tourism business providers need greater clarity as to these public sector roles and responsibilities, in order to ensure that they know where and how to access the supports that their business requires, in order to enable them to be competitive and to grow exponentially.

Management strategies adopted by the public sector tourism agencies should reflect the specific characteristics of the destination. It is important that the supporting and challenging elements of the destination are identified so that a more conducive entrepreneurial climate can be facilitated. While regions throughout the Wild Atlantic Way share some similar characteristics, it is imprecise to suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach is an efficacious tactic to use in destination development. Training programmes and the availability of mutually beneficial networks are accepted criteria for tourism entrepreneur success (Kline and Milburn, 2010), and it is recommended by the authors of this chapter that a more judicious approach is taken in their development. The entrepreneurial base and particular destination characteristics should be taken into serious consideration when making decisions around appropriate network development and the delivery of training opportunities.

Finally, it is important to note that tourism entrepreneurs have the capacity to deliver products to the tourist as part of the overall destination offer. Fáilte Ireland has succeeded in building a recognisable brand in the Wild Atlantic Way and must now continue to deliver on the destination offer. Entrepreneurial activity in this

context must be enabled if destination competitiveness is to be realised and Fáilte Ireland, along with other relevant public sector agencies, can enable the realisation of this potential through meaningful and transparent partnership with tourism entrepreneurs.

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CHAPTER 2

Measuring the Economic Impact of 'Brexit' through Evidence Based Planning for Tourism

Emmet McLoughlin

Dr James Hanrahan

Introduction

For Irish tourism, 2016 was a remarkable year. The country received record numbers of visitors with hotels at capacity in many destinations. In 2016, the sterling spending visitor market was worth €1.3 billion to Irish tourism, with just under €1 billion being spent by British visitors and the balance from Northern Ireland residents. Dublin Airport had its busiest-ever February in 2017, with passenger numbers up 4% from the same month in the previous year, when a record-breaking 28 million passengers travelled through in 2016 (Gabrielle Monaghan, Sunday Independent, 19/03/2017). However, since the UK vote in June to leave the European Union (EU) and subsequent fall of the pound against the Euro, Ireland is 15% more expensive for British holidaymakers (ITIC, 2017). In addition, uncertainty looms large over the Irish tourism and hospitality industry, about whether travellers from the North (Northern Ireland) will once again face border checks and if visitors from Britain will be restricted from free movement in the EU. While current discourse surrounding the potential fallout from Brexit has focused on the potential impact on trade, or the opportunities to Ireland presented by financial services relocating to Dublin, it is local tourism entrepreneurs who are going to feel the most immediate impact from the UK's departure from the EU. However, Local Authorities have the responsibility for ensuring sustainability and in partnership with their Local Enterprise Office's,

encourage entrepreneurial activity and economic development at local level. While economic factors, such as the generation of foreign exchange, are considered by Baum (1994) to be the prime focus of tourism policy, it is evidence based planning through data collected from tourism indicator systems that can provide Local Authorities with information they need to measure sustainability and to manage tourism activity more effectively. Through the economic indicators of the ETIS, senior planners can track the contribution of tourism to economic sustainability in their county while focusing on supporting local tourism enterprises. Although the immediate impact of Brexit has been modest it does have the potential to damage jobs and economic growth if appropriate policies are not established to mitigate the adverse consequences of Ireland's largest tourism market leaving the EU.

This chapter will explore whether Local Authorities in Ireland are measuring the economic impact of Brexit through evidence based planning for tourism. The authors utilised a multi method approach, comprising of a content analysis of tourism components of every Local Authority county development plan (CDP). This was supplemented with semi-structured interviews with every senior planner in Ireland's Local Authorities. Tourism can assist in the development of the local economy as well as promoting balanced sustainable growth (Hanrahan and McLoughlin, 2015) but, as noted by the ITIC (2017), tourism appears to have been left behind in terms of a strategic and practical support framework, which could prove detrimental to the long term sustainability of tourism enterprises. Through evidence based planning for tourism and the use of the ETIS, Local Authorities can attempt to minimise the fallout from Brexit on their tourism industry through the ongoing measuring of economic impacts.

Measuring the Economic Impact of Brexit through Evidence Based Planning for Tourism

The economic impact of tourism activities is usually estimated on the basis of data on number of arrivals, receipt per tourist, average length of stay and other economic indicators. An assessment of this opportunity cost is imperative for the complete estimations of the economic impact of tourism (Crompton, 1995). Andersson and Lundberg (2013) documented that visitor expenditure always has an alternative use that can be identified by the collection of information. Last year (2016) was considered as the best ever for inward tourism, with the number of visitors climbing 11% to 10.5 million, contributing more than €5.4bn in revenue (Fáilte Ireland, 2017). This industry is driven by strong tourism enterprises together with a strong tourism product. However, it is important to establish how significant tourism spending is to destinations economies. This will allow the relevant Local Authority to determine its dependency on tourism and to develop policies and strategies for the future. Proactive and sustainable planning policies here should enable Local Authorities to harness the economic potential of tourism within their county by providing tourism enterprises with the necessary data on tourism activity and reduce potential leakage.

Figure 1.0: Economic Indicators of the ETIS

Section B: Economic value		
Criteria	Indicator reference#	ETIS core indicators
B.1 Tourism flow (volume and value) at destination	B.1.1	Number of tourist nights per month
	B.1.2	Number of same-day visitors per month
	B.1.3	Relative contribution of tourism to the destination's economy (% GDP)
	B.1.4	Daily spending per overnight tourist
	B.1.5	Daily spending per same-day visitors
B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	B.2.1	Average length of stay of tourists (nights)
	B.2.2	Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation per month and average for the year
B.3 Quantity and quality	B.3.1	Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment in the destination

Source: EC (2016a)

Foreign exchange earnings, income and employment generation are discussed by Cooper et al (2008) as major motivations for including tourism as part of any development strategy. But for too long Local Authorities have relied on a limited range of statistics, such as visitor-arrival numbers and revenue ratings. The majority of which is gathered by organisations such as Fáilte Ireland to determine visitor arrivals and revenue and is made available to all tourism enterprises. However, the measurement of the economic impacts of tourism can be far more multifaceted than simply calculating the level of tourist's expenditure. Cooper et al (2008) discusses how estimates of economic impact of tourism based on tourist expenditure is not only inaccurate, but also very misleading. Head (2008) discusses how evidence has become central to the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. While, several studies have in recent years examined the concept of evidence-based policy-making (Godfrey, 2006; Johnston, 2006; Minogue, 2008; Head, 2008; Nilsson et al, 2008). It was Mangion (2011) who suggested that destinations can benefit significantly by adopting an evidence-based approach to tourism planning. Indeed, tourism indicator systems are recognised as useful tools to facilitate Local Authorities in transiting towards evidence based planning.

The European Commission (EC) has long committed itself to promoting the sustainable development of tourism in Europe. To date, the EC has introduced a number of tools and legislation to facilitate sound management practices by national and local governments. Tourism in Ireland will be extremely vulnerable to Brexit and action is needed now to minimise any downturn (ITIC, 2017). Within Europe, the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) is a specific management, information and monitoring tool intended to contribute to improving the sustainability of tourism destinations. This free indicator system, piloted on twenty-nine different destinations across twenty-nine different countries. The ETIS together with its economic indicators (Figure 1.0) is one such tool that Local Authorities in Ireland can utilise to help track

the contribution of tourism to economic sustainability at local level. Through this particular indicator system, Local Authorities would be able to benchmark data over time. This can then enable senior planners to make informed decisions to improve the long term sustainability of their local tourism industry in the wake of Brexit. To implement this particular indicator system, all Local Authorities would have to do is collect the necessary data and then input it into the excel data sheet to display results. The ETIS has benefited from extensive feedback collected from field testing in a number of diverse destinations throughout Europe. The core indicators of the ETIS have been simplified in the current version (2016), compared to the original tool-kit launched in 2013. This actually makes it easier for Local Authorities to collect data on the core indicators. Several well-known European destinations were piloted in the first phase such as the Valencia region in Spain, the Municipality of Rhodes in Greece and the Burren Geopark in Ireland (EC, 2016a). Miller, Simpson and Twinning-Ward (2012) in their report on existing tourism indicator systems, noted additional research was conducted on 35 different indicator systems from across the world. This was then refined to 20 systems, with those most relevant to the EU analysed in depth. In Ireland, Burren Tourism has adopted the ETIS and will use this indicator system as a framework for measuring and monitoring progress (Clare County Council, 2013), thus providing a solid basis of analysis for implementing sustainable planning for tourism.

The EC's (2016a) aim when developing the ETIS was to improve the sustainable management of destinations through benchmarking by providing a free and easy to implement tool-kit. This process of benchmarking is emphasised by Luque-Martinez and Munoz-Leiva (2005) as they discuss its utilisation through identification, learning and implementation of effective practices and capacities from other destinations. The economic indicators contained within the ETIS would allow Local Authorities to determine both the expenditure of tourists within the destination and their overall length of stay together with the quantity and quality of tourism employment and the percentage of locally produced goods and services. As connecting tourism businesses with local producers and suppliers of tourism related goods and services helps multiply the economic impact of tourism in the destination. Brexit will undoubtedly pose a significant challenge to Irish tourism in both the immediate and longer term. The economic criteria within the ETIS (Figure 1.0) are ideal indicators to facilitate Local Authorities in measuring the economic impact from 'Brexit' thus helping to protect tourism enterprises. However, despite the importance of tourism indicators in the sustainable development of tourism, there exists a fundamental gap in knowledge concerning which body is in fact responsible for their implementation at destination level. Therefore, it is necessary for this chapter to explore whether Local Authorities facilitate evidence based planning for tourism when developing CDPs and if senior planners would be willing to incorporate the ETIS when planning for tourism in the future.

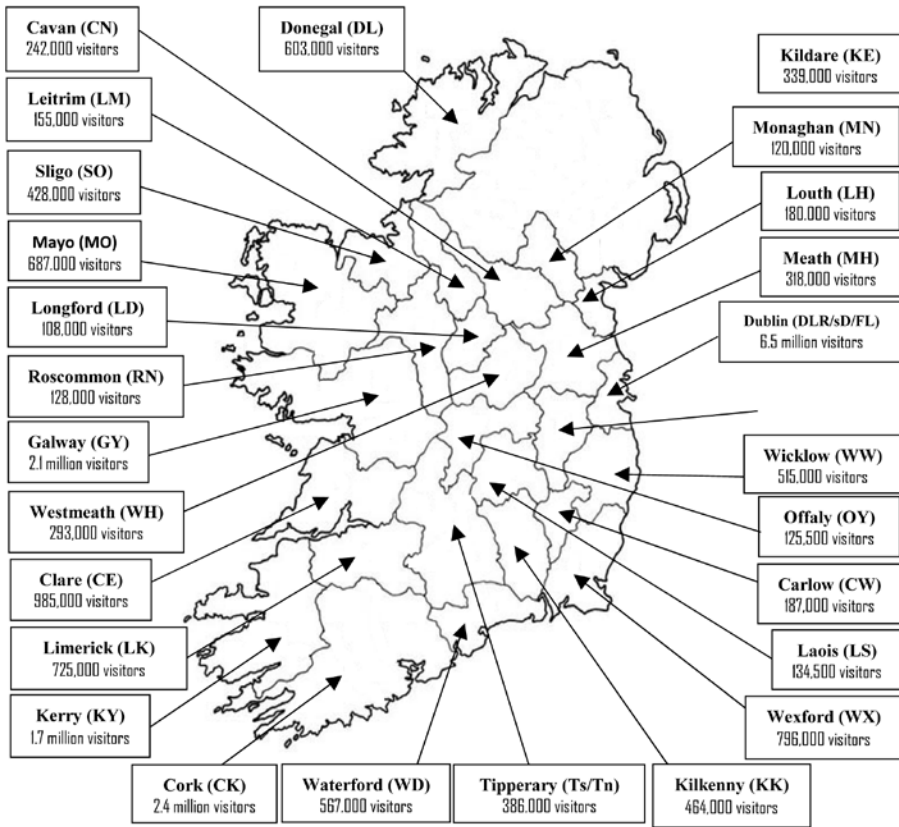
Methodology

This chapter utilised a multi-method approach as this allowed the authors to examine whether Local Authorities are measuring the economic impact of Brexit through evidence based planning from more than one theoretical perspective. As the weaknesses of each single method were compensated by the counterbalancing the strengths of another (Creswell, 1994; Mason, 1996; Bickman and Rog, 1998; Denscombe, 2003; Conaghan, 2013). The view here that both quantitative and qualitative methods were taken as complementary is in line with Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) observation that these two methods can be used appropriately with any research paradigm.

This research was conducted on all Local Authorities in Ireland. The area under the jurisdiction of each of these Local Authorities corresponds to twenty-six of the traditional counties of the Republic of Ireland including the three Dublin administrative counties (see Figure 2.0).

The authors identified and analysed the tourism components of every Local Authority CDP in order to determine whether Local Authorities measured the economic impacts of tourism through evidence based planning. The intention of this analysis was to obtain information that could be examined and patterns extracted. Local Authorities were selected as they have the legal power to reject or grant planning permission for all tourism development projects and their associated infrastructure and are legally obliged to make CDPs. The principle qualitative fieldwork within this study was attained by conducting semi structured interviews with all senior planners conducted on all senior planners in Irelands Local Authorities (see Figure 2.0) who are responsible for drafting and developing tourism components of development plans. This approach facilitated a broad investigation and in-depth constructions into the best approach to facilitate Local Authorities in measuring the economic impact of Brexit through the ETIS in future CDPs. An advantage of this style of interview is that it offers more of an insight into what people think (Clifford and Valentine, 2003). Valentine (1997) however, asserts that the aim of an interview is not to be representative but to understand how individual people experience and make sense of the issue in discussion. A single interview was conducted with each senior planner.

Figure 2.0: Map of Irelands Local Authorities and visitor arrivals



Key: Local authorities are abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal

Number of visitors comprises both domestic and international arrivals to the specific County for the year 2016

To facilitate the constant comparison throughout the research process and to illustrate any variations between the Local Authorities, the data was manually inputted into a content analysis tool for each CDP. The data from each category was then analysed and discussed in the context of current international literature and their connection with other Local Authority development plans. A single interview was conducted with each senior planner in 2016. All references to a particular Local Authority were removed from planner responses to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondent. The data was then analysed with the help of the NVivo 10 software package, which is one of the most widely used qualitative data analysis computer software package (Veal, 2011:401). Both the methodological procedures yielded a 100% success rate.

Results and Discussion

The continued growth in visitor arrivals to Ireland necessitates the need for the economic impacts of tourism to be measured and benchmarked year on year. From the content analysis it was found that more than half of all tourism components within Local Authority CDPs were found to support the positive economic impacts of tourism through policy provision. This finding is consistent with current theory on the symbolic relationship between tourism and foreign exchange earnings, generation of income, employment and regional and local development (Mason, 2016). Cooper et al (2008) does warn that such contributions can, cause inflation, opportunity costs and over dependence on tourism as an industry. Thus, the constant measuring of these impacts by Local Authorities are of critical importance for future sustainability of Irish tourism in the wake of Brexit.

Despite a number of counties receiving a significant percentage of visitor arrivals (see Table 1) no Local Authority had made provisions within their CDP for analysing tourism flow (volume and value). Furthermore, no Local Authority was found to incorporate tourism indicator systems when planning for tourism. This suggests that senior planners are having to operate in the dark when making development plans as they are without the necessary data on tourism activity. Also without such data collection procedures, senior planners would be unable to determine their dependency on tourism and to develop policies around this. Findings here illustrate an unwillingness among Local Authorities to measure the impacts of tourism and base policy on evidence. Therefore, it is necessary to determine whether senior planners would be willing to incorporate the ETIS in future tourism planning in the wake of Brexit and its potential to impact negatively on Irish tourism.

Table 1: Measuring the economic impact of Brexit through evidence based planning for tourism

Local Authorities measuring the economic impact from Brexit	Local Authorities in Ireland (abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal)																				% Total									
	CW	CN	CE	CK	DL	DLR	SD	FL	GY	KK	KE	KY	LS	LM	LK	LH	LD	MH	MO	MN		OY	RN	SO	TY	WD	WH	WX	WW	
Tourist numbers expressed as a % of total arrivals to county	1.9	2.4	10	27	6	64	64	64	23	4.8	3.2	20	1.4	1.6	8	2	0.9	2.9	8	1.6	1.3	1.1	4	2.3	2.3	6	2.9	8.6		
Positive economic impacts of tourism supported	x	x	x	x	x				x	x	x	x					x	x			x	x			x	x				54%
Analysis of tourism flow (volume and value)																														0%
Use of tourism indicator systems when developing tourism																														0%
Use of the ETIS when developing tourism																														0%
Aware of the European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destinations (ETIS)?			x	x			x				x							x												24%
Willing to utilise the economic value indicator tool of the ETIS	x			x						x	x				x	x			x									x	x	50%

Tourism competitiveness is closely linked to its sustainability (EC, 2016a). With one in nine people in Ireland employed within the tourism and hospitality sector, it is essential that policy makers act now to ensure the protection of tourism jobs and the future competitiveness of the industry (ITIC, 2017). One such tool is the ETIS which through its economic indicators, has the ability to measure the economic impact of Brexit at local level.

However, the majority of senior planners implied that they were unaware of the ETIS:

'I have never heard of such a system' (Planner 5).

'No I never heard of it, sorry' (Planner 28).

This suggests that the ETIS has not been communicated down to the majority of planning departments within Irelands Local Authorities. If unaware of this particular indicator system, how would senior planners be expected to implement it to measure the economic impact of Brexit. When asked whether senior planners would be willing to utilise the economic value indicator that compromise the ETIS, which is an ideal tool to measure the economic impact of Brexit. More than half of senior planners confirmed that their Local Authority would not be in a position to utilise this tool:

'Currently no, I doubt with the current resources available, that this would change any time soon' (Planner 24).

'The use of such indicator tools would all depend on staffing levels, resources and funding. The availability of such at the moment might pose a problem' (Planner 7).

This would suggest that for Local Authorities in Ireland to measure the economic impact of Brexit through evidence based planning, it would need to be adequately resourced and funded. As an industry, tourism is Ireland's largest indigenous sectoral employer providing over 220,000 jobs throughout the length and breadth of the country (ITIC, 2017). However, it is clear from the responses that senior planners do not have the time and necessary resources in place to utilise the ETIS. Brexit poses a real and imminent danger to Irish tourism and appropriate resources to facilitate evidence based planning that can measure the economic impact of Brexit needs to be allocated to support the future sustainability of such a key industry. This process for incorporating the ETIS however, may be effectively co-ordinated through specific approaches identified by senior planners themselves.

A number of senior planners acknowledged the need for the ETIS to be a legal requirement in order in to ensure its implementation nationwide:

'I would be of the opinion that it would need to be made legal requirement, that way you would have the will at all levels to utilise these indicators' (Planner 4).

'For the likes of things like indicators and specific tourism planning tools and documents, if they are not included in the national planning framework then they wouldn't be considered at local level. There are simply too many other issues that require our attention' (Planner 3).

The above senior planner (Planner 3) acknowledges the need for the ETIS to be included in the national planning framework for it to have a chance of being implemented at local level. The issue of funding too, was notable throughout the responses with the majority of senior planners stating that more funding needs to be made available before they would consider utilising this tourism indicator system:

'Well I think funding would need to be made available, this would be critical in facilitating its implementation nationwide' (Planner 21).

'First and foremost, we would need funding to be allocated' (Planner 28).

While, findings identify the need for additional funding to enable senior planners implement the ETIS. No funding would be required initially for Local Authorities in Ireland to implement the ETIS, as the tool-kit simply has to be downloaded. Besides, funding for evidence based planning for tourism in Ireland has not been provided in the past, so this approach would therefore seem improbable. A number of senior planners suggested the best approach to implement the ETIS in the future would be to promote its use among Local Authorities in Ireland. Also another approach was to recognise a particular Local Authority's achievements in implementing the ETIS. Blancas et al (2015) in their study on tourism indicators in Europe suggest that supranational institutions should make an effort in promoting the importance of indicators for policy makers to implement policies based on real data. The ITIC (2017) warns that appropriate policy must be in place to allow Irish businesses cope with the immediate challenges of Brexit. While these approaches suggested by senior planners might facilitate the implementation of the ETIS. To overcome any potential apathy or opposition within Local Authorities when it comes to evidence based planning, it is clear that the use of the ETIS needs to be made a legal requirement. This could help ensure all Local Authorities collect the necessary data on tourism activity and allow senior planners to develop tourism policy to respond to the challenges of Brexit.

Conclusion

Evidence based planning for tourism can be regarded as an ideal approach to measure the economic impact of Brexit. Regrettably tourism has been poorly served by Local Authorities in relation to measuring its economic impacts and placing policy on evidence. Despite the majority of Local Authorities supporting the positive economic impacts of tourism through policy provision within their legally required development plans. Considering that Irelands tourism industry will

be uniquely exposed to the consequences of Brexit, findings highlight a complete lack of evidence based planning for tourism. It is clear that the impacts on tourism are not being treated with the same degree of urgency and importance by Local Authorities as other sectors of the local economy. The free ETIS indicator system and its economic indicators are ideal tools to enable Local Authorities to develop appropriate policy responses to allow tourism entrepreneurs cope with the immediate challenges of Brexit. However, this study has established that a lack of resources in terms of funding and legal frameworks were found to have a profound effect on facilitating its use by senior planners. Tourism is extremely vulnerable to Brexit and action is needed now by Local Authorities to minimise any downturn in tourism activity and to protect new and existing tourism enterprises. If we want to see evidence based planning employed by Local Authorities in Ireland when planning for tourism, it may need to be required by law. Otherwise they need to adequately fund and staff the data collection process.

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CHAPTER 3

Communities – Doing it for Themselves?

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Introduction

Traditionally the definition of heritage focused on historic sites and buildings. It was expert-dominated with professionals and academics dictating views on conservation and management. This resulted in a narrow selective interpretation of what deserved to be conserved, interpreted and presented (Fojut 2009). The definition of heritage, however, has since broadened to encompass the tangible and intangible landscape (UNESCO 2003), and includes the processes and concepts surrounding the enrichment of the cultural life of a community (Palmer 2009) as well as by which the inherited world is understood and contextualised (Fairclough 2009).

The definition of heritage, therefore, is no longer simply about the past, but the modern day use of elements of the past for current needs (Timothy and Boyd 2003). This includes the development of heritage as a product in tourism and as a resource for community development and cohesion. Thus, heritage, while it refers to the inheritance from the past, can be of benefit to and become an instrument of the present and play an active role in the future (Nolan 1992; Breathnach 2003). Indeed, some would argue that the main functions of heritage are contemporary that is, economic, social and even political (Ashworth 2008) and that the outcomes as well as the processes are rooted in the needs and values of the present such as tourism.

Heritage tourism complements community tourism. Often it is the community who is best placed to protect their own heritage (Feehan 1994), to identify the potential resources available and to have the vision of how the locality can become a tourist destination with a potential for community development. The results of this positive synergy between tourism and community include a vibrant community within which sustainable tourism development can take place, one which recognises the potential negative impacts on the host community (Atkočiūnienė 2009). Community-based tourism is run by and for the local community with the term 'community' generally defined in the geographical sense and in which the community is the resource and the product. Community-based tourism, an important element of sustainable tourism (Maiden 2008; Atkočiūnienė 2009), involves an increasing emphasis on the active participation of the community in the planning and management of processes that impact on the community, including tourism.

Directing tourism growth to meet the needs and interests of the local community can greatly enhance the value of tourism and the community's sustainable development (Beban and Ok 2006). The increase in the importance of 'the local', the changed view of the role of experts and the impact of sustainable development have all increased the importance of local heritage, rather than concentrating on the tourism 'honey-pots' endorsed by experts and local authorities (Fairclough 2009). The idea of destination tourism or regional tourism, as outlined in recent tourism strategy (DTTS 2015), acknowledges that more should be done to concentrate on community projects in addition to more established sites. This would bring tourism more in line with sustainable tourism practices which is best achieved by enhancing the commitment of local communities (Hanrahan 2010).

The Irish Heritage Council recognises that the community needs to be actively involved in developing their future. They believe that, increasingly, people will come to value more the hidden potential of their local landscape and that the development of their community will be based on appreciating their heritage (Heritage Council 2015). This offers an official recognition that communities are at the heart of tourism and in the stories and encounters that visitors wish to experience. Community control and engagement in tourism can play a vital role in the community's development and long-term sustainability (Hall 2005), as well as in the subsequent preservation and increased appreciation of heritage in the community. The community is regarded as a repository of tourist resources and, hence, it is argued that community is a resource for tourism (Murphy 1983, 1985).

The Heritage Council recently held a workshop and conference on 'Realising the Hidden Potential of Ireland's Towns.' The subsequent publication of the document, 'Policies and Priorities for their Future' (2015) is an indication of the increasing awareness of the importance of community and heritage in Ireland. This awareness is grounded in the rhetoric of community that has emanated from Europe in recent years. This dialogue is beginning to have an impact on the ground in Ireland with

greater recognition of the importance of community in national and regional development policies (DAHG 2017; DAHG 2015; DPEF 2014; CEDRA 2014; DECLG 2012) as well as with tourism initiatives (DTTS 2015). They encourage active community participation, moving away from passively enjoying the benefits of tourism, and identify strategies for an integrated approach to rural development and towards national sustainable growth and development. Local Development Programmes aim to encourage rural tourism built on principals such as the sustainable development of Ireland's cultural heritage and maintaining, restoring and upgrading the built heritage (Forfas 2013).

There can be local involvement in many of the aspects of local tourism including the initiation, decision-making, planning, responsibility and management of tourism projects. This is a bottom-up as opposed to a top-down approach. It does not necessarily imply that at all stages it must be exclusively community-led. Endogenous development does not imply the absence of external inputs (Saxena and Ilbery 2008). There need often exists for external assistance for community groups. Local communities may not possess the knowledge or resources needed to develop their tourism (Tosun, 2000). While it may be recommended that the community play a large part in defining the objectives for their region, as opposed to the government, it may be necessary for the community to partner with the government and/or external agencies in order to develop a tourism plan that will benefit the community and all of its stakeholders (Simpson 2008). Many community projects benefit from partnership with government, public or semi-public agencies. The European Union (EU) has concentrated a lot of programmes into community initiatives, especially rural initiatives through such programmes as Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale (LEADER). These have had many positive and sustainable benefits for local communities. Also, what has been central with many of these programmes is that the agencies facilitate rather than dictate community programmes and work within a collaborative framework.

Collaboration

Collaboration is one of the recognised success factors in tourism, particularly in rural and community based tourism. It is linked to sustainable tourism development (Jamal and Getz 1995; Bramwell and Lane 2000; Sautter and Leisen 1999; Hall 2000) and, therefore, linked to community based tourism in the context of participation (Tosun 2000). Encouraging partnership and collaboration are central tenets to attaining successful community tourism (Rocharungsat 2005; Dwyer 2014). Collaboration may involve a number of stakeholders including: the local community, local authorities, tourism agencies and development companies. Cooperation occurs when independent stakeholders recognise the advantage of working together, rather than in isolation (Gorman 2005; Palmer 2002). It has been argued (Wilson et al 2001) that collaboration in a tourist destination is a conceptual determinant of

success. This is especially applicable in rural tourism where, by their nature, rural businesses often need to work together in order to create or develop a tourism experience (Gorman and Mottiar 2015; Dinis 2011). It also reflects the fact that rural tourism is embedded in its place or location and that its success is linked to the development of other enterprises in the area as well as to a community's sense of place attachment (Gorman and Mottiar 2015).

There is a greater need for collaboration as relationships between stakeholders tend to be underdeveloped in rural areas (Gorman and Mottiar 2015). Clustering tourism groups together would help to combat the decline in visitor numbers in peripheral areas (ITIC 2015). Cooperation in the tourism sector has been recognised as beneficial, especially in peripheral regions (Morrison 1998). Tourism developments such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and the Mayo Greenway have all developed collaborative strategies which have contributed to their overall success. The conversion of the deconsecrated Church of Ireland Kilfinaghty Church in Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare, into a public library is an example of effective collaboration. This was initially a community project, but such was the state of disrepair of the building that the committee realised they needed for external assistance. This resulted in a partnership with Clare County Council and FÁS. Thus, a community-led and project-managed initiative culminated in a public amenity (Clare Champion 2001). These examples demonstrate some of the reasons why collaboration is encouraged, as working together allows individuals and communities to achieve more than they could on their own. This synergy gives empowerment to communities rather than power imposed on them (Harvey 2012). Collaborative projects such as those already mentioned, also result in a community having an increased sense of ownership and empowerment, as the community is actively involved and engaged in the project from the start.

Assistance may also be in the form of external funding and may include additional supports such as capacity-building in the form of training or mentoring. In terms of specialised areas such as heritage, assistance may come in the form of funding or additional supports like specialised training or mentoring from the Heritage Council. The Heritage Council has twenty-eight heritage officers, all of whom work with local communities and local authorities using a collaborative and partnership approach. When local communities do not have relevant skills, these heritage officers can provide professional advice and support, training, education and they can also coordinate services. They assist in the coordination of heritage plans and offer professional advice to local authorities and community groups on best practise in heritage conservation and management. Heritage officers act as an interface between the professionals and the communities (Guinan 2012).

Methodology

This chapter is based on findings from the researcher's observations and immersion at the case study of Ballyhoura Fáilte, County Limerick. Observation and immersion approaches are examples of methodologies used in other heritage tourism studies (Hamilton and Alexander 2013). A case study can be used to describe events, processes and relationships as well as for the exploration of key issues. The immersion approach is about gaining an understanding of the relationship between factors operating within a specific social setting, allows for comparisons to be made and helps form explanations of causes, processes and relationships. It is a research approach which focuses on individual instances, rather than a wide spectrum of the issue that is to be investigated. That is, to illuminate the general by looking at the particular (Denscombe 2011). The limited number of case-studies in Ireland, in terms of heritage tourism in the context of community development, highlights the importance of this type of case study research at the micro-level. This chapter includes observations and presentations by stakeholders in Ballyhoura Fáilte on a cultural tourism event that the researcher assisted in organising as part of the research methodology. The research is exploratory and its focus on community and heritage tourism is pertinent, given the increased focus in government strategies (DTTS 2015; DAHG 2017). The research process is of an on-going and continuing process with which to extrapolate data.

Case Studies

Ballyhoura Fáilte is a designated activity-based company established specifically to promote tourism and recreation activities across a broad range of communities in the so-called Ballyhoura Country area of County Limerick. Ballyhoura Fáilte has access to a high level of tourism and possesses potential for tourism opportunities in the largely rural areas of the county. Its remit is to showcase examples of areas with different levels and types of tourism development from which to assess stakeholder engagement at different stages and in different strategies of tourism development. Indeed, its promotional tag-line is: *'Ballyhoura Country – simply different.'* The two case studies examined in this chapter are both based on heritage projects. The first is the Thomas Fitzgerald Centre which is an example of a community-based project that was developed during the recent economic recession and which is operated by a small volunteer base. It is situated and housed in the Old Courthouse building in Bruff, County Limerick. It represents the historic links between Bruff and the Fitzgerald Kennedy family and includes the Fitzgerald Family Tree Mural, as well as displays showcasing memorabilia relating to President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (Ballyhoura Fáilte, 2017). The second is Lough Gur Development, a Co-operative Society set up in 1993 and whose membership is comprised local residents and organisations. This community project is an example of an established community co-operative. It is a not-for-profit community organisation that

promotes and preserves over 6,000 years of local history and natural beauty. Lough Gur Development operates a visitors' centre and the Honey Fitz Theatre, as well as organises local festivals and events. It consists of voluntary community of local members and associated organisations (Lough Gur Development 2017).

Findings of the Case Study

The Ballyhoura region is rich in natural, archaeological and cultural heritage. The area is served by a large number of small to medium sized towns. It was a region that was previously very reliant on agriculture, which left the people of the region extremely vulnerable and disadvantaged in the recession of the 1980s. This was a particularly difficult time for the local people as the population decreased dramatically due, mainly, to emigration of younger people in the community, leaving an older population behind. This emigration resulted in a deterioration of local infrastructure and a decreasing quality of life for the people of the area. Rural tourism was identified as a lever for economic development and growth, as well as offering a means of diversifying away from agriculture, which was historically the local economic mainstay (Respondent 1). The development of rural tourism is often seen as important from the standpoint of diversification created by tourism, which helps communities that are often dependent on one type of industry, namely agriculture (Beban and Ok 2006; Dwyer 2014). Indeed, it could be argued that tourism in many rural areas has gone from being a primarily passive element to becoming a highly active and dominant agent of change in rural communities (Butler 1997). Part of this development has been led by the communities themselves in conjunction with agencies, such as Local Development Companies, with whom there this considerable potential for tourism and economic development to be harnessed.

Ballyhoura Fáilte was formed in 1986 as a co-operative. The founding members included stakeholders in potential tourism activity, such as accommodation providers, farmers offering educational facilities and the Kilfinane Educational Centre. These stakeholders worked in conjunction with the community around the base of the Ballyhoura mountain range. Initially, the focus was on specific aspects of tourism, such as tour packages to coach companies, but it soon included a cutting edge initiative of co-operative marketing, which remains a focus of promotion today (Respondent 1). The co-operative marketing undertaken by tourism businesses in Ballyhoura could be described as a 'hard' network as it is mainly economically focused and requires formal agreements (Saxena and Ilbery 2008). The inherent ethos complies with Morrison's (1998) definition of co-operation as it is between one or more tourism provider and seeks to add to their marketing competencies by combining elements of their resources with their partners, for mutual benefit. The Ballyhoura collaborative marketing links attractions, events, activities, accommodation providers and food providers in order to promote and spread tourism numbers around the region. The exogenous

support from Ballyhoura Country (a subsidiary of Ballyhoura Development Company), means that these businesses have an online social media presence linked with each business, all of whom promote each other and who depend on Ballyhoura Country to provide specialised training and valuable links to external markets. These are opportunities that, individually, the businesses would not be able to afford (Respondent 1). This collaborative marketing does not just focus on business support, but also promotes a product, local heritage, and has developed heritage trails and genealogy tourism, all of which links in with local businesses and communities in the wider region.

Tourism as a product has been embraced by local people and the communities of the area served by Ballyhoura Country. Many businesses have diversified into tourism, but it was identified through the case studies that more than just tourism was needed for economic development. People needed to be supported with regard to entering into employment and training needed to be provided. As this awareness and dialogue was taking place in a small, rural village in County Limerick, a similar dialogue was occurring at EU level, with similar challenges being identified at a local level throughout Europe. It was from of this EU conversation that LEADER came into being. This European rural support and funding mechanism was to be the focus for Ballyhoura Development, which is a Local Development Company, and separate to Ballyhoura Fáilte. In the first round of LEADER funding, during the 1990s, 181 local people received supplementary income in the area, 220 new jobs were created and 77 community projects were funded. This had a significant and positive impact on this small rural area (Respondent 1).

With regard to the continued development of tourism in the area, there were challenges facing the communities and tourism businesses of the Ballyhoura region. Geographically the area is very widespread and there were no so-called tourism 'honey pots' in the area with which to attract large numbers of visitors. Yet, it was recognised that communities would need to work together in order to gain an edge in the competitive tourism market. Indeed, Ballyhoura Fáilte is partner-driven and does not work in isolation. It works with various communities, but also with other agencies like tourism officers at local authority level as well as nationally, with Fáilte Ireland. These partnerships are important, not only for exposure, but also for access to funding (Respondent 1).

Ballyhoura Fáilte prides itself in its continued planning for tourism development. An example of this is the research undertaken on the tourism products available in the region. The Ballyhoura Cluster Initiative proposed that Ballyhoura could become a first-class rural Irish holiday destination for independent and special interest visitors, especially those looking for an integrated rural tourism experience (Tourism Development Resources 2003). Integrated Rural Tourism is linked to sustainability. It recognises the role of collaboration among stakeholders (Bramwell and Lane 2000). For this potential to be fully realised, it became clear that would need to be

cooperation and partnership between Ballyhoura Fáilte, the tourism trade and other stakeholders (Tourism Development Resources 2003).

The development of tourism clusters, networks, co-operatives, collaborations and partnerships demonstrates the determination of local communities and rural regions to develop tourism for their mutual benefit. Regional and rural businesses are often observed as clustering together to transform into larger economies, with collectively more tourism services on offer (Pavlovich 2003). Networking is an important aspect of Integrated Rural Tourism as it links local and diverse stakeholders together in order to promote and maintain economic, social, cultural, natural and human resources of the localities in which these community models occur. It is mainly sustained by social networks (Saxena and Ilbery 2008). Criteria for successful collaboration include the recognition of stakeholder interdependence and the perception for each partner, that benefits can be derived from their collaboration (Jamal and Getz 1995; Czernek 2013). A tourism network can be a set of formal, co-operative relationships between appropriate organisations, stimulating knowledge-sharing and a sense of community and collective common purpose, that may be of mutual benefit the stakeholders as well as being of benefit to the tourism destination, so that tourism businesses that would normally work in isolation, can collaborate and develop a successful tourism product and destination. Tourism networks and clusters can result in collaborative marketing, knowledge-sharing, innovation, opportunities to join other networks and to access and share resource development (Novelli et al 2006).

A number of tourism clusters were proposed for Ballyhoura Fáilte, including a Heritage Hub. It was realised that partnerships were important for exposure of visitor sites and, also, as leverage to access funding. With the development of Heritage Hubs, the local heritage of the area was acknowledged as being a potential resource for enterprising communities (Respondent 1). This, in turn, would not just result in a further economic stimulus for the region, but also in the preservation of local heritage sites and the revitalisation of rural community cohesion and development. This resulted in an increased focus on the symbiotic relationship of community and heritage, the results of which can still be seen and appreciated in the area today. Indeed, these initiatives continue to develop and evolve in a changing political/administrative landscape through LEADER and national alignment policies. This focus on local heritage was supported through a number of training initiatives, including tour guide training, genealogy workshops and training with a Historic Graves project. This would ensure that visitors could experience an authentic engagement with local people in the community who would also be able to guide the visitors properly to the various sites, accommodation and other services available in the region. It also ensures a level of local ownership in their heritage as a tourism product (Respondent 1).

The Thomas Fitzgerald Centre and Lough Gur Development are both part of a rural heritage cluster that Ballyhoura Fáilte supports and promotes in the region. The

Fitzgerald Centre in Bruff is an example of how a small, local voluntary group can benefit from collaboration with external agencies, such as Ballyhoura Fáilte. They benefit from the co-operative marketing of Ballyhoura Fáilte and they are included on one of their heritage trails and are represented in a Heritage Hub. Without this invaluable support, the Thomas Fitzgerald Centre would not have the funding for such promotion or development. Founder members of the centre themselves suggest that, when they first began operating, they were naïve with regards to knowledge of the tourism industry and potential tourist markets. They did not appreciate the pulling-power of larger tourism sites or the negative impact this could have on smaller towns and villages that were not on a primary tourist route. They also did not appreciate, by their own admission, the difficulties of gaining access or interest from established package tours. The feedback they have received from engaging with tourism agencies is that places should pool together with other established tourist facilities nearby and form a Heritage Hub of their own (Respondent 2).

Lough Gur Development is another example of a community group that has been enhanced through collaboration with Ballyhoura Fáilte. In the 1980s, the local community took over the visitor centre from Shannon Heritage. The local community felt that Shannon Heritage did not have the time to devote to Lough Gur, as it concentrated only on what were considered their tourism ‘honey pots’ in the Western region. Lough Gur Development was formed and restored the visitor centre, which re-opened in 2013. They now have 25 community members and rely heavily on local volunteer workers. The development has benefited greatly from collaboration with Ballyhoura Development. They have one person fulfilling many roles, including manager of the centre and being responsible for online social media promotion. Their collaboration with Ballyhoura Fáilte means they can be included in that organisation’s promotion and social media campaigns (Respondent 3). This provision of an authentic rural heritage and cultural experience based on a so-called ‘hub and spoke’ system was one of the aims of the Ballyhoura Attractions Cluster Development Strategy (Tourism Development Resources 2003). While it may not always be easy to work together, as individual sites and groups may have their own agendas and want to mind their own space, there is the realisation that you are also connecting to other sites with a flow of visitors being sent to the various areas through the central Ballyhoura Fáilte hub, to other ‘spokes’ or tourist sites in the area (Respondent 3).

For the past three years, Lough Gur has also been in the top three TripAdvisor sites to visit in Ireland (Trip Advisor 2015). This is quite a considerable achievement, bearing in mind that they have a €200 advertising budget, in comparison to the commercial machines of other tourist sites in the Western region. Their association with Ballyhoura Fáilte also means extra leverage when it comes to accessing national tourism campaigns. They are now a key site in Fáilte Ireland’s tourism campaign, ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’. This has resulted in national television, radio and newspaper

coverage, which would have been difficult to achieve otherwise (Respondent 3). It will also mean that Lough Gur will be part of Fáilte Ireland's domestic and international tourist promotional campaigns with tour operators (Respondent 1). The growth in visitor numbers to the Lough Gur area reflects the motivation and appreciation the community have in their local heritage, and their belief that it can be developed as a resource in order to revitalise tourism. This community and board members' commitment is also seen in the Lough Gur co-operative's application for a social investment loan of €75,000 (Respondent 3).

Challenges Facing Community Organisations

There are many challenges facing community groups and agencies like Ballyhoura Fáilte. The current European Rural Development Programme includes rural economic development incorporating rural tourism as one of its themes, and has identified culture and heritage as areas of significant potential (DAFM 2014). Funding, however, at the sub-regional level for the new LEADER programme, has seen reduced budgets for many areas (West Cork Development Programme 2015). This is part of the local government realignment reform, 'Putting People First' (DECLG 2013). This government reform aims to create a system of local development, based on the success of the LEADER approach, in order to develop a framework to support the development of sustainable rural communities (DAFM 2014). The intention is to provide opportunities for more active participation of communities in local development. It centralises the Rural Development Programme funding under the auspices of local authorities and proposes to centralise local development as a role of local government. This local development reform, however, has led to much debate over how engaged communities will actually be as a result. Michael Starlett (2014), chief executive of the Irish Heritage Council, has observed that there is evidence of a growing disconnect between government and its agencies and local communities. He proffered that local heritage may be an avenue to explore with regard to finding a solution with which to reconnect on common ground for mutual benefit for all. This demonstrates the value of local heritage as a tool in community development and rural tourism.

Other challenges faced by local community groups and which are specific to heritage projects, include funding for maintenance of historic sites like the old courthouse in Bruff, now the Thomas Fitzgerald Centre, which needs regulated indoor heating as part of its conservation management. This costs €360 every two months. On-going maintenance is often carried out by volunteers and is seen as just 'bandaging' the problem, yet without their input, this historic building would quickly fall into disrepair. This local community group was established in 2008, at a time when Ireland was experiencing an economic recession which resulted in funding for heritage projects being reduced. The Thomas Fitzgerald Centre has often had to source money from Church Gate Collections, community raffles and donations. If funding

was made available it could, in addition to maintenance, be used to attract more tourist foot-fall to the centre (Respondent 2).

Recruiting and maintaining volunteer-based groups is an issue that faces many local community groups. It is difficult to recruit young people as volunteers for heritage initiatives and yet, it is the young people who will be the custodians of heritage moving forward. It is important, therefore, to engage with young people. This is a challenge identified by committee members at the Thomas Fitzgerald Centre. They report that, despite their best efforts, it is difficult to get young people engaged in heritage. One difficulty is getting young people to understand that heritage is different to history, because quite often the perception is that these local projects are all about history. The one project which did result in interaction with local younger people achieved this by collecting old photographs of the community to be published in a book. The Thomas Fitzgerald Centre had considerable local interaction, with many young people sending in photographs via online social media (Respondent 2). This illustrates the importance of place, not just with local people in general, but younger generations too and demonstrates the close association people have with heritage and place.

Lough Gur found a difficulty with the life-cycle of the volunteer and that it is a dynamic that must be handled delicately. The number of volunteers is currently starting to decrease as the initial euphoria and motivation when they first began renovating the centre begins to wane. The volunteers now see that the centre is up and running, so they are inclined to take a step back. They are fortunate in that the centre is attracting a new wave of volunteers, which demonstrates the constant cycle of a volunteer-based community. However, they have the added difficulty in that their volunteers are working alongside paid community programme workers. These workers also pose a challenge, as there is a turnover of staff every nine months on the employment schemes and, therefore, just as they have trained their staff to a high quality they have to move on (Respondent 3).

A further challenge identified by the Thomas Fitzgerald Centre was the imposition of corporate governance for community groups. Such is the difficulty with it that one Respondent conceded that he would not recommend any young person to get involved with volunteering for a community group. They have a committee of five or six people, who are all actively involved with the group, but they find that more and more of their time is taken up with volunteering and filling out paperwork for funding applications and corporate governance training (Respondent 2). A benefit of being aligned with Ballyhoura Fáilte is that such training is offered, but also time must be allotted to fill out applications.

The success of Lough Gur is also a potential challenge for the future. Visitor numbers have risen from 2,000 visitors to the heritage centre in 2006, to 45,000 visitors in 2015 to and a further 132,500 accessing the lakefront. This will lead to future issues

regarding the capacity of the site (Respondent 3). Their visitor numbers, however, are starting to level-off. This raises another concern in that their main visitor typology is the culturally curious, which is a smaller sector than other tourism typologies, and may be more difficult to attract moving forward. Options to attract visitors include the development of a children's playground. It is difficult for one of the respondents, however, to reconcile with the fact that it may take a children's playground to attract visitors to what is an internationally significant archaeological site with over 1,000 monuments of historical importance (Respondent 3).

Summary

The case study of Ballyhoura Fáilte and the community groups it collaborates with draws attention to the tourism potential of local heritage resources within a rural community. It illustrates how community tourism capacity can be developed and enhanced through a collaborative approach between community voluntary organisations and external agencies, such as, in this case, Ballyhoura Fáilte. It further outlines the benefits of such collaborations, but also highlights the continued challenges that face community initiatives. Some of these challenges are specific to local heritage such as the continued preservation of a historic building, or the development of a natural landscape. Other challenges can be identified with community organisations in general, such as continued lack of corporation of a volunteer workforce as well as the organisational difficulties that come with collaboration with external agencies, such as the implementation of corporate governance. Underlying this is the uncertainty surrounding the changing political and administrative landscape of LEADER as well as national alignment policies. The case study of Ballyhoura Fáilte, however, demonstrates the potential success of the symbiotic relationship of heritage and community utilised to the advantage of both in terms of tourist potential. Community groups which can find strength in each other and support from an external agency, such as Ballyhoura Fáilte, can bring tourist success to a different level.

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CHAPTER 4

The Role of the Local Producer in the Sustainability of Cultural Traditions

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Introduction

This chapter examines the role of the local food producer in sustaining cultural traditions. The survival of local, distinct cultural traditions around the world faces many challenges. These challenges stem largely from one phenomenon, namely, globalisation. Although native and indigenous foods, along with traditional cooking methods and those who produce and practice such traditions, are all key aspects in a local area’s distinctive cultural identity, none of these aspects have not escaped the influence of globalisation. Food tourism, however, is merited as a defence to these threats throughout the world, not least in Ireland. In recent years, Ireland has significantly advanced its food tourism sector, which can be observed in the increasing number of farmers’ markets, food festivals, cookery schools and restaurants, allowing the country to retain and develop its cultural food traditions (Fáilte Ireland, 2010; O’Connor *et al.*, 2007). This chapter investigates whether or not local Irish producers, through the medium of food tourism, have a role to play in sustaining a region’s cultural traditions. Three locations in the south and southwest of Ireland were chosen as areas within which to conduct case studies: Cork’s English Market and the towns of Kinsale and Dingle. Research was carried out through in-depth interviews with food tourism representatives, including farmers’ market members, artisan producers, restaurateurs, stall-holders, and food festival

organisers. Data was analysed through the grounded-theory method and resulted in the generation of a number of themes, including the role of the local producer, which is the focus of this chapter. Findings from this research project illustrate that the success enjoyed by food tourism representatives is greatly attributed to the availability of high quality local produce, as well as mutual-interest relationships established between local producers. Results indicate a demand from customers for local, sustainable food, and a dedication by Irish food tourism representatives to buy directly from local producers, despite the often higher cost involved. It is further indicated that high quality local food represents the strength of Irish food tourism businesses' success. However, the findings of this research also highlight a disparity between individual economic success and the support of local producers. Research findings further reveal the increasingly high and often prohibitive levels of regulation regarding food products made by local food producers, leading to uncertainties for some local producers about the future viability of their businesses and, thus, the survival of local cultural traditions.

Review of Relevant Extant Food Tourism Literature

Interest in and demand for, food tourism is a growing market in Ireland and among tourists internationally. It is suggested in available literature that Food tourism possesses a number of sustainability merits, namely: environmental, social and economic (academic source/s...?). Food tourism can act as a gateway to Irish localities and landscapes by focusing on local identity and authenticity. Furthermore, food tourism, it is advocated (by whom...?), can have a positive effect on local communities, employment and heritage and can, indeed, rejuvenate and diversify tourism offerings by engaging all stakeholders. Food tourism also encourages the use of local food by supporting small and local food producers and reducing its so-called environmental footprint. Local foods are associated with preserving traditions, environmental sustainability and contributing positively to the local economy and are considered the opposite to the globalisation of food (O'Neill, 2014; Olsen *et al.*, 2014; Contò *et al.*, 2014; Amuquandoh and Asafo-Adjei, 2013; Chambers, 2009). A popular anecdotal, public perception is that the purchase and consumption of food is often seen as a fashion accessory, or as being 'trendy'. This is witnessed, for example, in the proliferation of cooking shows, celebrity chefs, television programmes, and may be used as an expression of societal standing identities (Taar; 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2009; Gyimóthy and Mykletun, 2009; Wright *et al.*, 2001).

In Ireland, both food and tourism contribute significantly to the Irish economy. As outlined by Delheure *et al.* (2014:180),

'...food and tourism industries play a pivotal role in the Irish economy, particularly in rural and regional economic activity.'

This notion is exemplified by the fact that, in Ireland in 2009, the money tourists spent on food and drink amounted to almost €2 billion (Fáilte Ireland, 2010). Food tourism in Ireland has greatly progressed in recent years, as evidenced in the expansion of farmers' markets, food festivals, and restaurants (Dunne and Wright, 2015; Fáilte Ireland, 2010; O'Connor *et al.*, 2007). This growth may be credited to a number of dynamics: globally, the prominence of food in marketing is evident and, in Ireland, substantial advertising efforts have been made to endorse Irish food as high quality and as a significant feature of Irish culture (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). It is also suggested that this growth is a result of, 'increased consumer interest in the provenance of food, environmental concerns, health and the desire to support the local economy' (Henchion, 2014:82). Additionally, interest in learning the story behind the food product, the importance of an authentic experience, and meeting the 'person behind the food' is all fuelling interest in food tourism and local food (Dunne and Wright, 2015; Bord Bia, 2014).

It is argued that countries around the world can, potentially, expand their food tourism industries by giving local and regional cuisines special attention, including those involved in producing them (WTO, 2012). This suggests that the primary producer plays a key role in the development and success of food tourism and, therefore, the continuation of regionally-specific food traditions. It is advocated that food tourism businesses, such as food markets, may signify a basis of identity for local communities and help in keeping local traditions alive (Bord Bia, 2014). Moreover, the idea of a 'sense of place', or '*terroir*', is lauded as being a key component in food tourism (lauded by whom...?). It is further proposed that, in an Irish context, this 'sense of place' can be created by linking food to culture, heritage and folklore to Ireland's many food traditions (Fáilte Ireland, 2015; Delheure *et al.*, 2014; Mac Con lomaire and Gallagher, 2009; Linehan, 2006).

Methodology

The case study method is the chosen procedure of research for this study. According to Yin,

'...the case study [research method] allows investigators to focus on a 'case' and retain a holistic and real-world perspective' (2014:4).

The research locations chosen for this chapter are all areas synonymous with food and food tourism. The research participants/respondents are all food tourism representatives on the front-line of the food tourism industry, including restaurateurs, farmers' market members, artisan producers, market traders and food festival organisers. Eleven participants from each location were chosen (see Table 1 below). The English Market was chosen because it is one of Cork City's top tourist attractions and the only market of its kind in Ireland. The English Market has been trading since the 1700s and is noted for its distinctive and unique food fare

(Ó'Drisceoil and Ó'Drisceoil, 2005). The County Cork town of Kinsale was chosen because it has long held the title of 'Gourmet Capital of Ireland,' and has had a *Good Food Circle* for over forty years (Kinsale Chamber of Tourism and Business, 2014). The County Kerry town of Dingle was chosen because, in recent years, food tourism there has been used as a means of creating employment and also as a method of celebrating and promoting Dingle's culture (Fáilte Ireland, 2012).

Table 1: List of Participants

Occupation	Number
Restaurateur	10
Food Festival Organiser	3
Farmers' Market Stall-Holder	6
Artisan Producer	2
Trail Guide	2
Market Trader	10
Total	33

An in-depth interview method of research was chosen. The in-depth interview, as a method of inquiry, allows the researcher to obtain an insight into the topic by providing a platform for the interviewees to express their thoughts and opinions (Yin, 2014; Chrzanowksa, 2002). The responses gathered from all the interviews were then analysed through the grounded-theory method, allowing the generation of theory inductively from the data (Ezzy, 2002). From this analysis, a number of themes emerged, as discussed in the findings below.

Findings and Discussion

Although the literature above mentioned refers to the diverse merits of food tourism as a potential 'saviour' of local traditions, as a sustainable means of local development, and as a lifeline to local economies and producers, it is important to note that this was found to be, in general, on a minor scale. Throughout the interviews, it was highlighted that the sustainable alternative offered by food tourism is on the small, locally-based scale only. This is encapsulated in the words of the following respondent:

'The local food tends to be on the smaller, family run scale. On the large scale, globalisation has taken over completely (Restaurateur, Dingle).

The above respondent's reply at interview highlights how, in their opinion and in the grander scheme of things, globalisation seems to have 'taken over' the food sector. The respondent notes that, when the term 'local food' is being used, it is generally

used to describe small, family-run businesses. While bearing this in mind, this chapter examines the specific role of the local producer contributing to the maintenance of traditions, albeit on a small rather than a global scale.

Throughout the three chosen locations of research, respondents credited the availability of local producers and the supply of high quality local food as a major factor in their own business achievements. The following statement from one respondent illustrates how local food as well as those who produce it, are frequently the starting points for a successful food tourism business:

'We see this in the traditions of the lamb, the culture, the food from the land [sic]. They're all related, food and culture especially, in a place like here [sic]. We need food tourism to help us in the future. We need it to protect [not only] our livelihood, but also our traditions and culture. It speaks about the history of the people [sic] (Food Festival Organiser, Dingle).

This respondent's words portray the place of the local producers as representing the beginning of the development of an area's food traditions. The statement emphasises how certain foods are historically and geographically linked to certain local regions. The continued presence of local food producers ensures that these foods maintain their connection with their local, natural environment. Building on the availability of and access to local food products, as well as the presence of local food producers, allows the respondents to continue their food traditions. It was highlighted that continuous support of these local food producers was necessary due to a number of factors and it was found that this consensus was echoed in each of the research locations, as outlined in the following statements from respondents:

'People are looking for more local foods, more Cork foods. Lots of places are doing the five mile radius [sic]. Before, people would take it for granted it's local, now they're asking [sic]. There's a huge source of pride in the market about being able to tell the customer exactly where it [the food product] came from. People can expect good quality local food when they come in here.' (Baker, English Market).

'The local produce is in big demand all the time. The more local the better [sic].' (Trader of Artisan Produce, English Market).

'Everyone wants local food these days. We use over 90% of local food in our restaurant anyway. A lot of it comes from our own farm, but even if it didn't, you'd have to be local these days because that's what people want.' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

These statements reveal the demand for local food produce and reiterate the value and necessity of close proximity to the local food producer in terms of an effective and productive inter-relational business perspective. The findings illustrate that local food suppliers represent the first link with locally unique food traditions and

that, without them, local food businesses, in general, would be difficult to sustain. It is also indicated that, without local food producers, the overall authenticity of the products that Irish food tourism offers would be lessened. Similarly, it was inferred by some respondents that locally sourced food was essential in order for food tourism businesses to survive:

'There is a demand for local food, more and more I'd say. That's the way things are going. I think it's going to be very important for any food retailer, supermarkets, farmers' market, and restaurants to support local producers. I think it's necessary to support local artisan producers.' (Baker, English Market).

'Before, it was all about produce from exotic, far-flung places [sic]. Now it's the complete opposite. If you're not using local then you're gone off the scene completely [sic].' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

These statements further demonstrate how, in order to be successful, local Irish food tourism businesses depend on supplies from local food producers. The findings infer that the previous trend was to source 'exotic' produce, and that this has now been replaced with a tendency towards sourcing food supplies as locally as possible. The above responses also reveal that food sourced and produced locally is currently fashionable and, according to respondents, is a popular development which is expected to endure. Furthermore, the findings highlight that, if the food tourism representatives were not using local food producers, then their businesses would not be meeting customer demands.

From another perspective regarding local food produce, one respondent offered a view which suggests that, at times, the demand for 'local' food can go too far:

'Local in Ireland is really local [sic]. I mean, if it's fifteen miles you're thinking that's not local at all' [sic]. In most countries, if it was on [or from] the same island it would be considered local. We might have to watch that a bit. Like, if the fish comes from Castletownbere, it's okay. If the meat's from Tipperary, that's fine too.' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

Although this perspective was not widely held by the food tourism representatives, it does offer an insight into the level of food traceability and how closely linked that can be to the primary producer. The above response suggests that there are different understandings in other countries regarding what qualifies as local food and the respondent clearly states the high expectations of what constitutes 'local food produce' in Ireland. The following statement adds to this perspective:

'Even produce from Cork would outsell something from Galway. It's that local.' (Trader of Artisan Produce, English Market).

The above response again illustrates the necessity of having locally sourced food in close proximity to food producers and marketers, in order to ensure the availability of

fresh and authentic produce. Furthermore, interview responses also highlighted the mutually beneficial nature of a good relationship between local food suppliers and food tourism businesses, as seen in the following responses:

'If you have a good relationship with your suppliers, it all comes back to you really. You're giving them an income and they're giving you quality.' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

'If you take care of your local suppliers, then they'll take care of you. Whatever local food we use we'll put it on our menu. It'll be meat from Killarney or Annascaul or our bread made with Ballyferriter Stout.' (Restaurateur, Dingle)

The responses detail the huge importance attached to a good working relationship between food tourism representatives and local food producers. Respondents revealed that, in exchange for supporting local food producers, they are, in turn, assured of high quality local food produce. Adding to this, the findings further reveal how certain food tourism businesses have a direct link to local food produce:

'There's a great representation of the meat, the lamb, the beef and the fish, and shellfish that are from here [sic]. The lamb on the menu is from our own farm. The salads would be grown locally by friends of mine. We have everything local [sic].' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

'Butchers here, some have their own farm, their own animals and their own abattoir.' (Baker, English Market).

These responses of interviewees offer a glimpse into the business advantages of the continuation of food traditions. It appears from the findings that, through building excellent working relationships with the local food producers, and maintaining the same supply chain, the authenticity of the end product is further maintained.

Together with support from food tourism businesses, the findings reveal how local food producers are supportive of each other. The following statements are indicative of this:

'We'd help each other out. Say, a guesthouse would recommend me if they wanted some baking for a picnic. If they came to me, I'd say go to so and so for jam, and so and so for a quiche. We try to share it around [sic].' (Farmers' Market Member, Kinsale).

'The artisan producer [business] is becoming huge. They're only becoming huge because they are being supported by us [sic].' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

The idea of mutual exchange, or as the respondent above says, 'helping each other out,' between primary, local food producers and businesses operating in the area of food tourism, is demonstrated in the above statements. Through this mutually beneficial exchange, primary food producers are contributing to their fellow food

producers' success, as well as enjoying a further shared advantage through endorsing locally-based recommendations to customers. The findings also reveal that this mutual trade-off creates a beneficial synergy for all local food producers, as well as food tourism businesses in general and, by extension, local food traditions.

Building on this, the respondents made frequent reference to the high quality of the food produce supplied to them, and highlights confidence in the local food producer. This further emphasises that a high standard of local food produce is the foundation of Irish food tourism businesses' success. This is borne out in the following statements from respondents:

'I think there's a sense of pride about the quality of the local food. Food that has been stored and vacuum-packed for a couple of thousand miles is not going to taste great. If it's locally sourced, you'll know what they'll be eating and you know the background and the whole lot, so you'll know the quality of food is very high [sic].' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

'There's a huge sense of pride in here among the producers.' (Butcher, English Market).

'I'm delighted to support local trade. I know where it's coming from, that's so important. You have to have traceability with food. It makes life easier when you know the food's story. It's generally more accessible these days anyway, easier to get local things.' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

These statements not only emphasise the importance of high quality food produce available, but also reveal the food producers' personal pride in the food product they are offering to the local food market. Many of the interviewees also highlighted the issue of traceability which, as revealed in the earlier findings, is critical to overall business success and only made possible by the accessibility of local food producers. The following statements from respondents build on this principle and add a new dimension to the importance of the 'story behind the food':

'In here, it's a lot easier to find out the source of the product. I had a very interesting conversation with somebody who works in a processing plant recently. I asked him if it was all Irish produce that they were getting in. No [was the reply]. You'd tend to be a bit cynical. Like the horsemeat scandal. It's getting very hard to prove the origin of the product. I think the lines are getting blurred. In here, you'll probably be able to tell them the name of the person who caught the fish.' (Fishmonger, English Market).

The respondent details how the supply chain is becoming distorted, with tangible scepticism evident about how food is sometimes labelled, especially with regard to its source. These findings again reveal that the collective knowledge of local food producers about their food products plays a key role in creating a connection between the provenance of food and the end product. The findings suggest

that using local suppliers, who are easily traced, eliminates a great deal of risk in purchasing food.

Despite the above references to the importance of local food suppliers and their key role in the survival of cultural traditions, as well as food authenticity and traceability, it was also revealed that local food producers are not always supported by, for example, local authorities and local by-laws. The findings reveal a number of reasons for this specific lack of support. For interviewees from the English Market in Cork City, the primary concern was the inadequate access for customers to the premises with regard to parking. A consequence of this, the findings reveal, has a detrimental effect on overall business for the English Market, and a knock-on effect to local food producers. The following responses of interviewees outline this in more detail:

'Parking-it's like a broken record. We say it over and over again and nothing's being done about it. Our customers are saying it to us all the time that they just don't come in because it's too expensive to park.' (Baker, English Market).

'I'd say that this market could thrive but for the [lack of] parking. It's the biggest drawback for the local community. Even when our suppliers come in to drop off the goods, they haven't really any proper place to park the delivery van. They're running out to check if they have a parking ticket [sic].' (Trader of Artisan Produce, English Market).

These direct quotes from respondents are illustrative of the opinions conveyed by many traders as to why the English Market in Cork is not exploiting its full potential. The English Market interviewees outlined that both the high cost of car parking and the lack of satisfactory parking spaces have a direct and negative impact on business. The interviewees outlined how this problem was, paradoxically, aiding other retailers, as detailed in the following responses:

'The biggest obstacle would be parking for the city centre and for the [English] market. It's slowing down trade. It's too expensive or you can't find parking, so you'll go to Mahon Point, where you can park easily.' (Butcher, English Market).

'Lidl and Aldi have free parking and we can't compete with that.' (Baker, English Market).

'People shop in the suburbs and don't come into the city centre.' (Butcher, English Market).

'There's nothing we can do about the big multiples and their facilities [sic].' (Restaurateur, English Market).

These responses detail the issues that the city centre location of the English Market faces regarding customer and food suppliers' car parking and general accessibility. The advantages this presents to larger suburban competitors are evident. These

factors are threatening the viability of the English Market and, thus, the local food producer. Respondents expressed their frustration at this situation, outlining how they cannot compete with the convenience offered by suburban outlets where ample free car parking is available. As noted at the beginning of this section, on a larger scale the globalisation of food production has taken over. The above statements from interviewees reinforce this notion. The data gathered also provides an insight into how people purchase food and, furthermore, reveals many challenges faced by local businesses as well as local, small-scale food producers.

Moreover, the English Market respondents noted that, although their premises and the market itself are part of a well-known tourist destination, it is local patronage, rather than tourists who are needed:

'We need locals to come in here to do their weekly shop. The tour buses aren't much good to us because the tourists go through in about 15 minutes, in one door and out the other. The tourist will appreciate that it's a lovely market and that's nice, but they're not spending much [sic].' (Butcher, English Market).

The respondents reveal that, while tourists are welcome in the English Market, they do not spend a great deal of money in there, for obvious reasons such as the fact that a lot of the food produce on sale is raw, or the fact that many tourists have a lack of time to adequately look around or buy food. Building on the need for more local custom, it was also revealed that in the past, perceptions of the English Market were not so favourable:

'There was a time people snuck in the side gates, they didn't want to be seen coming in here [sic]. Then different people spoke out for it, like Darina Allen said she never shops anywhere else. That was a huge plus for us. That the Queen of England would come here was beyond belief for the older generation.' (Butcher, English Market).

The above respondent reveals how changing attitudes, created in part by local champions, have helped raise awareness of the English Market and its dedication to local food produce. The findings highlight that the English Market, and its use of local food suppliers, is currently trendy and reveals the contrast to past perceptions. This also buoys the findings noted earlier in this section detailing the current demand for food which is produced locally. This does, however, also raise the issue of sustainability. If, as the findings suggest, local food is popular at the moment, it may not always remain fashionable and, therefore, local producers and cultural traditions will find it difficult to weather such trends.

In addition to this, research findings reveal tensions between certain food tourism businesses. Although the above findings highlight the benefits of reciprocity, a friction between particular elements was also evident. This is clearly demonstrated in the following responses:

'The problem with the farmers' market is that it became an outdoor food court. It was like the biggest restaurant in Kinsale. To me a farmers' market should be [local] producers bringing in their extra produce. I think if that was happening, then restaurants and chefs would support it more. As a restaurateur you see your potential customer-base not coming to you. I think it sours the good producers that are in the farmers' market. Restaurateurs don't go and support them as much.' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

'There's an active group behind the farmers' market in Dingle and they really pushed it in terms of organising special events and things like that. Kerry County Council hired someone to work on finding a location for the market and to develop farmers' markets throughout Kerry. We had tried to work it out ourselves, but there were too many objections from townspeople.' (Farmers' Market Member, Dingle).

These interviewees' responses reveal the source of the discord between various stakeholders. From the point of view of restaurateurs, farmers' markets can sometimes resemble an 'outdoor food court', rather than a place where local food producers bring extra produce to sell. As a direct result, some restaurateurs were not keen to support the farmers' market. It was also outlined by some respondents that the issue of commercial property rates was contentious, as the farmers' market do not have to pay them, but other local businesses do, adding to a certain amount of resentment towards the farmers' market. This indicates that local food producers may suffer the knock-on effects of this discord and, therefore, lessen the sustainability of local cultural traditions.

The findings also revealed that, in addition to conflict among businesses, local communities were not always steadfast in their support. The following responses provide an insight into this:

'When the recession hit, my cakes were the first things that were cut back on [sic]. If you have to cut back your food bill, cakes will be the first thing to go.' (Farmers' Market Member, Dingle).

'The market is always much bigger in the summer. All the tourists are around.' (Farmers' Market Member, Kinsale).

'Some farmers' markets tend to be quite expensive, charging a premium on their products and I think that puts people off. We try to get people to shop locally in here. We need more local people to come in here.' (Butcher, English Market).

'There were more customers before the recession. This is the first year there seems to be a slight increase after dropping off for five years. So, it seems to be in line with the general recession. A lot of the customers have houses in France and go away for the winter.' (Farmers' Market Member, Kinsale).

These insights gleaned directly from respondents highlight perceptions of farmers' markets as 'high-end' and also as a perceived 'costly shopping experience'. The findings also reveal that, during the recession, support for farmers' markets and local produce was not as strong as it had been previously. Furthermore, the above quotes from respondents detail that many of the farmers' market's best customers tend to travel abroad during the winter, highlighting the lack of a permanent base of local support from customers. These sentiments are in line with those of the English Market respondents regarding the presence of tourists, that is: local customers are essential for survival. Furthering the argument highlighting a lack of sufficient and steady customer support was the idea of luxury goods for sale at farmers' markets, rather than daily necessities. As mentioned above, during times of economic scarcity, these 'luxuries' were the first items on which customers economised:

'In the market, I think we need to sell more savoury things. We need to sell meats. You can buy cakes and chorizo and cheese and olives. You could go down there and spend a lot of money and still you wouldn't have done your weekly shop. People don't have money for those extras any more. In recent years there hasn't been as much money around so it [the farmers' market] hasn't been supported well financially.' (Farmers' Market Member, Dingle).

The findings illustrate that if there is restricted available spending money, then the farmers' market will not benefit. The above response from an interviewee also implies that there is a surplus of certain 'luxury' goods, rather than adequate supplies of everyday items, further impeding the farmers' market success. The farmers' market members did, however, put forward an argument regarding high prices:

'People see the difference in price, but you try to explain to them that these are made with fresh ingredients. When people taste it they understand. I charge €1.50 for a mince pie, but there's fresh mincemeat, cranberries, marzipan, and its time consuming [to produce] as well.' (Farmers' Market Member, Kinsale).

The above respondent highlights the increased cost of producing high-quality food products. The issue of trying to balance price and quality was noted across the three geographical areas researched, but it was also acknowledged that the balance will, more often than not, be weighted to high quality, and thus, the local producer. This is illustrated in the following quotes from respondents:

'The balance would be in favour of local produce. You have a nice mix. As a market we would try and push local produce.' (Fishmonger, English Market).

'There must be a balance between quality and price. I suppose that's why the successful restaurants stay successful because they try not to lose that quality. We've got a good relationship with our suppliers and you're not just buying cost cheap [sic]. It's a struggle to keep your prices competitive though when the cost of overheads is going up.' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

'If you use local producers then the air miles are cut. If the price is a bit higher it'll probably all come back to you in the end. People appreciate quality and, when you're talking about food, you can't cut corners.'
(Artisan Producer, Dingle).

Food tourism representatives interviewed for this chapter detail their preference for local food, even at the expense of cost-saving. The findings reveal that this commitment to local food producers is a key part to the sustainability of their overall business success. It is inferred that the respondents would prefer their business reputation be judged on quality rather than price. It does, however, also highlight that, at times, business will be lost due to higher prices. The dedication to local food suppliers is further revealed in the following statement from a respondent:

'Sometimes when you do use local produce you do sacrifice price. The small local producers can't afford to be as price competitive. If you have a choice of two cheeses, one French, one Irish, and the French is 50cents cheaper, you'll pick the Irish cheese [sic].' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

As evidenced in the above statement, although loyalty to local food producers is obvious, it is also acknowledged that the cost of the final product may, as a result, be higher. The following response further outlines this issue:

'The customer is always expecting more for less now. They want value for money. But there has to be a balance between quality and price. It's the one thing we always get critiqued about. They want a magnificent meal and they want it cheap. We try, but you have to pay [high prices] for quality ingredients.'
(Restaurateur, Kinsale).

The above interviewee further illustrates the difficulty in balancing cost and quality, as cutting corners is not possible for the majority of food tourism businesses, especially at the expense of potential customers. Conversely, however, there was also a general consensus that, despite loyalty to local food producers, not everything needed to run a food business was available locally:

'When I started the bakery I was very determined to source locally and to have a lot of organic ingredients. But you have to be realistic. There are a certain number of things that you can't get locally.' (Baker, English Market).

'Some things you just can't get locally. You have to keep in mind what people are willing to pay [for food] as well.' (Farmers' Market Member, Dingle).

'You can't have it all local because it's just not sustainable.' (Fishmonger, English Market).

'We try to use local suppliers as much as possible. But are there enough local suppliers there?' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

The above responses offer a different perspective to the use of locally produced food, and the practicalities of staying in business. This, above all else, provides a wider perspective of the earlier findings regarding dedication to quality and local purchasing loyalty. Furthermore, it is also inferred that, with regard to locally bought food products, there are often insufficient numbers of local food producers on whom food businesses can rely solely.

Building on this, a further perspective on the cost-versus-quality conundrum was offered by some respondents:

'People come in here and learn what's fresh and what is good. People go into a supermarket and see meat at a 20% discount and will see the price rather than the quality. It might not even be edible.' (Butcher, English Market).

'I think people are becoming more interested in local stuff nowadays. Of course, some people will always be led by price though.' (Butcher, English Market).

It is illustrated in the above statements that, regardless of the assured quality of locally produced food on offer, price will often be the deciding factor for a number of customers. It further indicates a correlation with the notion mentioned earlier in this section that, on a wider scale, the globalisation of food has taken over. The respondents, however, do not make a distinction between those who can afford local food and those who choose not to purchase local food, even if the customer has the economic means. Despite this ambiguity, however, food prices do and customers' spending trends do impact on the survival of local food producers and, thus, on local traditions.

Building on this further, a constant theme observed throughout the findings was a worry by many respondents that a continued decrease in numbers of local food producers is imminent. This fear was, generally, in relation to one particular group of food producers, namely the fishing industry. This is illustrated in the following responses:

'Within the fishing industry it tends to be a couple of families [sic]. I don't see any new blood going in to it [sic]. People just aren't going in to the industry any more. It's only a couple of families left. My worry is when they're gone, what's going to happen then?' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

'There are a lot of my family involved in the fishing industry. The [EU] quotas and regulations are unbelievable. We support the local fishermen as much as possible, but it's a hard life for them. It's hard to make a living as a fisherman.' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

The above quotes from respondents highlight the cause of concerns about the fishing industry going into the future. The respondents make reference to the difficulty in making a living through fishing, the harsh conditions faced by fishermen,

as well as difficulties posed by EU fishing quotas and regulations. These issues are not encouraging new people into the fishing industry. The findings reveal the worries of the food tourism representatives regarding access to local fish in the future. This is further emphasised in the following statements:

'Everyone was affected by the recession. The fishermen haven't increased their prices. To keep competitive they've had to keep their prices low. Overheads are going up.' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

'There's a lot of [EU] regulation in the fishing industry I think. Also, the returns, the producer and the fisherman aren't getting enough. He's being squeezed tighter by everyone [sic]. Market dictates and they're at the bottom of the ladder. I think they should be looked after more, they should be nurtured more. They're not being taken care of and that's why people aren't going in to the [fishing] industry [anymore].' (Restaurateur, Kinsale).

'We should be able to land more fish in Dingle, but because of the EU regulations we can't.' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

These statements further reveal the problems directly affecting those in the fishing industry. The findings highlight decreasing revenues and a lack of support from relevant EU authorities. The findings also infer that, if local fishing boats are further restricted and discouraged, then small towns with fishing traditions will lose a part of their heritage. Similarly, worries were also expressed about local vegetable producers. This is outlined in the following statement:

'We get as much [vegetables] as humanely possible locally [sic]. There are difficult times of the year when our garden isn't going too well. But we're still bringing in a decent amount. For a green island full of perfect soil we don't grow a lot of vegetables. At times you'll find yourself buying in things [from outside the locality] if you're stuck.' (Restaurateur, Dingle).

The above statement illustrates how local produce is not always available and so, must be brought in from further afield. The interviewee details that, although Ireland has ideal conditions for growing vegetables, not everything can be obtained locally. This issue was taken up again by a further respondent, and a potential cause of the problem was suggested:

'Suburbanisation and central distribution pushed a lot of the vegetable growers out of the market. Before, you could just go down to the supermarket and drop off your produce at the door. Now it's all big depots in a big way [sic].' (Butcher, English Market).

The above respondent outlines again the impact of globalisation on local food producers. The findings reveal how the small-scale food producer simply cannot compete financially with larger business competitors. The findings additionally

concur with the predicament of those in the fishing industry, and its knock-on effect on the sustainability of local food producer businesses and food traditions.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the role played by the local food producer in the sustainability of local cultural food traditions, through the realm of food tourism. While acknowledging the globalisation of food on a large scale, the findings reveal that a crucial part is played by the local food producer in maintaining these food traditions. Throughout the findings, respondents credited their business success, as well as the sustainability of their food traditions, to the local producer. This is evident in many ways throughout the research findings. Demand by the customer for a desire to know more about the origin and background of food has increased substantially in recent years. The food tourism representatives are now faced with the need for access to local food produce, and the capacity to deliver the 'story behind the food' to the customer. Close links between the primary food producer and food tourism representatives, allow for the provenance of food to be made clear, and concerns over traceability to be lessened. Findings reveal that, as the starting point for many food tourism businesses, local food producers are the first step and the foundation on which their food tradition is built and authentically sustained. From the point of view of the respondents, guaranteed access to high quality, locally produced food is the focal point of their business. This is evident in the aspiration to choose quality over cost in many cases in order to sustain reputation, albeit with the occasional loss of customers. Despite this loyalty to local food producers, however, discord was also evident from the findings, such as between the farmers' market and restaurateurs, impacting on support received by the primary food producer. Furthermore, the need for a continuous local customer-support base, rather than solely tourists, was evidenced clearly. It was also found that there is a correlation between customers' financial scarcity and support of local food producers. The notion of food being currently fashionable, or 'trendy', was also uncovered, thus raising the issue of long-term support and sustainability for food producers and businesses. Emerging strongly from the findings was the critical role of local authorities, for example, in providing adequate car-parking facilities for the food tourism businesses. Their role is further evident considering the impact of EU regulations on certain primary producers, particularly the Irish fishing industry. Such regulations are resulting in the decimation of some local fishing industries and their traditions. Most critically, these findings reveal that unless support is given to certain local food producers by those in a position of power, the future sustainability of local food traditions cannot be guaranteed. This chapter revealed that, despite being faced with the challenges of globalisation, as well as wavering levels of customer support, through the medium of food tourism local food producers are the anchor to which local cultural food traditions are tied and sustained through the years.

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CHAPTER 5

Entrepreneurs' Potential Role in Mitigating Tourism Biosecurity Risk in Ireland

Domhnall Melly

Dr James Hanrahan

Introduction

Commercial globalisation, population movements and environmental changes are the main factors favouring the international spread of emerging infectious diseases (EID) (Soto, 2009). With international tourist arrivals to Ireland growing in 2015 by 13.1% to reach 8.0 million (Fáilte Ireland, 2016), it is evident that there is a significant increase in potential for biosecurity threats entering the country. As noted by (Miller and Moore, 2006), travel was instrumental in the rapid spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) from China to susceptible populations worldwide. Furthermore, Rey (2006) highlights that international travel, tourism and commerce are increasing and, therefore, they constitute a highly efficient transport system for pathogens and vectors of biosecurity threats. This has led to Ireland's economy, environment and human health, coming under increased risk from threats being vectored into the country, most notably the following, all of which have been highlighted by media: SARS, Avian Flu, the Ebola Virus, and other harmful pathogens. This is due to the unintended effects caused by the introduction into a country of microbes, or harmful pathogens, affecting human health through biological exchange (Davis, 2003; Occhipinti-Ambrogi, 2007), which can pose a serious threat to human health. The environment and objects or materials which are likely to carry infection, otherwise known as fomites, play important roles in the transmission of

pathogenic microorganisms that can survive on surfaces for prolonged periods of time (Pantaleon, 2016), representing and confirming a serious threat to human health in Ireland.

Biosecurity and tourism are clearly linked, as noted by Hall (2004), through the increased movements of people across political and physical borders. As stated, there has been an increase in international tourists visiting Ireland; therefore, implicit in this movement of people are a number of unintended and unwanted consequences, such as the potential for tourists vectoring harmful pathogens. The results of such consequences are not only threats to human health, but also threats to environmental health. It is important to note that tourism often involves movements of people to areas of vulnerable environments. Keeping this in mind, according to Fáilte Ireland (2016), Irish natural landscape and scenery has been recognised as a key resource in attracting tourists to the country, which is evident through 92% of overseas visitors to Ireland indicating that the beautiful scenery was an important issue when choosing Ireland as a holiday destination, while 86% said that the natural unspoilt environment was an important destination factor. This is a clear indication of the growing importance of the environment as a crucial element of Ireland's tourism product, and it also highlights the importance of protecting it. However, according to Baram and Rowan, (2004) and Silberman (2007), global rationalisation has transformed tourism destinations into an increasingly commodified resource. As a consequence of this, important natural and cultural resources within these destinations have been managed and even valorised by governmental authorities and international agencies in the name of economic development. However, this economic benefit is often offset by the high cost of eradication measures of established invasive non-native species such as, the Zebra Mussel, Japanese Knotweed and Rhododendron, and the control of diseases such as Avian flu, also known as the H5N8 Virus, and Nipah Virus (NIV), not to mention the threat to human health. This paper remains part of a larger biosecurity and tourism study which aims: to investigate how tourists can act as vectors of potential biosecurity threats in Ireland; to examine biosecurity threats, impacts and management techniques in the tourism sector worldwide; and to explore planning strategies in Ireland for biosecurity threats. This paper, however, will discuss the potential for entrepreneurs to mitigate tourism biosecurity risks in Ireland.

Biosecurity and Human Health

Biosecurity has been defined by Pyšek and Richardson (2010) as the management of risks posed by organisms to the economy, environment and human health through exclusion, mitigation, adaptation, control and eradication. Furthermore, invasive species not only pose a threat to biodiversity and ecosystems through imperilment and habitat loss for native species (Gurevitch and Padilla, 2004), but can also have negative effects on human health, including socio-economic

consequences (Pyšek and Richardson, 2010). According to Herfst et al. (2017), the recent emergence of zoonotic pathogens such as Avian Influenza type-A viruses, including the H5N1 and H7N9 strains, Nipah Virus, Swine Flu and SARS raises the spectre of future pandemics with unprecedented health and economic impacts. While it is important to note that many infectious diseases that are spread through biological exchange are often perceived to mainly affect animals, zoonoses are diseases or infections which affect both. Zoonoses are defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2017) as,

'...any disease or infection caused by all types of agents (bacteria, parasites, fungi, viruses and unconventional agents) transmissible from vertebrate animals to humans and vice-versa.'

In 2003, it was found that 8,096 people worldwide were infected by the SARS virus, resulting in 774 deaths (McAlear et al., 2010). Subsequently, between 2014 and 2016, the Ebola Virus outbreak infected 28,646 people, which resulted in 11,323 deaths (WHO, 2016b). The human infection rate and the sheer death toll, both serve as stark examples of the significance and overall impacts which biosecurity threats have on human health. Furthermore, it has clearly established that humans as well as animals can be infected with avian and many other zoonotic influenza viruses, including: Avian Influenza Virus subtypes A(H5N1), A(H7N9), and A(H9N2) as well as Swine Influenza Virus subtypes A(H1N1) and H3N2 (WHO, 2016a).

While the main biosecurity threats to human health are associated with zoonotic diseases, other threats are known to create negative impacts indirectly to human health and tourism entrepreneurs may be in a position to mitigate this. Invasive species are a biosecurity threat mainly associated with disrupting the natural cycles of native ecosystems. However, they are also known to have negative impacts on human health. According to Pejchar and Mooney (2009), Kettunen et al. (2009), alien species affect a wide range of ecosystem services which underpin human well-being including: provisioning of food and fibre; regulating the spread of human diseases; and providing aesthetic, recreational and tourism benefits. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP, 2016) has also stated that environmental shocks created by invasive species are, 'a huge threat to human well-being', while according to Pyšek and Richardson (2010), invasive species disturb established ecological conditions such as: native fauna habitats; vegetation coverage and composition; and water and air quality. However, the most serious impacts on human health occur when pathogens cross the barriers that separate their natural reservoirs from human populations and ignite the epidemic spread of novel infectious diseases (Antia et al, 2003). Examples of such include: allergies and skin damage caused by invasive alien species, outbreaks of human diseases caused by novel pathogens such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV); Monkey Pox; and SARS (DAISIE, 2009), all of which are analogous to the process of biological invasions.

With the increasing number of international visitors to Ireland, it is clear that biosecurity threats can potentially pose a serious risk to human health. With the recent emergence of zoonotic pathogens, these risks contain inherent socio-economic consequences, as well as having an overall negative affect on human well-being. With this growth of global trade and travel, a localised epidemic can transform into a pandemic rapidly, with little time to prepare a public health response (WHO, 2016). With the SARS epidemic in 2003, the pandemic of Swine Flu (influenza H1N1) in 2009, and the more recent outbreak of the Ebola Virus in 2014, there is a renewed global concern for the potential to cause extensive human harm with further pandemics, epidemics and outbreaks of diseases. Therefore, it is clear that, in the event of an outbreak of a harmful disease to human health, Ireland must be adequately prepared in order to mitigate that risk. This research suggests that tourism entrepreneurs may be in a position to play a significant role in mitigating tourism biosecurity risks in Ireland.

Biosecurity and Environmental Health

Ireland's natural environment and unspoilt surroundings are key features of Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland's tourism advertising campaigns. However, freshwater ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to invasive non-native species (Strayer, 2010). Freshwater ecosystems are exposed to a wide range of transmission pathways including: fish stocking and re-stocking; the redirection of water supplies; release of boat ballast and bilge water; the release of exotic and ornamental plant and animal species; and the transfer of recreational angling and boating gear between sites (Havel and Shurin 2004, Rahel 2007, Jacobs and MacIsaac 2007, Keller et al., 2009, Strayer 2010, Oidtmann 2011). According to the Irish government website, Invasive Species Ireland (2016), there is a list of twenty-nine 'most unwanted' invasive species already established in Ireland, with many more classed as 'potential threats' all of which have damaging effects on native species and ecosystems. Many of these may be a result of tourism activities. The vectoring of biosecurity threats posed by tourism occurs through tourist activities, whereby the tourists body, clothes and/or luggage, sporting equipment such as waders, kayaks, wetsuits, fishing equipment and hiking boots come into contact with the environment and distribute or disperse into the ecosystem. This vectoring of biosecurity threats is especially likely in the case of activities such as hillwalking or angling, due to the high level of contact which tourists have with the environment. It should be noted that, 1,674,000 overseas visitors to Ireland engaged in hiking/cross country walking in 2015 (Fáilte Ireland, 2016), which represents more than a 28% increase from 2014 (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). Similarly, angling in Ireland by overseas visitors had a 3.6% increase in 2015 compared to 2014 (Fáilte Ireland 2016).

According to Kottelat and Freyhof (2007), European biodiversity includes 546 native species of freshwater fish. Currently, sixty three of these species are

classed as 'critically endangered', fifty two as 'endangered' and seventy nine as 'vulnerable' (Freyhof and Brooks, 2011). Furthermore, out of Ireland's thirty four species of freshwater fish, four are considered 'critically endangered', one is listed as 'endangered' and three others are considered to be 'vulnerable' (Del Carpio et al, 2013). It was also noted by Freyhof and Brooks (2011) that the percentage of native freshwater fish species affected by invasive species across Europe was over 40%, while the biggest threat was pollution at just over 50%. This clearly signifies the extent to which invasive species are threatening native Irish species. One of the most common invasive species in Ireland is the Zebra Mussel, or *Dreissena Polymorpha*. The Zebra Mussel is an aquatic bivalve mollusc (Colomer et al, 2014) that is considered to be an opportunistic species with the ability to settle in a wide variety of aquatic habitats (Palau et al., 2010; Sanz-Ronda et al., 2013, cited in Colomer et al, 2014). This aquatic invasive species (AIS) can cause system-level changes in the ecology of rivers and lakes (MacIsaac, 1996). Zebra Mussels are known to prevent native mussels from feeding by encrusting their exposed shells, causing the native unionids to sink into the mud and die, and which has led directly to the extinction of many aquatic species (Ricciardi et al., 1998). AIS are now well established in many popular Irish tourist destinations, including the Shannon, the Boyle and Erne Waterways' habitats, and they have even spread to over fifty lakes throughout Ireland (Notice Nature, 2017). Studies from Johnson and Carlton (1996), Buchan and Padilla (1999) and Johnson et al. (2001) have all indicated that human actions are the primary vector and that recreational boating is the largest single transport mechanism. Further to this, Timar et al. (2009) state that control policies must specifically target the behaviour of recreational boaters in order to reduce the continued spread of the Zebra Mussel. In the future, this may be a key responsibility of tourism entrepreneurs.

It is now clear that the increasing spread in Ireland of invasive species is attributed to recreational tourism activities, which form a key element of Ireland's tourism product. It only takes a few anglers to stock trout to a small spring stream, and any endemic species could be wiped out. This, in turn, highlights the need for biosecurity measures in Ireland's tourism industry which is dependent on the preservation of Ireland's rich biodiversity and unique natural environment. Further research in this area could address this issue, going forward.

Biosecurity Measures in Ireland

According to the EU Common Plant Health Regime, member states are obliged to take measures to eradicate or, if this is not possible, prevent the spread of harmful organisms (European Commission, 2011). This should motivate EU member states to put an emphasis on protecting the biodiversity of each country. Regarding emergency planning for disease introductions in Ireland, the Government Task Force is the top-level structure which creates policy and gives direction, and which coordinates and oversees the emergency planning activities of all government

departments and public authorities (DOH, 2014). In relation to preventing the spread of the Ebola Virus to Europe and Ireland, the World Health Organisation states that, during the outbreak of 2014, there was a total of 28,616 confirmed cases, with many 'probable' and 'suspected' cases having been reported in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and with a tragic total of 11,310 human deaths (WHO, 2016). The then Irish Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly, stated that,

'...the most effective thing we can do is to halt the rise of the diseases in West Africa.' (DOH, 2014).

It was also stated by the minister that,

'...should a case occur, it is likely that there will be only one or two cases and they can be handled in the National Isolation Unit in the Mater [Hospital]' (DOH, 2014).

Furthermore, the Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health said,

'...it is far more effective to screen people as they leave countries where the virus is present, rather than screening people coming into a country.' (DOH, 2014).

This suggests that there is, effectively, no regulated or system of a designated, pre-emptive biosecurity action plan in place currently in Ireland. In the event of a serious outbreak, Ireland's general attitude towards biosecurity seems to be very much reactive-based and focuses on measures to reduce spread, rather than offering a preventative plan that stops the introduction of biosecurity threats in the first place. While it is now evident that an Ebola Virus outbreak did not occur in Ireland, there is little evidence to suggest that adequate emergency procedures were in place at points of entry into Ireland, such as airports and ferry ports, in the potential event of such an outbreak. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2010) states that biosecurity is a strategic and integrated approach to analysing and managing relevant risks to human, animal and plant life, as well as overall human health and associated risks for the environment. To be effective, this strategic approach must be proactive in dealing with threats when considering the potential risks to human health. This further highlights the need for an effective strategy when it comes to the Irish tourism industry.

What is evident from current research is that much of Ireland's biosecurity preventative measures focus primarily on the agriculture and poultry industries (DAFM, 2009; DAFM, 2008; AHI, 2017), which have successful track records in identifying diseases and preventing their spread. Within the agriculture industry, Ireland has strict regulations regarding biosecurity, one of which is that it is a legal requirement that cattle over six-weeks of age must have had a Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) test within the previous twelve months, before being moved to other farm areas, other herds or to markets. It is the Irish Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine

(DAFM) that issues schedules of herd tests to private veterinary practitioners. This is done in phases throughout the year. However, in terms of protection measures for human health, there seems to be a reactive approach rather than a proactive one, meaning Ireland would be vulnerable to any potential outbreaks which may occur in the future. This could pose significant problems for Ireland's tourism industry.

In terms of potential invasive species, Ireland has been forced to focus on more costly eradication measures because many such biosecurity threats have already become established. As a result, the estimated annual cost to the economy of Ireland of managing invasive species in the country is €202,894,406 (Kelly et al, 2013). Further to this, the projected annual costs of invasive species to tourism and recreation in Ireland has been identified, and is estimated to cost the inland angling sector €493,416; Irish recreational boating €3,070,086; and costs for Irish waterways management of €2,203,937 (Williams et al, 2010). This is a substantial overall cost to the Irish state, which is why many tourism authorities are starting to recognise the significance of biosecurity relating to recreational activities in the tourism sector.

Due to the importance of both the ecosystem and the natural environment in Ireland's tourism product, as well as the increasing number of invasive species present in Ireland, there are signs that agencies are taking a preventative approach to biosecurity. Inland Fisheries Ireland recently launched two new biosecurity protocols aimed at detailing correct procedures that would prevent vectoring the spread of invasive species or harmful fish pathogens. The two protocols are 'Disinfection of Angling Equipment', and 'Disinfection of Boats and Boating Equipment,' and they both advise key stakeholder groups, as well as the general public, about appropriate disinfection procedures. Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) sets out these guidelines in the Invasive Species Biosecurity Guidelines for Anglers, and also in the Invasive Species Biosecurity Guidelines for Boaters (IFI, 2016).

Invasive Species Biosecurity Guidelines for Anglers:
Protective clothing:
Clean, wash or disinfect (e.g. 1% solution of Virkon Aquatic or another proprietary disinfection product) all articles of clothing.
Footwear should be dipped in disinfectant solution and thoroughly dried afterwards.
Nets, Storage Bags and Mats:
Landing nets, keep nets and stink bags should be immersed in disinfectant solution for 15 minutes. They should then be rinsed in clean water and left to dry.
Weed rakes and rope should be immerse in disinfectant solution following each fishing trip and thoroughly dried afterwards.
Unhooking mats should be visually inspected, cleaned and washed with disinfectant solution as outlined above.
Angling Tackle:
Rods should be sprayed or wiped down with a cloth soaked in an appropriate disinfectant solution rinsed with clean water and dried.
Spools and line should be immersed in disinfectant solution for 10 minutes after which they should be rinsed in clean water and dried.
Lures and floats should be immersed in disinfectant solution for 10 minutes, after which they should be rinsed in clean water and dried.
Boats, Outboard Motors and Trailers:
Visually inspect the boat, outboard motor and trailer once this equipment has been removed from the water. Remove all adherent plant and animal material and dispose of in sealed bags.
Visually inspect and thoroughly inspect the anchor, ropes and any other equipment used in the boat during the angling trip. These should also be immersed in/sprayed with disinfectant solution and dried thereafter.
Drain all water from the boat and from the outboard motor before moving to a different waterbody.
Where possible, power-hose the interior and exterior of the boat using heated water (60 degrees Celsius). Where this is not possible, the boat should be washed before leaving the catchment, and not reintroduced to any water for at least 5 days.
Cooling water should be drained from the outboard motor and, where possible, it should be flushed with disinfectant solution.

Source: (IFI, 2013a).

While these guidelines are put in place for anglers to ensure the protection of the environment from potential biosecurity threats, there must also be clear communication to anglers and tourists of these guidelines to ensure they are adhered to.

Invasive Species Biosecurity Guidelines for Boaters:
<u>Standard Cleaning and Disinfection Measures for Motorised Watercraft that Remain in the Water for Long Periods:</u>
Regularly spray or clean the exposed part of the hull, the bilge area including any livewells or baitwells, the deck and any fixed equipment with a 1% solution of Virkon or another proprietary disinfectant. The bilge pump should be used to expel any residual disinfectant solution.
Before moving from one watercourse to another, stop the boat and visually inspect the hull, exposed engine parts and any other possible sources of contamination for attached plant or animal material or debris. Remove and safely dispose of this before proceeding. Much of the material can be composted or removed to a municipal recycling centre.
Clean and disinfect any livewells, baitwells or any other likely sources of contaminant water.
Flush the bilge with disinfectant solution before proceeding.
When the boat is removed from the water, ensure that the cleaning and disinfection listed below are adhered to.
<u>For Watercraft that are Removed from the Water after Use:</u>
On removal, visually inspect all surfaces and equipment that have been exposed to the water. Remove and safely dispose of all attached plant and animal material, mud or associated debris from the boat, exposed engine parts and trailer. Drain all water from the boat, livewells, baitwells, anchor recess and bilge. Clean and disinfect the boat and all equipment that was used while the boat was afloat.
<u>Specific Cleaning and Disinfectant Procedures that should be followed for Various Classes of Craft Include:</u>
<u>Motorised Watercraft:</u>
Ideally the trailer, hull, bilge area including any livewells or baitwells, deck and any fixed equipment should be sprayed with a 1% solution of Virkon Aquatic or another proprietary disinfectant. The bilge pump should be used to expel any residual disinfectant solution.
Alternatively, the trailer, hull, bilge area including any livewells or baitwells, deck and any fixed equipment should be power-hosed with heated water (60 degrees Celsius) and residual water cleared using the bilge pump.
Where an outboard motor is used, the cooling system should be flushed out with disinfectant solution.
Other equipment used in the boat, including oars, row locks, anchors, ropes, buoys, fishing tackle and personal protective equipment (PPE), should be sprayed or cleaned with a 1% solution of disinfectant.
<u>Non-motorised Watercraft (e.g. canoes, kayaks, small sailing boats):</u>
These crafts should be sprayed or thoroughly cleaned both inside and out using a 1% solution of disinfectant.
Where practical, a volume of disinfection solution should be poured into the interior of the craft and all associated equipment and PPE used in the boating activity immersed to ensure a contact time with the disinfectant of at least 15 minutes.
Where it is not possible to fill the craft, the associated equipment and PPE should be cleaned with the disinfection solution.

Source: (IFI, 2013b).

Due to the high volume of tourists partaking in recreational angling and associated activities who could, raise the threat of an introduction of an unwanted species or pathogens, these guidelines act as an important tool for protection, but only if implemented and monitored correctly. According to the European Commission (2013) the introduction of non-segmented negative strand virus (NNS) has the potential to have significant impacts on biodiversity, as well as serious economic and social consequences, with the rate of introduction increasing across Europe. Although there has been a recent shift toward prevention of invasions (Cook et al., 2010 and Simberloff, 2013), traditional approaches to managing invasions which pose a threat to biosecurity have been largely reactionary in nature, with a focus on control through mitigation and eradication (Keller et al., 2007; Foxcroft and McGeoch, 2011). Although these guidelines are a step in the right direction, they may be seen as 'too little, too late' because many invasive species have already been established in Ireland, which raises the question of how these guidelines are being implemented and effectively monitored. Also, at the early stages of this research, it became evident that there is a shortcoming in Ireland's biosecurity defence mechanism and, potentially, this means that there are inadequate protection and prevention measures in place. The aim of this research is to analyse the planning for biosecurity and its associated impacts in the Irish tourism sector. The outcome of which, can provide Irish Local authorities and Irish tourism entrepreneurs with greater management techniques for future biosecurity management.

Biosecurity Mitigation

Biosecurity involves preventing the introduction of harmful new organisms, and eradicating or controlling those unwanted organisms that are already present (Biosecurity Strategy Development Team, 2001a, sec.1.3, cited in Hall, 2010). A major factor in the spread of biosecurity threats is air travel. As noted by Warren et al. (2010), in 1968, which was the time of the last influenza pandemic, 261 million passengers worldwide travelled by air (ICAO, 1968). However, in 2008, passenger air traffic exceeded two billion (ICAO, 2008). The International Health Regulations (IHR) are legally binding regulations, forming international law, and are effectively the leading international legal instrument with respect to health (WHO, 2007).

'The purpose and scope of these international regulations are to prevent, protect against, control, and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease, in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.' (WHO, 2008, p.10).

Initially, the IHR were adopted in 1969 by the World Health Organisation Health Assembly and covered six quarantinable diseases including: Smallpox, Yellow Fever, Plague and Cholera. The most recent version of the IHR was developed,

'...in consideration of the growth in international travel and trade, and the emergence or re-emergence of international disease threats and other public health risks.' (WHO, 2008: 1).

IHR (2005) cover food-borne diseases, accidental and deliberate outbreaks, and new health events that have resulted from chemical, nuclear and sudden environmental changes (WHO, 2007). These include IHR (2005) provisions with regard to routine public health measures and minimum capacity requirements for international traffic at designated points of entry such as specified airports, ports and ground crossings (WHO, 2007, 2008, 2009). In the IHR (2005) document, Areas of Work for Implementation, it is stated that:

'It is critical that all countries have the capacity to detect, assess and respond to public health events. They will then be able to contain the spread of diseases within their borders, thus minimizing the international spread of diseases. This is not the case in many countries and specific national action plans must be developed to improve countries' capacities. Enhanced international health security depends on all countries' commitment in this area.' (WHO, 2007)

It is noted by Hall, (2009) that in the SARS outbreak of 2003, substantial barriers were placed on people's mobility in order to prevent the further spread of the disease, including screening procedures and changes to national border customs and arrival forms, all of which had an impact on the future sustainability of many local tourism enterprises. Budd et al., (2011), state that regional airports fulfilling new functions, in particular the hosting of long haul flights, result in a greater risk of the importation of global infectious diseases. Furthermore, according to Warren et al., (2010) more recent scholarly work has been conducted into the spread of infectious disease by air travel. Air travel is evidently a large contributor to the biosecurity risk to Ireland. During the summer of 2009, the UK experienced one of the highest incidences of H1N1 Virus transmission outside of the Americas and Australia (ECDC, 2009). This was widely believed to be caused by direct charter flights from areas such as Cancun in Mexico, rather than a higher volume of airline traffic which was part of a connecting flight. In a study of global travel during the H1N1 pandemic of 2009 in the UK by Warren et al., (2010), it was noted that much of the biosecurity protection measures associated with this pandemic focused on air travel. For example, the media began reporting on a number of practices being adopted by other jurisdictions in order to slow or even halt the spread of this disease at that time. Some of the measures adopted by other countries included: 'reinforced checks' at points of entry for visitors from affected countries; the provision of additional medical staff; use of thermal imaging scanners; planned detention/quarantining of any passengers suspected of carrying the H1N1 Virus; and powers to 'disinfect' suspected passengers. (Journalistic examples taken from: The Irish Times, 27 April 2009; The Mirror, 28 April 2009; The Guardian, 30 April 2009).

However issues arose about the implementation of these measures and their negative effect on global travel. Although many of the Asian countries affected had been quick to set up thermal scanners at airports 'to screen for feverish passengers', reliability and cost of the technologies employed came into question. Other temperature checks and quarantine procedures appeared to single out passengers who appeared even slightly over temperature, creating many unwarranted quarantine instances, while also creating a fearfulness in the public. What is now evident from previous outbreaks is that, although sever biosecurity measures are warranted in some circumstances, a pre-planned approach to disease outbreaks are the way forward in order to mitigate risks before they become established. Such approaches should be developed in conjunction with tourism entrepreneurs.

Tourism Entrepreneurship

Due to the highly competitive environment of the tourism industry, entrepreneurship and innovation are crucial for dealing with current consumer, technological and environmental trends (Daniel, 2017). Governments around the world seek to maximise economic growth by providing a framework for economic development, of which entrepreneurship is regarded, almost universally, as an integral component (Hall, 2008). Furthermore, this is also considered integral to national and regional competitiveness. However, before realising the potential for the mitigation of biosecurity threats by tourism entrepreneurs, it is important to understand the motives, key characteristics and traits of these people. According to Shane and Venkataraman (2000), one of the problems in defining entrepreneurship is linked with the fact that it involves the nexus of two other phenomena: the presence of lucrative opportunities, and the presence of enterprising individuals. Innovation in this case may not be considered as a radical innovation which represents a break from the already established structure of entrepreneurship, but rather an incremental innovation, which refers to changes aimed at significantly improving the functionality and performance of the company (Villaverde et al., 2017).

The basic model of the entrepreneurial process involves personality traits which current research suggests include a cognitive way of thinking (Mitchell et al. 2002), one that may be construed as thoughtful, skilled engagement with the process of opportunity recognition, development and formation within a specifiable entrepreneurial environment context. Moreover, such engagement also comprises an effective set of behaviours that help direct and energise the entrepreneur (Chell, 2008). In terms of entrepreneurial behaviour, according to Chell (2008), the person is perceived in terms of cognitive factors described as:

- Knowledge, including experience and beliefs;
- Skills that are acquired through training and education and which are relevant to the entrepreneurial process;

- Abilities or skills that are already inherent to the entrepreneur such as, for example, a musical or creative ability that may be drawn upon to facilitate innovation and opportunity development in a known field;
- Constructs of communication, specifically the skills-set that enables the individual to describe their world, their situation and the objects and people around them and, at a higher level, form schema for understanding and describing complex phenomena, events and circumstances;
- Plans that include strategies and tactics devised by the entrepreneur to enable them to negotiate their world.

Source: (Chell, 2008).

It is also important to note that it is not merely these cognitive factors which the person possesses that are essentials, as Chell (2008) goes further to state that a person's individual make-up also includes other factors which comprise emotions, drive, attitudes and values (Chell, 2008). All of these personal influences may prompt tourism entrepreneurs in Ireland to create a solution for biosecurity threats specifically in relation to adventure tourism. Nonetheless, preliminary results of this research have identified very little entrepreneurial involvement in mitigating biosecurity threats in Ireland. The researchers endeavoured in vain to identify entrepreneurs manufacturing and retailing mobile kits for sanitising equipment such as fishing rods or boating equipment, or any entrepreneurs renting out equipment aimed at minimising biosecurity threats such as specialist wetsuit hire for tri-athletes. From a micro scale of people renting out wetsuits, to a macro scale of airport scanning, none of these procedures were identified at the early stages of this research. What this research did expose is that there is now a clear prerequisite for a greater emphasis on biosecurity by government bodies, such as Inland Fisheries Ireland and Invasive Species Ireland, and indeed, all leading Irish authorities, to place a stronger focus on cost-effective regulated preventative measures. However, regarding air travel in and out of Ireland, the early stages of this research found little evidence of entrepreneurs providing biosecurity equipment such as thermal scanning, adequate sanitation or quarantine equipment. Significantly, neither was there any sign of biosecurity-specific training for airport personnel within Ireland. With an increasing number of disease outbreaks worldwide and pandemics in general, as well as the continuing rise of global populations and the afore-mentioned growing attractiveness of tourism into Ireland, there may be potential for Irish entrepreneurs to bridge this biosecurity deficit in a truly effective way at all points of entry into the country, but especially through Ireland's airports. This could be done through the development of efficient and cost effective biosecurity procedures which can be used in tandem with general airport operations, with as little disruption as possible. In addition to this, an emergency action plan may be developed to be implemented in the event of a serious global outbreak. This might consist of a national roll-out of biosecurity stations utilising disinfection and screening

procedures. The essential key to this entire proposal, however, is for professional, rather than *ad hoc*, training and education of all personnel involved at every level in reducing Ireland's biosecurity risks.

Conclusion

It is clear that there is huge potential for an increasing risk to both human and environmental health in Ireland. This is due to an increased number of biosecurity threats arriving into the country via tourist vectoring and from a number of different entry points. Recent outbreaks of diseases such as the occurrence of SARS in 2003 and the more recent Ebola Virus outbreak of 2014, which produced a high infection rate among humans, is a clear indication of the level of risk to human health throughout Ireland. Furthermore the increasing level of global travel as result of growing tourism numbers, easier and cheaper worldwide transportation and globalisation, are all factors which contribute to an increased level of biosecurity risk to human health.

The environment has also come under increasing pressure from biosecurity. With many invasive species already established in Ireland, this has led to many native species becoming critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable and has put Ireland's rich biodiversity at risk, in addition to the large cost to the state of eradication measures of non-native species. There are many transmission pathways for non-native species entering Ireland; however it is tourism that has been identified on many occasions as a large contributor to their introduction. This is, in part, due to the nature of popular tourism activities in Ireland which mainly consists of large volumes of tourists travelling to areas of vulnerable environments. This highlights the need for a tourism planning approach that includes a significant plan put in place regarding biosecurity management. This, in turn, could potentially create opportunities for entrepreneurs to mitigate Ireland's biosecurity threats through providing sanitation equipment, specialist sports equipment rental, scanning and quarantine facilities at Ireland's points of entry, and by providing education on biosecurity.

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CHAPTER 6

An Investigation into the Impact of Airbnb on Hotel Accommodation in the Cork City Area

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Introduction

One of the most recent disruptors to the tourism industry globally has been the emergence and rapid growth of the sharing economy, specifically Airbnb, as a key instigator of this disruption. Since Airbnb's inception in 2008, it has experienced phenomenal growth with little indication that this growth will cease in the near future. There is very little research, however, into the impact that Airbnb is having on traditional tourism accommodation provision. Nonetheless, there is some evidence emerging from the USA which focuses on the development of Airbnb, its impact on the hotel sector and the sustainability of its business model, but there is a dearth in the literature examining the role of Airbnb in an Irish tourism context, and whether or not it poses a disruption to the hotel sector here in Ireland. It is in this context that the current chapter seeks to address this gap, by assessing the impact of Airbnb on the hotel accommodation sector in Cork City and its environs.

Literature Review

The Emergence of the Sharing Economy

Globally, the sharing economy, or the sharing of goods and services peer-to-peer, is rapidly expanding, particularly in tourism and travel services. According to Tuttle (2014), until recently, very few people, with the exception of early adopters, knew what the term meant. Frenken *et al.* (2015), define the sharing economy as: consumers granting each other temporary access to underutilised physical assets (idle capacity), possibly for money. The sharing economy has also been referred to by Rifkin (2014) as a hyper-connected economy which is enabled by digital platforms such as, in this case, a specific telephone application: the Airbnb App. This digital platform has the ability to link potential consumers to anything and anyone, from private individuals to multinational corporations. Additionally, the sharing economy is also referred to as: the collaborative consumption; the collaborative economy; or the peer-to-peer economy. The sharing economy challenges traditional notions of private ownership and is based instead on the shared production and consumption of goods and services. Its origins were in not-for-profit initiatives such as Wikipedia, which was founded in 2001. The concept of the sharing economy should be distinguished from what is traditionally called sharing. The principle of sharing is that it does not involve an exchange of money. Sharing only happens in the absence of market transactions.

Airbnb and the Sharing Economy

Airbnb is a pioneer of the sharing economy and has served over 30 million guests since it was founded in San Francisco in 2008. As a business, it now has over two million listings and operates in 192 countries. As outlined by Bradshaw (2014), the growth of sharing economy online platforms like Airbnb does not seem to be slowing anytime soon. Airbnb defines itself as, 'a social website that connects people who have space to share with those who are looking for a place to stay', and it exemplifies a community marketplace. It is, essentially, an online platform through which ordinary people rent out their spaces as accommodation for tourists.

Airbnb hosts list their spare rooms or apartments, establish their own nightly, weekly or monthly prices, and offer accommodation to Airbnb guests. Airbnb derives revenue from both guests and hosts for this service. The organisation charges guests a 9% to 12% service fee each time a reservation is made, depending on the length of the reservation, and they also charge hosts a 3% service fee to cover the cost of processing payments. Airbnb is largely self-regulating and the taxes or licenses required vary widely, depending on local laws which apply in the country where the Airbnb accommodation is situated. Guttentag (2013) argues that tourists use Airbnb not only because of its economic benefits, but also because of its perceived experiential values.

Airbnb has experienced extraordinary growth over the past few years, becoming the largest accommodation provider globally, offering over one million properties in approximately 34,000 cities and 192 countries (Varma *et. al.*, 2016). The most recent valuation of Airbnb estimates it to be \$31 billion (Fortune.com, 2017). The success of Airbnb can be signified by its philosophy and the emerging desire for tourists to experience authentic cultures. It also offers an alternative to traditional accommodation and enables visitors to discover off-the-beaten-track destinations. Oskam and Boswijk (2016: 26) attribute the success of Airbnb to the following factors:

- The experience value proposition for guests to ‘live like a local’;
- The concept is built on trust through interactivity and the community, while the vast quantity of establishments allows for easy access (peer-to-peer);
- The power of the network leads to increasing scale advantages;
- Leveraged assets.

The realisation of Airbnb’s success suggests that the traditional accommodation sector is being disrupted. The Disruptive Innovation theory, a term coined by Christensen *et. al.* (2015), hypothesises that a new business model, which is differentiated from traditional ways of doing business or offering traditional products, will cause limited disruption initially, but as it moves from a niche market to a mainstream market, it will eventually become an established way of doing business. Several analysts and investors, however, predict significant disruptions ahead, particularly for the so-called Millennial Generation (Fortune, April 2015).

The global financial services firm, Morgan Stanley (2016) estimates that Airbnb now occupies about 4 percent of traditional hotel demand. However, it predicts that this number could grow to 6 percent by 2018. Morgan Stanley further adds that Airbnb had more than 100 million room nights in 2016 in the USA and Europe, but believes it could have as many as 245 million room nights in 2018. Recently, Zervas *et al.*, (2016), collected information on all Airbnb listings in Texas, USA and found that the growth of Airbnb negatively affected the revenue of local hotels. The authors, however, found that the impact was somewhat uneven, with the impact felt much more by lower-end hotels than by high-end, business and luxury hotels.

Online social media and mobile technology have enabled the rapid expansion of the sharing economy. Advances in this type of technology tend to drive economic activity and innovation in ways that are unpredictable. According to Varma *et. al.*, (2016), Airbnb owes its existence to online social media. In fact, it is through social media that Airbnb provides users with useful information about potential accommodation. This is done through the use of videos, photographs and reviews of hosts, their accommodation, and guests. In this way, the company does its utmost to

guarantee the reliability of both parties and increases the likelihood of potential trust between guest and host.

Proponents of the sharing economy argue that Airbnb brings many benefits, including extra income from the users of such services, and new economic activities for cities. On the other hand, critics argue that the negatives of the sharing economy far outweigh the benefits. Many critics suggest that the sharing economy is about economic self-interest rather than sharing. It is in this context that an exploration of the impact of Airbnb on the Irish hotel industry is timely.

Issues in Relation to Airbnb

There have been numerous factors cited in available literature and mainstream media that focus on the negative and positive aspects, as well as the experiences of Airbnb guests and Airbnb hosts. One of the key issues emerging relates to the relatively unregulated nature of Airbnb in comparison to traditional registered accommodation providers (Varma *et. al.*, 2016). A further issue relates to taxation issues faced by Airbnb hosts and customers around the world. Any household or home owner can, technically, establish a tourism accommodation facility by registering their home or premises with Airbnb. One of the main motivations behind the development of Airbnb was to benefit homeowners and to allow them to subsidise the cost of their mortgages. In an Irish context, a recent case was taken against an Airbnb host in Dublin who rented their premises on an on-going basis throughout the year. In this specific case, the ruling by Dublin City Council and An Bord Pleanála related to a house in the Templebar area of Dublin, which was earning over €80,000 a year for the owner of the property through Airbnb rental alone. It was ruled that a change in planning from residential property to commercial property was required if the Airbnb rental situation was to continue. As a change in planning was enforced, the Airbnb host was subject to the same rates as any business operating in Templebar, thereby providing a level playing field for all accommodation providers in the area (Doyle, 2016).

A further issue relates to the Fáilte Ireland approved sector of accommodation provision which indicates the level of quality and service provided to potential tourists. As an Airbnb host, there is no quality approval and the entire business model is built on the concept of trust (Ert, *et. al.*, 2016). As the tourism experience is intangible and inseparable (Zeithaml *et. al.*, 2006), the host in an Airbnb exchange, together with their authentic experience of the locality, plays an integral role in the quality of the service delivered. In traditional accommodation provision, however, tourists have tangible cues they can identify with, most of which indicate the level of quality of the establishment, including the approval rating and, in many instances, the brand. In an Airbnb transaction, all of these elements are based on trust. Therefore, could the lack of regulation of Airbnb as an organisation lead to negative experiences for tourists and, in turn, tarnish the reputation of their destination?

Alternatively, some researchers suggest that Airbnb is driving growth in tourism, particularly in rural areas which would not have traditionally been accessible for tourists (Clifford, 2016). In a report conducted by Airbnb (2016), focusing on the rural impact of Airbnb, it was indicated that €22m was directly attributed to Airbnb, with an additional €101m indirectly, resulting in an overall economic contribution to rural areas in Ireland of €123m. This is additional revenue that would not have been generated without Airbnb, and it is suggested that it does not displace current accommodation provision.

Furthermore, four typical characteristics of the Airbnb user are: tourists who are travelling for leisure, people who tend to be younger, who may be constrained by their budget, but who are also looking for a unique experience. In 2015, however, Airbnb began to focus more on the corporate travel market, and enhanced its 'Airbnb for Business' product by launching a new global travel management platform that allows business travellers to book travel through Airbnb and, automatically, charges the cost to their employer. Through this initiative, Airbnb is able to target longer-term business travel more comparable with corporate temporary housing.

To date, the very limited academic research conducted on Airbnb has focused primarily on the USA market. A central question surrounding the sharing economy relates to its impact, both locally and globally. For example, will peer-to-peer online platforms materialise as a viable mainstream alternative to hotels? The primary objective of this chapter is to add to the apparent shortage of knowledge and information about the impact of Airbnb on hotel accommodation from an Irish perspective. In particular, the area chosen for investigation is Cork City and its environs.

Methodology

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with hotel managers in the Cork City area, in order to get insights into their perspectives on the growth of Airbnb (see Table 1 below). All four and five star hotels in Cork City and its environs provided the starting point for targeting interviewees. Initially, an email was sent to hotel managers outlining the aim of the research and establishing whether or not they were willing to be interviewed. All the hotel managers who were contacted agreed to be interviewed and were unilaterally enthusiastic about the potential of such research. Mutually suitable dates and times for the interviews were then arranged. The interviews took place during March and April 2017 and were conducted in-person by the authors. Each interview took approximately twenty minutes. As per academic best practice, all the interviewees were assured of complete anonymity and confidentiality. An interview guide was developed from a review of relevant extant literature. Research questions were designed in order to enable the authors to better understand how the hotel industry is responding to services such as Airbnb. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed after each interview. Table 1 summarises details regarding the respondents and their corresponding establishments.

Table 1: Summary of interview respondents

Interview	Role	Location	Rating
Interview A	Marketing Manager	Cork City centre	4 star hotel
Interview B	Marketing Manager	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel
Interview C	General Manager	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel
Interview D	General Manager	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel
Interview E	General Manager	Cork City centre	3 star hotel
Interview F	Marketing and Sales Director	Cork City centre	4 star hotel
Interview G	Marketing and Sales Director	Cork suburbs	5 star hotel
Interview H	General Manager	Cork City centre	4 star hotel
Interview I	Sales Director	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel
Interview J	General Manager	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel
Interview K	General Manager	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel
Interview L	General Manager	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel
Interview M	General Manager	Cork suburbs	4 star hotel

According to McCracken (1988), the face-to-face interview process allows us access to the mental world of the individual manager, in order that we might begin to see the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. McCracken further adds that the interview process gives the researcher an opportunity to metaphorically 'step into the mind of' another person, to see and experience the world as they do. The use of face-to-face interviews was considered appropriate for this research, as this form of information gathering provides depth, opportunities to probe issues further and it encourages respondents to relate, in their own words, experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the topic under investigation.

Findings and Discussion

Airbnb and the Sharing Economy

Interviewees were first offered the opportunity to provide their views on Airbnb and the sharing economy. It was apparent to the researchers that, in general, interviewees held strong beliefs that Airbnb is not negatively impacting on the hotel industry in Cork. This hypothesis was predominantly supported by the belief of interviewees that Airbnb focuses primarily on self-catering accommodation and home stay visits. Two hotel managers interviewed, who also have apartments as part of their accommodation portfolios, believed that competition is stronger in this market, but added that they continually invest financially in their properties,

thereby enabling them to charge higher prices. Furthermore, two respondents noted that Airbnb is a growing phenomenon and is still in its infancy in Ireland. These respondents stated that Airbnb has,

'...a global element attached to it and has really come out of nowhere.'
(Marketing Manager, D, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel). One interviewee went so far as to state:

'Airbnb is very clever, and I'm impressed as to how fast it has grown in the last few years. I think it is brilliant. I admire what they do so much, and I also admire the speed at which it has grown in a few years. It taps into markets where traditional hotels have not been able to do so [sic].' (General Manager, H, city centre 4 star hotel).

The general overview of the sharing economy was perceived as being, *'another market place'*, and in particular, Airbnb was seen to be affording people the opportunity to travel to Ireland who may not have done so without the uniqueness of the holiday experience offered by the company. One interviewee suggested that:

'We need to be realistic, Airbnb is here to stay. As a hotelier, I believe we need to embrace it, rather than fight it. We need to look at the big picture, for example, if we can get a further million visitors into our country, and them staying in Airbnb [sic], they are going to spend money in our economy, and make our economy stronger.' (General Manager, J, suburban 4 star hotel).

In particular, it was suggested that Airbnb may, in fact, be advantageous for the industry, as those who choose to stay in Airbnb accommodations may also choose to come back to Ireland at some point in the future, perhaps with their families, and there is the possibility that they may then choose to stay in more traditional forms of accommodation:

'The more people who come to Ireland the better, if they come as students and young adults of 19 or 20, when they don't have much disposable income, and if they like it they may come back in their 30s and 40s with their families and stay in hotels.' (Marketing and Sales Director, F, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel).

All interviewees concurred that the Airbnb brand and organisation will continue to grow. The majority of interviewees welcomed additional competition, even suggesting that competitors continue to keep standards high across the board. However, some cautioned that competitors need to be, *'on a level playing field'*, and some even stated plainly that, *'hotels and Airbnb's are not on the same playing field'*. All interviewees, however, were more negative in their responses when asked about Airbnb entering the corporate market. Respondents did suggest that it may be suitable for the corporate market when employees want or choose longer-term stays, for example, 25 nights and more. Interviewees further believed that many

international companies, such as Apple or EMC, which are heavily mandated, choose not to use Airbnb accommodation because they cannot track occupancy. Not being able to track occupancy, together with the absence of legislation and paucity of regulation surrounding Airbnb, was a recurring theme throughout all the interviews.

Regulation of Airbnb

Interviewees strongly articulated their views in relation to the lack of regulation surrounding Airbnb. Many interviewees are members of the Irish Hotels Federation and their views reflect the following press statement of that association:

'The Irish Hotels Federation supports a level playing field for all accommodation providers in terms of taxation policy, planning law and regulation of the sector. It is not possible at this stage to determine the effect unregistered accommodation service providers are having on the hotel sector. Ireland's hotel sector is highly regulated. It has one of the highest standards of service and quality of hotel stock in Europe and, indeed, across the world. The Irish Hotels Federation believes that quality assurance is paramount and that all accommodation services should be regulated and classified. This would create a fairer environment for all providers and investors in the sector while also providing quality assurance for guests. Unregulated accommodation providers raise serious issues in terms of insurance cover, health and safety risks and lack of adequate systems for redress for guest.' (Irish Hotels Federation, Press Statement, 2016).

All respondents believed that the lack of regulation regarding Airbnb was not helpful or positive for the Irish accommodation industry as a whole. Those interviewed for this research spoke very forcefully about the investment they make in training and developing staff, paying taxes and insurance and adhering to stringent health and safety legislation. They also spoke of the star ratings and the costs associated with achieving Fáilte approval:

'We have just come through the process of Fáilte Ireland inspections for their new classification system. The inspectors pick holes in things and you have to spend money to make changes and to get approval.' (General Manager, E, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel).

'In addition to not having any regulations or quality control there is also a lack of local governance. Not having local governance or regulations in place is a worry.' (General Manager, H, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel).

This concern of respondents emerged repeatedly throughout the interview process. Given that there are currently no quality control mechanisms in place for Airbnb, at least not on a parity with the rest of the Irish hospitality industry, it was strongly

felt by many of those interviewed that this could result in negative experiences for visitors to Ireland and, thus, could potentially tarnish the reputation of Irish tourism internationally. Although Airbnb is built on the concept of trust and user generated reviews, another hotel executive believed this was not sufficient in safe-guarding the reputation that he and many others operating in the hospitality industry, are striving to achieve:

'Here in Ireland we have a reputation of doing things well...if all of a sudden we are going [sic] unregulated it is going to have an impact.' (General Manager, D, suburban, 4 star hotel).

Respondents also noted the difficulty experienced by hotels in making profits, as margins in hotels are constantly being eroded with rising costs of rates and insurance, as well as health and safety requirements. All interviewees spoke about the 'very good profit' those operating Airbnb are gaining:

'Why should someone down the road putting someone up for €50 or €60 a night make a profit of €45 while I put someone up for double that and I am still only clearing €10 [sic].' (General Manager, C, suburban, 4 star hotel).

'Virtually anybody can open an Airbnb and, in a lot of cases, they have no standards and no regulations. We could be competing with Joe Blogs next door who is willing to charge very little, and I think that devalues what we offer to our customers.' (General Manager, L, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel).

Managers repeatedly spoke of the high level of service they continue to provide, 'regardless of whether Airbnb is on the market, or not.' They constantly referred to the additional value hotels provide, while bearing in mind at all times that they need to remain cost effective. Many respondents further added that customers are becoming more discerning, but most welcomed this. Some respondents also spoke about customers' expectations continually rising, thereby obliging all hotel standards to rise also, in order to meet these expectations. This includes providing 'an experience', which many respondents believed Airbnb are unable to provide. Given that interviewees were operating hotels in Cork City and its environs, there was a general view that their hotels attract a different type of customer. Many cited the corporate market and the wedding market as examples. Interviewees were further queried about their perceptions of Airbnb's target market.

Airbnb Target Market

Several respondents noted that Airbnb is a positive development for the Irish hospitality industry as it attracts a 'different type of tourist'. Managers believed that travellers aged thirty and under are much more price conscious and added that, 'people over 30 like their comfort and luxury.' They further suggested that, 'the more mature' traveller would probably still choose hotel accommodation because of the

additional facilities a hotel can offer, such as a bar, spa facilities, or a swimming pool. The generally held belief, however, was that Airbnb has identified a gap in the market and has potentially tapped into a new market that could actually offer opportunities for future development of the tourism industry as a whole:

'I think the demographic for Airbnb is a younger demographic or a seasoned traveller like the Millennial brigade [sic].' (Marketing Manager, B, suburban, 4 star hotel).

'I think the customer is very much early twenties, the back packers [sic].' (Marketing Manager, A, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel).

'I think Airbnb are aiming at the budget market, because that is how they started. They have now expanded to people who are willing to try something different, but it is all very much budget driven, as that is the market that they are aiming for.' (General Manager, L, Cork City centre 4 star hotel).

The majority of respondents believed that Airbnb's target market is the Millennial Generation including, specifically, the younger-aged traveller. However, two different viewpoints were articulated:

'I have been reading lately that Airbnb is attracting people who are in highly stressful roles and if they want to wind down and relax, they avoid hotels and instead they use Airbnb. If they are looking for magnificent locations, for example, opposite the Sydney Opera House, then Airbnb would be seen as an attractive option for them.' (General Manager, J, suburban, 4 star hotel).

'I believe Airbnb is an attractive option for families. Families might like to book a home rather than a hotel. I think families might be willing to give Airbnb a go. It is difficult traveling with children and an entire house would probably work out cheaper than a hotel.' (Marketing and Sales Director, G, suburban, 5 star hotel).

Overall, however, the respondents suggested that Airbnb was perceived primarily to target the millennials, who view hotels as, *'old hat and they do exactly what they say on the tin [sic]* (Marketing and Sales Director, F, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel). While the Millennial Generation is seeking something new and original, they may be risk averse and may be prepared to take their chances with an Airbnb establishment:

'The younger audience is a lot more risk averse. What is acceptable in your 20s may not be acceptable in your 30s or 40s.' (Marketing and Sales Director, G, suburban, 5 star hotel).

'A lot of travellers do want to do the next cool thing [sic]. Young people are attracted to this unique experience.' (Marketing and Sales Director, F, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel).

Respondents suggested that Millennials have grown up with the sharing economy and online social media and are, therefore, more likely to be comfortable with the concept of an experience based on trust and consumer generated reviews, rather than the regulated system of hotel rating and classification:

'The Millennials are looking for something a bit different, a bit quirky and they are not looking to stay in a four star hotel as they are all the same[sic].'
(General Manager, C, suburban 4 star hotel).

In summary, the overall impression presented was that Airbnb is an attractive option to those looking for a unique and 'quirky' experience on holiday, as well as to those who wish to experience first-hand the authentic experience and culture a destination has to offer. Airbnb provides travellers with the choice of a home-stay option, rather than renting an entire house or apartment, thereby, allowing the tourist to share an individual's home and learn about the local way of life. The type of accommodation offered by Airbnb is similar to that of a traditional bed and breakfast, which is perceived to be under threat from Airbnb. Finally, several respondents believed that self-catering, hostels and traditional bed and breakfast establishments are more vulnerable to the threat of Airbnb than the Irish hotel sector in general. As outlined, hotel managers believed that the hotel industry in Cork is largely not affected by Airbnb. The next logical line of questioning related to the future of Airbnb and its possible impact on the hotel industry.

Airbnb and its Future Impact on the Hotel Industry

All respondents noted that Airbnb is 'on their radar', albeit vaguely, as one interviewee succinctly noted:

'Airbnb has not affected our business yet, but, it is out there and it is something we all know about, but I think it is still in its infancy.' (General Manager, K, suburban, 4 star hotel).

One interviewee spoke about hotels and Airbnb co-existing and went so far as to suggest that hoteliers and Airbnb providers should, '*sit around a table and look at the rules [sic]*', and have discussions in relation to how both sectors might be strategically positioned and more advantageously marketed in order for both to survive. Another interviewee suggested:

'We would probably be talking a lot more about Airbnb if it was not for Brexit [sic]. We are all talking about Brexit non-stop at the moment, and if it was not for Brexit, we would probably be giving out a lot more about Airbnb [sic].'
(General Manager, M, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel).

Interviewees also spoke about the effects of the economic downturn in Ireland over the past few years, and many suggested that they have been unable to invest

financially in their respective properties. However, they now observe that some hoteliers are beginning to invest in their properties again. This trend towards re-investment, they suggested, would see standards rise even higher in Irish hotels, which should, *'help to negate the threat of Airbnb.'*

Seven interviewees expressed that their primary concerns relate to the relationship with online travel agents (OTAs) and in particular, the online digital platform: Booking.com. As one interviewee noted:

'Hotels are changing; most people are booking through OTAs now.' (Marketing and Sales Director, F, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel)

'We are battling with OTAs constantly because their marketing spend is huge. They use Google search and Pay per Click [sic]. Certainly, independent hotels cannot compete with that.' (Marketing and Sales Director, G, suburban, 5 star hotel)

'Our biggest concern is the booking.com side of things. We are trying to get booking.com customers to book directly. It's a much bigger issue for us than Airbnb [sic].' (Marketing Manager, A, Cork City centre, 4 star hotel)

Respondents had varying opinions regarding this relationship with OTAs. It was seen to be both positive and negative. However, overall, respondents considered the use of OTAs as a necessity to drive business to their facility. Two respondents considered the possibility of advertising their self-catering apartments with Airbnb simply because of the high impact of OTAs:

'We should embrace Airbnb as they have a far more reach than we do [sic]. I would hang on to their coat tails and there is enough business there for all of us.' (Marketing and Sales Director, G, suburban, 5 star hotel).

'I have thought about putting my apartments on Airbnb, but I haven't. My business is very specific, as it is largely driven by weddings. We do offer accommodation in our apartments for wedding guests, which generally means we do not have any problem with occupancy.' (General Manager, J, suburban, 4 star hotel).

One manager suggested that Airbnb has, *'made us look at our unique selling point and ask ourselves, how are we better than Airbnb [sic]?' Overall, respondents believed that if they continue to deliver high standards of service and maintain high quality standards, while still remaining competitive from a price perspective, they should be able to deliver, 'an experience, which Airbnb cannot.'* Finally, respondents reiterated the importance of remaining competitively priced and not competing with the, *'Airbnb guy next door'*, because in the Irish hotel industry, the main focus is on high standards and the delivery of an excellent service.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to investigate the impact of Airbnb on hotels in the Cork City region. The research findings demonstrate that Airbnb does not currently pose a threat to the hotel market in Cork City and its environs. All respondents, however, believe that Airbnb is a concept that should be monitored for future competition, particularly as Airbnb enters the corporate market. Direct quotations from the interviewees reveal that they view Airbnb as an alternative and innovative form of accommodation for visitors to Ireland. Many respondents welcome this competition and believe there is space for additional accommodation providers to enter the market. However, others cautioned that if Airbnb delivers an inferior service, then there is a danger of damaging the reputation of the Irish hospitality industry as a whole. Currently, none of the interviewees have any marketing strategies in place to prevent customers moving to Airbnb, as they strongly believe in their own product. They spoke positively and with confidence about the high percentages of return bookings to each of their respective hotels, a factor which they attributed to the high level of service provided by their staff. It was generally held by respondents that Airbnb cannot compete with or deliver on the overall positive experience provided by hotels. These findings, however, should be taken with a degree of caution, as respondents are hoteliers from four and five star establishments who cater predominately to the corporate and wedding market. The hoteliers generally believed that the impact of Airbnb would be felt much more by lower-end hotels and bed and breakfast providers, rather than by high-end, business and luxury hotels. The hotels researched for this chapter are operating in Cork City, a city that is currently experiencing high demand for accommodation due to the growth in tourism nationally. Respondents also believe that their corporate customers will remain loyal to each of their hotels and further added that Airbnb will not be able to deliver a consistency of service with operators from Delhi to Sydney.

Throughout the interviews, the key importance of well-trained staff was highlighted. Indeed, an excellent staff base was perceived by many respondents to be the main contributing factor, in their opinion, in creating the holiday experience customers seek. Many respondents believe that such an experience cannot be achieved in an Airbnb. All respondents held their staff in high esteem and invested heavily in their continued professional development. Many told how they encourage staff to 'be themselves', to show their personalities; that their hotel staff are actively encouraged to share with guests their own personally unique and expert local knowledge of the city and its environs, in an effort to optimise the holiday experience for all.

As illustrated, the main issues emerging from this research concern the lack of regulation and taxation for Airbnb providers. The potential for negative impact on the local economy due to loss of tax revenue was clearly highlighted. The interviewees called for regulatory policies to be introduced both at national and

local government levels. They further believe that Irish hotels still have a competitive advantage because they reduce risks through stringent policies of standardisation, such as Fáilte Ireland approval, safety regulations and their overall reputations.

Interestingly, many interviewees emphasised the positive aspects of Airbnb for tourism growth and welcomed the additional revenue which may be generated by tourists in the region. Some did, however, stress that whether or not tourists might return to the region depends greatly on the quality of their initial Airbnb experience. This, again, reinforces the proposal that there is a need for firm policies to be implemented with regard to accommodation standards in general.

Finally, the research findings in this chapter suggest that the impact of Airbnb on hotel accommodation in Cork City and its environs is almost negligible and that the perceptions of the hoteliers interviewed firmly view Airbnb as a niche player in the overall accommodation market.

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PART 2: INNOVATION IN EVENT AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 7

Event Entrepreneurship – the Growth of Féile an Phobail

Dr Adrian Devine

Frances Devine

Introduction

The word entrepreneur is widely used, both in everyday conversation and as a technical term in management and economics. There are many definitions of entrepreneur found in available literature and it is difficult to provide a concise and unambiguous definition. According to Davidson (2003), it is generally accepted that entrepreneurs are agents of change and that they provide innovative and creative ideas for enterprises to grow and make profit. They act to create and build a vision from virtually nothing, hence being enterprising. From an event management perspective, an event entrepreneur can therefore be defined as someone (or a group of people), who sets up a new event (Raj et al., 2013). To achieve this, and for the event to be a success, the event entrepreneur must identify a gap in the market and design an event that meets the needs of the target audience.

In this chapter, the authors will discuss how Féile an Phobail, a community festival set up in West Belfast in 1988, has grown from a relatively humble parade of floats, bands and GAA sports clubs, walking in their club regalia, to now having become the largest community arts festival on the island of Ireland. What makes this case study even more interesting is the fact that this festival was set up during the so-called 'troubles' in Northern Ireland, and at a time when West Belfast was one of the worst affected areas. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the challenges that the organisers of Féile an Phobail have overcome, as well as the entrepreneurial skills that were required to develop this community festival. In order to gain an insight into

this festival, the authors conducted ten in-depth interviews with past and current members of the organising committee, one of whom was a founding member. To elicit as much information as possible from these interviews, the authors combined the general interview guide approach with an open-ended question approach. The data gathered was analysed using thematic analysis, the main findings of which are presented in the following chapter.

Féile an Phobail – Rationale and Motivation

According to Raj et al. (2013), most successful ideas for starting a new business, or setting up a new event, come from identifying gaps in the market or from problems that people face at the onset of the task. In the case of Féile an Phobail, it was a mixture of both. From 1968 until 1998, Northern Ireland was a war zone with an ongoing cycle of public protest and violence fuelled by sectarian division and hatred. During this period, which is often referred to as the ‘troubles’, over 3,600 people were killed and over 30,000 were injured. West Belfast was at the centre of many of the major incidents during the early days of the conflict. For instance, on August 9th 1971, when the British government introduced internment (imprisonment without trial), among the people hardest hit was the community of West Belfast. Thereafter, ‘August 9th’ became the major focus for annual protests against British rule, including the burning of bonfires and widespread street demonstrations. Unfortunately, the protests came at a price. It was a time of rioting and gun battles and fatalities. In these confrontations local communities lost out most, as the streets of West Belfast lay littered with burnt-out vehicles, and deliveries and essential services were suspended by the local authorities.

During an interview for this chapter, Danny Morrison, who is a founding member and former chairman of Féile an Phobail, discussed how the festival grew directly out of the violent events of one particular year, the spring of 1988. In March 1988, three Nationalists were killed by the British Army in Gibraltar. Their funerals in Milltown Cemetery (West Belfast) were attacked by a loyalist paramilitary and three mourners were killed. The funeral of one of those three was disrupted by a speeding car, occupied by two armed, undercover British soldiers. They were dragged from the car and killed shortly afterwards. After this incident, the people of that area were demonised as ‘savages’ by the establishment and the media. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at that time, Peter Brooke, casually referred to these people as, ‘the terrorist community’, and the Democratic Unionist Party proposed that a wall be built around West Belfast to segregate it from the rest of the city. In reaction to this unparalleled negative and damaging portrayal of the community, local community groups along with their MP, Gerry Adams, decided to organise a festival. Its purpose was to celebrate the positive side of the community and provide entertainment at a price that the majority of the community could afford. The date deliberately chosen for the festival was the

week around August 9th, which saw street parties and concerts replace bonfires and confrontations.

Development Issues

According to Burke (2006), because entrepreneurs tend to operate in uncertain environments, risk-taking is a fundamental part of entrepreneurship. This was certainly the case for those responsible for organising Féile an Phobail. The ‘troubles’ created a very volatile, unstable operating environment and the organising committee, which was made up solely of volunteers, faced many challenges, the majority of which were directly related to the ‘troubles’. While being interviewed for this chapter, Danny Morrison identified three major barriers and all three were inextricably linked to the politics of Northern Ireland at that time.

The first barrier was the attitude of some Unionists towards the event. According to Jeong and Santos (2004) festivals can act as political instruments, and this was how many Unionists viewed Féile an Phobail. They were sceptical of any event that was geared towards galvanising a Nationalist community, with some Unionist politicians going as far as describing it as a ‘Provo’s at play carnival’ (‘Provos’ was a commonly-used shortened term for the Irish Republican Army, the militant arm of Nationalism). Their main criticism of the event was that it excluded a large section of working class people living in West Belfast, namely Unionists living on the Shankill Road. This links into Quinn (2003) and Finkel’s (2010) argument that, rather than embracing a community, such festivals can operate as spaces of exclusion. Responding to this criticism in a newspaper article in 1995, the festival committee acknowledged that the event did represent and reflect the Nationalist community, but in defence of Féile an Phobail, they went on to discuss how the organising committee had made efforts to reach out and encourage cross-community participation:

‘We can’t dilute our Nationalist culture, it’s part of the dynamic energy behind the festival and its expression. But we do not see that as necessarily being exclusive or sectarian. In fact there are many events – the concerts, the plays, the comedy nights – that Unionist people can come along to without feeling that they were are contributing to the nationalist or republican cause.’ (Féile an Phobail, 1995)

The second barrier which Féile an Phobail faced was funding. According to Kobia and Sikalieh (2010), when starting out on a new venture, entrepreneurs are often faced with financial hurdles. Devine and Devine (2012) discuss how securing funding for an event is often a bureaucratic minefield which requires event organisers to prepare funding proposals and grant applications. For Féile an Phobail, this problem was compounded by the fact that during the ‘troubles’, funding in Northern Ireland was often used as a ‘political pawn’ by local politicians. Both Farrell (1980) and Tonge

(2005) discuss how, during the ‘troubles’, the Unionist Party dominated local politics and discriminated against Nationalist communities throughout Northern Ireland. According to Danny Morrison, because Unionist politicians controlled the ‘purse-strings’, it made his job of developing a community festival in a nationalist area much more difficult:

‘In the early years lack of statutory funding made it almost impossible for us to plan and develop the festival. Covering basic costs for an ever-expanding festival became a major struggle, with statutory bodies and Belfast City Council, for example, withholding or minimising funding on the most spurious of grounds, often in a discriminating fashion which forced us to resort to the courts on occasion.’ (Danny Morrison, Founder and Former Chairmen of Féile an Phobail).

The third barrier was regulatory. According to Morrison, political bias was, once again, an issue for Féile an Phobail when it first started to apply for permits and entrainment licences. Bladen et al. (2012) discuss how, no matter which country an event is organised in, there is a myriad of regulations with which the event manager must comply. These regulations change from country to country and are often governed by local authorities. In the case of Féile an Phobail, the local authority responsible for administering permits and entertainment licenses was Belfast City Council, and this proved to be a major stumbling block for Féile an Phobail, particularly during its early years:

‘Our first concerts in 1988 were not ‘legal’, insofar as we had no engagement with the local authorities regarding licensing laws or the volume levels of the music or the hours we played to [sic]! City Hall was under the control of Unionist councillors who were hostile to the Nationalist community in West Belfast so we did not even bother wasting our time applying.’ (Danny Morrison, Founder and Former Chairmen of Féile an Phobail).

According to Wickham (2006), a characteristic demonstrated by all successful entrepreneurs is persistence. In the case of Féile an Phobail, despite the barriers discussed above, the organising committee remained committed and motivated. As with many new entrepreneurial ventures, progress in the early years was slow. One interviewee, who was on the organising committee between 1990 and 1993, discussed how the committee’s motto was: *‘...think about what can be done rather than what cannot be done’*. This links into what Neck and Manz (1992) refer to as ‘opportunity thinking’, whereby entrepreneurs focus on potential challenges and ways of dealing with these situations. By adopting such a positive approach during the darkest days of the ‘troubles’, this meant that when a peace deal for Northern Ireland was eventually brokered in 1998, the foundations had been laid for further growth.

Responding to Change

In August 1994, the IRA announced its first ceasefire and, over the next four years, as Nationalist and Unionist politicians negotiated a peace agreement in the shape of the Good Friday Agreement (1998), the political barriers discussed above were gradually broken down. Although there are still some political tensions in Northern Ireland today, the peace process has changed the political landscape and the importance of the peace process in the development of Féile an Phobail is summed up in the following quote by Danny Morrison:

'The peace process liberated everything and made so much more possible [sic].'

Integral to the concept of entrepreneurship is the ability to take action and respond to change. In this context, Féile an Phobail has responded to changes in the wider political environment by introducing a series of political debates to its programme. In addition to attracting a large audience and media interest since the mid-1990s, these debates have played an important role in the peace process by encouraging cross-community dialogue. They have brought together former enemies and political opponents to its festival platforms, which in turn has helped break down barriers, not only in West Belfast, but across Northern Ireland as a whole. Its culture of inclusiveness has provided a voice for relatives of all victims of the 'troubles', and has seen its festival platforms graced by Nationalist and Unionist politicians, Nationalist and Unionist paramilitaries, religious leaders, former British soldiers and serving police officers. Over the years, debates and discussions have tackled controversial topics such as the decommissioning of weapons, devolution of policing and justice for relatives bereaved by violence. While being interviewed for this chapter, Danny Morrison discussed how, having lived through the troubles, the organising committee was conscious of the damage that exclusion, censorship and demonisation can do to the heart and soul of a community. He went on to discuss Féile an Phobail's policy of inclusiveness and how all the Unionist political parties and representatives of Unionist opinion have standing invitations to attend political debates.

Although the debates on local politics often grab the headlines in local newspapers, it should be noted that these debates are not confined to the politics and politicians of Northern Ireland. Féile an Phobail has attracted international politicians including English MPs and US Congressmen. Among the speakers to attend the festival, there have also been well known journalists and documentary filmmakers such as: Robert Fisk (London's 'Independent'); Peter Taylor (BBC's 'Panorama'); and Oscar-winner and American Film Director, Michael Moore. All of these speakers have tackled a wide range to issues:

'We have talks about contemporary life, about poverty, emigration, racism, economics; but also historical talks about, for example, why so many

Irish people enlisted in the British army in the nineteenth century. (Danny Morrison, Founder and Former Chairmen of Féile an Phobail).

In addition to breaking down political barriers, Féile an Phobail has worked unceasingly towards removing cultural barriers in West Belfast. Raj et al. (2013) discuss how event entrepreneurs must be innovative and creative. This has certainly been the case with Féile an Phobail, as the festival offers a mixture of artistic events to suit all interests, whether low, high or middle-brow (Roberts, 2004). Among some of those who have participated in Féile an Phobail are internationally renowned music acts such as Girls Aloud, Westlife and Status Quo. This links into Quinn's (2013) argument that festivals can attract artists to places that might be 'off the beaten track' and lacking in a well-developed and/or permanent cultural infrastructure. As such, Féile an Phobail has offered the community audience access to see such popular artists perform, an experience that they might otherwise have been denied. However, Féile an Phobail is not just about promoting international performers. Indeed, its policy down through the years has been to showcase the local with the national and the international. As a result, local bands have performed at the same gig as legendary acts such as the Stranglers and Status Quo, whilst local poets and writers have had the opportunity to read their works on the same podiums as such renowned authors as Pat McCabe and Roddy Doyle.

In 2012, the Minister for Arts, Culture and Leisure acknowledged the valuable contribution that Féile an Phobail has made to community life in West Belfast, and described it as, *'a superb example of a dynamic organisation in the promotion of the Arts.'* Féile an Phobail has an Entertainments, Discussion and Debate sub-committee, which provides ongoing support and advice throughout the year to the main organising committee, in order to ensure that the festival has a full programme of quality events. Through this structure, Féile an Phobail has been able to enhance access to and participation in the arts for community groups that were significantly under-represented in the audience.

As a non-profit making organisation, Féile an Phobail has brought international acts into an historically deprived area, which is something that was normally beyond the budgets of working-class people. This raises a very salient point: both Waterman (1998) and Quinn (2003) discuss how some festivals are exclusive to elite audience groups directly because of high admission fees which act as barriers to inclusivity. In 2013, eighty-two percent of Féile an Phobail events were free, whilst the remaining eighteen percent were subsidised. According to Arcodia and Whitford (2006) and Carlesen et al. (2007), this is good practice in an area such as West Belfast, as it reflects the economic conditions and gives people in lower socio-economic groups, greater access to cultural activities.

Developing the Portfolio

According to Carlsen et al. (2007) festivals may need to change over time in order to widen their support base in the local community, as the local community itself may change over time. A similar point was raised by Duffy and Mair (2015) when they discussed how some festivals fail to change in keeping with the community for whom they were developed and, over time, may begin to lose their relevance to local people. For Féile an Phobail, there was always a risk that, as an event set-up in response to the ‘troubles’, it would lose its appeal once a peace deal was brokered. However, this has not been the case. In fact, in the post-‘troubles’ era, Féile an Phobail has grown from a one-week festival to a year-round programme with many diverse events.

Building on the success of its August festival, Féile an Phobail has introduced a four-day spring festival called Féile an Earraigh. Since its inception in 2002, this four-day festival has become a very important weekend in Belfast’s event calendar, attracting large crowds to the city during what is normally regarded as ‘off-season’ for local tourism businesses. Similar to the August festival, it celebrates the best of Irish culture and the arts in West Belfast. The festival programme includes: Irish traditional music sessions; master-classes; school workshops; concerts; tours and walks; debates and discussions; literary events; youth and sporting events; and family-based activities.

In 2002, Féile an Phobail also pioneered a children’s festival in Northern Ireland, ‘Draiocht’, with activities ranging from sports to multi-cultural and educational events. In its first year alone, 5,000 children and young people participated in ‘Draiocht’. In conjunction with this event, Féile an Phobail has set up an annual youth arts programme. This project is co-ordinated by Féile an Phobail’s Youth Arts Development Officer, who works in partnership with community youth workers across West Belfast in order to develop the medium of arts as a vehicle for providing a diverse range of opportunities for all young people in the community.

As part of its community outreach work, Féile an Phobail also operates a very successful disability awareness project called ‘Oscailt’, which when translated into English means: ‘Open’. This programme promotes equal opportunities and access to the arts for people with disabilities. As a means of raising disability awareness, the programme encourages people with disabilities to attend festival events, as well as to organise their own, all as part of Féile an Phobail’s annual programme. To this end, it offers otherwise isolated individuals and groups living in West Belfast, a voice and a public platform to showcase their many talents and achievements.

The Impact of Féile an Phobail

Cooney (2005) discusses how entrepreneurship contributes to economic growth and is crucial for a country's global competitiveness. As Féile an Phobail has grown, its economic impact has increased, at both local and international levels. Earlier in this chapter, the authors discussed how Féile an Phobail was originally set up in 1988, primarily in reaction to the negative publicity West Belfast was receiving in local and international media coverage. Its purpose was to celebrate the positive side of the community and to project the area in a progressive light. To that end, the festival has been a huge success. Over the last twenty-six years, Féile an Phobail has achieved international recognition while maintaining solid and important links with the local community. This is summed up in the following quote from a former Director of the Festival, Deirdre McManus:

'We took control of our image. We showcased all the talent that there is actually within West Belfast and we also interacted with people outside of the community on a more positive note.'

This view is shared by founder member and former chairman of Féile an Phobail, Danny Morrison:

'The festival has cemented a sense of identity and perhaps ended prejudices and biases that people had about West Belfast.'

For an area like West Belfast, which was historically desperate to attract jobs and inward investment, making the news headlines for the 'right reasons' was, and still is, vital to local economic growth. Even during its early years, which were also some of the most violent days of the 'troubles', Féile an Phobail helped project West Belfast to others in a different, more constructive manner.

Closely linked to image is tourism and, according to Getz (2013), festivals have strong tourism potential because they can create 'product', enliven a destination, animate static attractions and promise a glimpse into the authentic culture of a place. McKercher et al (2006) discuss how small community festivals embody the kind of authentic cultural experience so sought after by tourists. Féile an Phobail was and still is, primarily a festival for the local community, but it has grown to the point where it now has a unique appeal and now has, consequently, the capacity to attract both domestic and international tourists. For instance, in 2014 the event attracted a total audience of 70,000 people. Fifteen thousand of these visitors were international, generating local tourism revenue and creating what Chalip (2004) refers to as 'the multiplier effect,' whereby money is recirculated around the local economy.

From a wider societal perspective, since its formation in 1988, Féile an Phobail has provided many ancillary benefits for the local community. According to Wilks (2011) festivals and events create the conditions and contexts within which groups of people can develop a sense of community. Building on this point, Wheatley and

Kellner-Rogers (1998:1) suggest that festivals can become the heart of a community, as their celebratory nature provides residents with conditions of freedom and connectedness, rather than a fixation on the forms and structures of the community. For Derrett (2003:51), festivals offer opportunities to ‘nurture and sustain what is important to their constituency,’ and demonstrate a sense of community by offering connections, a sense of belonging, support, empowerment, participation and safety. This links with Chwe (1998) and Moscardo’s (2007) work on social capital, and how festivals can empower communities and create trust, cooperation, goodwill and reciprocity. From the outset, building social capital in West Belfast has been a priority for the organisers of Féile an Phobail, hence its name when translated into English: a festival of the people. In fact, the current organising committee argues that social capital was, and still is, the cornerstone of this community festival.

During the darkest days of the ‘troubles,’ Féile an Phobail brought the Nationalist community together to celebrate its culture, a culture which, in many respects, was itself under attack during the ‘troubles.’ It also provided the community with a ‘time out of time’ (Duvignaud, 1976:15), and a welcome release, however temporary, from the ongoing bombings and shootings. The festival also helped to channel the energies of the youth in the community into constructive activities and, in doing so, offered them a glimpse of what a ‘normal society’ could look like. Thus, by providing opportunities for shared collective community action and experiences, Féile an Phobail engendered a sense of pride in the community and offered a temporary distraction from the violence and suffering.

According to Duffy and Mair (2015), the benefits of holding festivals include opportunities for local people to become involved through volunteering. During the interview with Danny Morrison, he discussed how covering the costs for an ever-expanding festival was, and still is, a major struggle for the organisers. According to Danny, it simply wouldn’t be possible except for its cohort of volunteer workers. This links directly with Molloy’s (2002) argument that, in the absence of local volunteers assuming a variety of key organising roles, workers would have to be employed and the festival costs would become prohibitive. In the case of Féile an Phobail, each autumn a management committee is elected by community representatives at an annual general meeting. Each member of this committee is then given a certain section of the event to plan, and it is their responsibility to recruit and manage a team of volunteers to implement their plan. In 2014, the event recruited a total of 550 volunteers, all of whom performed a variety of roles ranging from event steward to venue manager. Finkel (2010) discusses how volunteering gives people who would otherwise not meet, the opportunity to mix with others across a wide spectrum of backgrounds and interests. From a socio-economic perspective, volunteering helps develop skills and experiences for those seeking employment, a crucial outcome in an area like West Belfast, which suffered high unemployment as a result of ‘troubles’ (Johnson et al., 2011).

In addition to volunteering, Getz (2013) discusses how, if a festival is to remain viable and a part of the community, organisers must also forge a strong working relationship with local businesses, public organisations and community agencies. The following quote from Danny Morrison suggests that Féile an Phobail managed to achieve this by collaborating with a range of stakeholders:

'We work not just with the local community and various ethnic minorities, but in partnership with trade unions, health and social services trusts, local transport authorities, the national tourist board and the hotel industry.'

The stakeholders recognise the mutual benefits to be gained from being associated with the festival. For example, every year, the local hospital sponsors a health lecture which helps raise general health awareness within the local community. Féile an Phobail has also developed an excellent relationship with the media and, each year, a local television personality chairs one of the 'political debates'.

Conclusion

From relatively humble beginnings then, in 1988, Féile an Phobail has grown to become the largest community festival on the island of Ireland. It is testament to the organising committee and their entrepreneurial spirit that they have managed to develop this festival in such a politically charged and unstable environment. They have persevered and overcome political, legal and financial barriers and, in more recent years, Féile an Phobail has contributed to the peace process through its political debates. This makes it both an example of good practice and an inspiration to other event entrepreneurs. What started out as a week-long festival has now grown into a year-long programme of events. The August festival remains its flagship event and attracts thousands of international visitors annually to West Belfast, and yet, the local community remains at the heart of its programming. Féile an Phobail was set up for the Nationalist community in West Belfast during the darkest days of the 'troubles' and, although the organising committee has been creative and innovative, it still maintains its status as 'the people's festival'.

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CHAPTER 8

Owner/Manager Entrepreneurial Capability and Innovation in the Tourism Micro Firm – A Framework based on Absorptive Capacity

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Introduction

The Irish tourism industry is recognised as being of major importance across a number of criteria. Economically, the industry contributed 7 billion euro to the Irish gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015 (Fáilte Ireland, 2016). Tourism employment in the food and employment sector is 143,000 and rises to 205,000 in the wider tourism sector (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2016). Looking ahead, there are positive projections for the tourism industry in terms of GDP growth and employment (Fáilte Ireland, 2016). In investment terms, the tourism industry plays a key role in acting as a magnet for foreign direct investment in a range of areas, but most notably world class hotels (IHF, 2015). Investment of this nature is a vital source of helping recovery in areas of the Irish property market (Fáilte Ireland, 2016).

Micro firms dominate the tourism industry in terms of the actual number of firms (Mattimoe, 2015). Though making a lower value added contribution than larger firms, micro firms contribute economically to GDP growth, notably in rural areas where economic development relies heavily on the micro firm (Duffy, 2010). Specifically,

they provide employment, especially in rural areas where larger firms no longer exist (Kearney *et al.* 2014) and, from an employment growth perspective, micro firms arguably contain the potential for the creation of up to eighty thousand jobs, if one extra job were to be created in each micro firm (Dublin Chamber of Commerce, 2015). Finally, the micro firm tourism business model is considered to be suitable when contemplating the development of more sustainable economic growth models based on indigenous industry (ITIC, 2016).

The Irish tourism industry faces competitiveness challenges in the shape of marketing, human resources and management capability (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). At a macro-economic level, competitiveness concerns in the nature of a weak euro and low fuels prices are posited to be responsible for recent improvements in tourism industry performance (ITIC, 2016). Innovation is well established as a method by which competitiveness challenges can be overcome, through providing deeper and longer lasting competitiveness mechanisms (Camison and Montfort Mir, 2009). In the micro tourism, firm arguments are made that, while innovation is a vital ingredient in improving firm competitiveness, the mechanisms through which innovation is developed and shaped require contextual understanding (Kearney *et al.* 2014). Furthermore, a number of authors have questioned the applicability of innovation management models taken from contexts outside the micro firm in the micro tourism context (Kearney *et al.* 2016 a; Wood and Thomas, 2015; Alonso and Bressan, 2015; Thomas *et al.* 2011).

The aim of this chapter is to propose a framework of entrepreneurial capability for innovation in the micro tourism sector. Recent research has highlighted the influence of managerial capability for innovation on the competitiveness of micro tourism firms (Kearney *et al.* 2016 a; Alonso and Bressan, 2015; Kearney *et al.* 2014). However, the focus of available research has used a managerial framework. The research offered in this chapter, while accounting for the dominant owner/manager's influence on innovation, also takes the wider approach of owner/manager entrepreneurial capability. Emerging from Komppula (2014), an approach using entrepreneurial capability is argued to offer greater insight into the unique motivations and creative base of tourism micro firm owner/managers' potential for innovation. The theoretical perspective used to develop the framework is drawn from the theory of absorptive capability (Gebauer *et al.* 2012; Zahra and George, 2002; Cohen and Levinthal, 1989), recently contextualised for the tourism industry (Thomas and Wood, 2015; 2014).

The Tourism Micro Firm Context

Micro firms share unique characteristics which sharply differentiate them from other small to medium sized enterprises. The owner/manager dominates the life of the firm in three forms: as owner, manager and operational employee (Haghighi *et al.*

2014; Kelliher and Reinl, 2009). The agency problem, created by the separation of ownership and management in larger SME firms, is not present in the micro firm where ownership and control are melded in the single personage of the owner/manager (Haghighi *et al.* 2014). Consequential opportunities, from the melding of ownership and control for implementing strategy, are more directly avoiding the communication challenges emerging from the negotiating of management layers (O'Dwyer and Ryan, 2000). However, critically it is argued that where the owner/manager engages too heavily in both strategic and operational work, there are risks from over-work, and from ineffectiveness in either strategy or operations, or both (Kelliher and Reinl, 2009). In the micro firm arena, business is transacted not through formal mechanisms, but through often long-established mutual relationships emerging from embeddedness in local community (Lynch and Tinsley, 2005), as well as through family and other stakeholder ties (Haghighi *et al.* 2014; Morrison, 2006). Managerial learning in the micro firm is argued to be uniquely based on social interactions, both internally and externally in the firm (Reinl and Kelliher, 2010), and deriving from the unique social interactions are implications for management development in the micro tourism firm context. However, from a marketing perspective, micro firms tend to be challenged in developing appropriate marketing capabilities, and specifically in exploiting the benefits of new marketing technologies (Alford and Page, 2015)

Innovation in Micro Firms within the Tourism Sector

Novelli *et al.* (2006) argue that micro firm innovation emerges through links developed between owner/managers within networks, with innovative product and service offerings not simply the creation of a single entrepreneur, but rather an emergent property of network-based collaboration. Di Domenico and Miller (2012), in an investigation of farm based micro tourism enterprises argue that both the challenges and opportunities for innovation are deeply linked to the motivations and capabilities of the owner/manager(s) in shaping their own style of innovation as a competitiveness-enhancing mechanism. Martin (2004) highlights both the business potential and other inherent challenges presented by the impact of new technologies on marketing innovation in the tourism firm. Both Morrison and Teixeira (2004) and Irvine and Anderson (2004) argue that micro firm marketing is deeply linked with positioning of the firm's image as being rooted in locality and heritage. Taking an integrative approach to previous studies, while also contemplating emerging technology based challenges for micro tourism, Matlay (2013) considers new marketing challenges as a force through which fundamental innovation based strategic alignment can take place. Similarly, in a study based on in-depth interviews with a small sample of micro hotel owner/managers, Kearney *et al.* (2016 a), argue that despite strong indications that innovation reflects conventional divisions into product, process, marketing and supplier-driven innovation, a more integrative view of micro firm innovation is manifest

as a firm-level propensity, which can be shaped by the owner/manager, and which ultimately impacts strongly on the firm's competitiveness.

Grimstad and Burgess (2014) posit the possibilities for innovation in micro firms focusing on a wine cluster, with innovative reconfigurations of the cluster leading to improvements in competitiveness for firms. However, while the influence of owner/managers on reconfiguration of the cluster is alluded to, the capabilities underpinning such reconfigurations remain unclear. Similarly, in the wine tourism sector, Alonso and Bressan (2014) argue that micro firm innovation, while comprising aspects such as managing technological change, product diversification and the development of new marketing methods, is essentially an organisational level phenomenon capable of shaping the firm's competitiveness and ultimately shaped by the owner/manager. Komppula (2014) challenges existing approaches to the development of micro firm innovation, arguing that while managerial approaches are of benefit, there is a need for greater focus on owner/manager capabilities using an entrepreneurial framework. Taking an approach based on an entrepreneurial framework is contended to open research into micro firm innovation to an alternative literature base. For example, arguments are made that through the pursuit of an entrepreneurial framework, as opposed to a managerial framework, insight is gained into the development of creativity (Hayton and Cholakova, 2012); a mission-based leadership (Miller and Wesley, 2010); a contextual marketing capability premised on entrepreneurial motivation (Liu Eng and Tekada, 2015); and the contextual emergence of business relationships mediated by entrepreneurially oriented owner/managers (Cardon and Kirk, 2015).

Premised on the review of available studies which have examined innovation in micro firms within the tourism sector, a definition is postulated by the authors as follows:

Tourism micro firm innovation is an organisational level phenomenon, facilitating continual organisational and managerial responsiveness to environmental change, and is manifest in the form of new products, processes and modes of marketing.

Research Gap

Recent research, however, into the management of micro firm innovation has highlighted the fundamental role played by the owner/manager. For example, Alonso and Bressan (2015) argue that, in synthesizing a framework of micro firm innovation based on a historical literature review, owner/managers' strategic perceptions act as an activating lens through which environmental change is interpreted and which also guides the emergence of innovation possibilities. Kearney *et al.* (2014), in the context of the hotel micro firm, develop a theoretical model of managerial capability grounded in resource-based theory and the

emergence of managerial capability within a framework of embedded resources. Empirical research, supportive of the framework, emerges in a further paper Kearney *et al.* (2016 b). In addition, Komppula (2014), in a paper critical of the neglect of owner/manager entrepreneurial capabilities in developing micro tourism firm competitiveness, argue that owner/managers play an important role, a role that appears to be dependent on entrepreneurial capabilities, rather than on more narrowly construed managerial capabilities. Following on this contribution, Kearney *et al.* (2016 b) argue, in a paper highlighting the impact of dynamic managerial capabilities in tourism micro firm management of innovation, that future research can build on investigating the role of entrepreneurial capabilities as a mechanism for innovation. Therefore, following obvious research question presents itself: What is the nature of entrepreneurial capability for innovation in the tourism micro firm? The aim of this chapter is to develop a framework of entrepreneurial capability for innovation in the tourism micro firm sector.

The Concept of Entrepreneurial Capability

Arthurs and Busenitz (2006), cited in Phillips and Tracey (2007), define entrepreneurial capabilities as capabilities to identify new opportunities and to cultivate resources necessary to pursue the new opportunities. Obrecht (2011) distinguishes two groups of entrepreneurial capabilities. The first group is acknowledged as incorporating individual anchored capabilities which are rooted in individual identity and knowledge. The second group is seen to include more the context-related capabilities which are rooted in social networks, locality and legitimacy. It is argued that the entrepreneur's proactivity emerges as a phenomenon from the two groups. Phillips and Tracey (2007) highlight the benefit of a theoretical approach, premised on entrepreneurial capabilities as an enabling identification of capabilities and resources necessary for effective entrepreneurial action and, thus, helping build a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial processes. In considering the context of international entrepreneurs, Karra, Phillips and Tracey (2008) argue that the importance of entrepreneurial capabilities is centred on opportunity recognition and institutional bridging.

Komppula (2014), in a case study of individual tourism micro firm entrepreneurs in Finland, highlights the importance of entrepreneurial capabilities in the guise of willingness to take risk, to exhibit a high level of commitment and a desire to innovate.

Though entrepreneurial capability can be viewed at several different levels, for example: firm level, top management team level, and at the level of the individual (Phillips and Tracey, 2007), this chapter takes an approach based on the individual level. There are a number of reasons for this approach. Given the dominant influence of the owner/manager, focusing on individual entrepreneurial capabilities provides

valuable insight into key aspects of how innovation is shaped in the tourism micro firm. Furthermore, an approach based on entrepreneurial capability at individual level, facilitates a wider investigation of owner/manager influence on innovation than an approach merely premised on managerial capabilities (Kearney *et al.* 2016 b), enabling investigation of the creative and more spontaneous aspects of owner/manager influence. Finally, through taking an entrepreneurial capabilities approach, this chapter is facilitated in evaluating the wider entrepreneurial literature, as opposed to a reliance on limited available management literature in the micro firm context.

Entrepreneurial Capability in the Tourism Micro Firm

This section discusses a critical review of micro firm literature undertaken with the aim of developing criteria of tourism micro firm entrepreneurial capability. The review made use of major academic journals filtered through databases such as: Science Direct, Wiley Online and Emerald. For the purposes of the review, entrepreneurial capability was defined at the level of the individual owner/manager and, broadly, understood within the definition of Arthurs and Busenitz (2006) as a capability to identify new opportunities, as well as to cultivate resources necessary to pursue the new opportunities. Entrepreneurial capability is argued to be manifest in the tourism micro firm in the guise of owner/manager capabilities in leadership, relationship management, market sensing and strategic creativity.

Leadership

Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) suggest that the very socio-political motivation of tourism entrepreneurs, while contended to limit the firm's potential when the firm is viewed purely as a vehicle for transmission of classical economic processes, can also be an influential motivator on employees and others, who are aligned and lifted to better performance through identification with the owner/manager's motivation. Similarly, Komppula (2014) and Franchetti and Page (2008) argue that owner/managers' personal high level of commitment to innovation can stimulate employees into improved performance, but also risks the institutionalisation of the structural changes necessary in the micro firm to become more open to innovation. Skokic, Lynch and Morrison (2016) posit that entrepreneurial capability exists not simply as a motivational influence, but rather as a force to challenge employees towards transformational change in worldview. From this perspective, entrepreneurial capability, intrinsically manifested as leadership, emerges as a nuanced capability inherent in the personality of the owner/manager, facilitating the stimulation and transmission of entrepreneurial interpretations of the environment to employees. Effectiveness in such transmission requires a context-sensitive self-understanding, in addition to capabilities in relating to employees (Kelliher and Reinl, 2009).

Relationship Management

Novelli *et al.* (2006), argue that innovation lies dormant in ties within which the micro tourism firm is embedded, and they allude to the importance of relationship management as an entrepreneurial capability through which innovation can be unlocked. Saxena (2015) considers the relational capabilities of owner/managers of tourism micro firms in Yorkshire and, through a so-called post-modern critical approach, argues that relationships between firms are not static, but rather it is in the relationships that new modes of feeling and thinking are imagined and put into practice. Lew, Hall, Williams and Shaw (2014), while drawing attention to the importance of entrepreneurial capabilities rooted in relationship management by the owner/manager, posit a note of caution in arguing the highly contextual nature of such relationship management capabilities, often rooted in the local culture unique to an individual firm. The challenges of enacting entrepreneurial relationship management capabilities are delineated in a study by Kylanen and Rusko (2011) of Lappish tourism entrepreneurs, where the continual challenges faced by owner/manager entrepreneurs in negotiating between competition and cooperation in tourism micro firms are described. Vikane (2006) cited in Franchetti and Page (2008), point to the importance of the interactional context between entrepreneurs, notably highlighting how, where the context is one in which learning is encouraged, and where facilitators suspend competitive behaviour, it is possible for the development of shared competences to occur. Kelliher, Aylward and Reinl (2014) consider the challenges of knowledge-hoarding in a micro tourism firm network, alluding not only to the competences of policy makers and academics responsible for managing the network, but also to owner/manager relationship capabilities in successfully interacting with other owner/managers.

Market Sensing

In a study of tourism entrepreneurs in Northumberland, Bosworth and Farrell (2011) highlight the importance of opportunity spotting and entrepreneurial capabilities rooted in market sensing. Reflecting on entrepreneurial capabilities in micro firms in Spain and Denmark, Sundbo *et al.* (2007) argue that higher performance, in terms of innovation, can be achieved where owner/managers develop cognitive capabilities enabling superior identification of innovation opportunities, particularly in markets where competing firms fail to sense these opportunities. Critically, Komppula (2007) seeks to distinguish between entrepreneurial market sensing based around opportunities which are perceived to exist, yet which are inadequate or even damaging in terms of overall impact on the firm's strategy. Instead, she suggest that more successful market sensing, used as an entrepreneurial capability, encompasses a level of commercial understanding rooted in the entrepreneur's experience. Similarly, Brouder and Eriksson (2013) distinguish between market sensing where opportunities are identified, and what they consider to be the often experientially

derived sifting processes necessary to focus commercial attention on market opportunities where commercial success is more likely, with consequent rejection of many opportunities where outcomes in terms of commercial success are unlikely.

Strategic Creativity

Komppula (2014) argues that unique experiential life and business pathways have created entrepreneurial capabilities in the form of strategic creativity. Thus, such pathways are argued to facilitate owner/managers in proactively engaging with market change, not as necessity, but rather as a natural strategic mechanism embedded in entrepreneurial routines, which continually adopt new learning and updates as the firm's environment evolves. Svendsen, Kjeldsen and Noe (2010), argue that strategic creativity encompasses unique engagement between the owner/manager and local social capital which is, in turn, transformed from embedded ties into sources of economic value through entrepreneurial strategic creativity. In a seminal study of rural tourism entrepreneurs, Bryant (1989) argues that creative forces manifest in such owner/managers emerge from the very fringe nature of their existence, encouraging the surfacing of alternative strategic development paradigms for their firms. While such alternative strategic development paradigms are encouraged as bringing new life to tired strategic modes of competitiveness (Morrison, 2006), there are criticisms that where these are not moderated or regulated by appropriate, effective financial and business discipline, they are rendered inadequate (Brooker and Joppe, 2014).

Table 1 below presents the four aspects of tourism micro firm entrepreneurial capability as emerging in available academic literature:

Table 1: Nature of entrepreneurial capability

Nature of Entrepreneurial Capability	Academic available Literature
Leadership	Skokic <i>et al.</i> (2016); Komppula (2014); Franchetti and Page (2008); Kelliher and Reinl (2009); Ateljevic and Doorne (2000)
Relationship management	Saxena (2015); Verbano <i>et al.</i> (2015); Kelliher, Aylward and Reinl (2014); Lowik <i>et al.</i> (2012); Kylanen and Rusko (2011); Vikane cited in Franchetti and Page (2008); Novelli <i>et al.</i> (2006)
Strategic creativity	Kearney <i>et al.</i> (2014); Komppula (2014); Brooker and Joppe (2014); Svendsen <i>et al.</i> (2011); Morrison (2006); Bryant (1989)
Market sensing	Alford and Page (2015); Bosworth and Farrell (2011); Komppula (2007); Sundbo <i>et al.</i> (2007)

Absorptive Capacity: A Theoretical Framework

Cohen and Levinthal (1990) define absorptive capacity as a firm level capability with four components: knowledge acquisition; knowledge assimilation; knowledge exploitation and knowledge transformation. Zahra and George (2002), distinguish between a firm's potential absorptive capacity and realised absorptive capacity. In their view, potential absorptive capacity includes the absorption and assimilation of external information, while realised absorptive capacity implies the exploitation and transformation of information by management in the context of the firm. Tsai (2001) argues absorptive capacity in larger firms reflects a potential for innovation, and posits a framework whereby absorptive capacity becomes a lens for the study of innovation management. However, recently there are arguments that absorptive capacity as delineated in the existing literature is inadequately developed for application in the tourism industry context. Emerging from a survey based study of the British hotel sector, Thomas and Wood (2014) argue that there is limited evidence for the relevance of Cohen and Levinthal's four components of absorptive capacity in the tourism industry. Similarly, Thomas and Wood (2015) argue for the limited relevance in the tourism industry of the distinction between potential and absorptive capacity. Alternatively they propose that a framework of tourism industry absorptive capacity can be conceptualised as a mechanism reflecting the acquisition and use of both external and personalised knowledge sources with the potential to transform knowledge into innovation based competitiveness. From the perspective of entrepreneurial capability, the tourism specific framework of absorptive capacity highlights the importance of investigating the role of entrepreneurial capability manifest in the role of owner/ manager business experience, socially activated triggering mechanisms in owner/ manager ties and the context of the owner/ manager in activation triggering mechanisms for both acquisition and use of knowledge.

A Framework of Tourism Micro Firm Entrepreneurial Capability and Innovation based on Absorptive Capacity

This section argues that through enacting entrepreneurial capabilities tourism micro firm owner/ managers can shape a firm's absorptive capability towards the creation of innovation. The potential of each of the four entrepreneurial capabilities: leadership; relationship management; strategic creativity and market sensing is considered sequentially. Specifically the framework emerges from the evaluation of the framework of absorptive capacity developed by Thomas and Wood (2014). The evaluation focuses on how the four entrepreneurial capabilities can impact on the processes of acquisition and use of knowledge, and follows Thomas and Wood (2015) in positing that through the processes of knowledge acquisition and use the emergence of innovation in the tourism micro firm becomes possible.

Leadership as an entrepreneurial capability impacts on both the acquisition and use of knowledge in the tourism micro firm. Franchetti and Page (2008) argue that traditional approaches to micro firm leadership emphasise a limited role in helping employees acquire business knowledge, effectively a role reflecting the dominance of the owner/ manager and with little scope for alternative approaches other than the approach taken to acquiring knowledge assumed by the owner/manager. In contrast, Skokic *et al.* (2016) argue micro firm leadership can liberate employees to both acquire new knowledge but also to find new modes of acquiring new knowledge. Though such an approach reflects Wood and Thomas (2014) in positing how knowledge acquisition is a social process with potential to lead to innovation, the approach goes further in suggesting the dynamic nature of leadership in micro firms within the tourism sector in reshaping existing approaches to knowledge acquisition. Leadership impacts on knowledge use where a contextually sensitive micro firm leadership is argued to facilitate employees in learning not simply knowledge of operational tasks necessary to the tourism micro firm, but also the knowledge manifest in the underlying business processes necessary for the firm's survival (Kelliher and Reinl, 2009; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). From an innovation perspective, appropriate leadership can assist employees to use knowledge to assist in the creation of knowledge necessary for new products, processes and new modes of marketing.

Relationship management as an entrepreneurial capability provides the second example of how innovation emerges through the acquisition and exploitation of knowledge in the tourism micro firm. Wood and Thomas (2014: 46) argue the importance of "activation triggers" in igniting the acquisition and use of knowledge. Relationship management provides a mechanism through which the somewhat static version of ignition occurs, and provides a proactive role for owner/ managers of tourism micro firms (Kelliher *et al.* 2014; Kylanen and Rusko, 2011). Lowik *et al.* (2012) argue that through the cultivation and development of new strong ties with stakeholders, owners of micro firms build a relationship management capability, and posit such a relationship management capability leads to the acquisition of new knowledge into the firm improving the micro firm's innovation capabilities.

Similarly, Verbano, Crema and Venturini (2015) highlight the potential of relationship management in shaping the acquisition of new knowledge, but posit further that relationship management alters the routines underpinning the use of knowledge in the micro firm. The nature of alteration in routines, they suggest, offers owner/ managers the opportunity to nurture innovation in finding and implementing contextually routines of knowledge use sensitive to innovation.

Entrepreneurial capability manifest as strategic creativity is argued as a mechanism for the shaping of innovation (Komppula, 2014; Morrison, 2006), however taking the lens of absorptive capacity provides specific mechanisms through which the working of strategic creativity on innovation can impact. For example where strategic

creativity comprises evaluation and enactment of how a micro firm's socially based resources can be leveraged as value creating mechanisms (Kearney *et al.* 2014; Svendsen *et al.* 2011), there is potential for fundamental alteration of the micro firm's capability to acquire knowledge. Bryant (1989), focusing on the dominance of the owner/manager in the strategic creativity of the micro firm, points towards how strategic creativity can impact on more than simply the cognitive emergence of new strategic perspectives, and instead suggests strategic creativity as a mechanism for new modes of acquisition and use of knowledge premised on calculated awareness and subsequent willingness to enter into deeper and wider stakeholder dialogue. Contemplating strategic creativity within the absorptive capacity framework of Thomas and Wood (2014) opens both the possibilities and limitations inherent in the business experience of the owner/manager. Kearney *et al.* (2016 b) argue that tourism micro firm owner/managers possess more sophisticated and deeper business experience than that argued in other micro firm studies thus suggesting strategic creativity awaits an activation trigger, and positioning strategic creativity as an embedded entrepreneurial capability in the tourism micro firm which can consider and implement new modes of knowledge use capable of appropriating innovation.

Finally, market sensing viewed as an entrepreneurial capability impacts on absorptive capacity in a number of ways. Komppula (2007) posits the direct impact of a dominant owner/ manager on the competitiveness of the tourism micro firm based on the owner/ manager's experientially developed market sensing capabilities. Wood and Thomas (2015) argue that both acquisition and use of knowledge lead to the emergence of innovation. In the context of the tourism micro firm market sensing as an entrepreneurial capability can be seen as rooted in business experience developed over time Emerging marketing technologies create both fundamental challenges and opportunities for micro firms in tourism (Martin, 2004). Critically, while there is an apparent ease through which such marketing technologies enable the tourism micro firm to improve both acquisition and use of knowledge, there are challenges in developing appropriate managerial mechanisms (Alford and Page, 2015). Therefore technology, from a market sensing perspective can be seen as a disruptive force violating existing entrepreneurial market sensing capabilities, perhaps beyond the control of management. From this perspective, Thomas and Wood (2014) in relating deterministic aspects of absorptive capacity posit how activation triggers impact often randomly on both knowledge acquisition and use. In contrast, and allowing for the greater influence of the tourism micro firm owner/ manager, existing market sensing capabilities of the owner/ manager can become a mechanism through which new marketing technologies are used to enhance the firm's acquisition and use of knowledge.

The proposed framework, at Figure 1 below, argues that the four criteria of entrepreneurial capability can, when effectively deployed, liberate innovation

through improved acquisition and exploitation of knowledge. The proposed framework acknowledges continual environmental change and presents two feedback loops through which opportunities for improving the criteria of entrepreneurial capability can be effected.

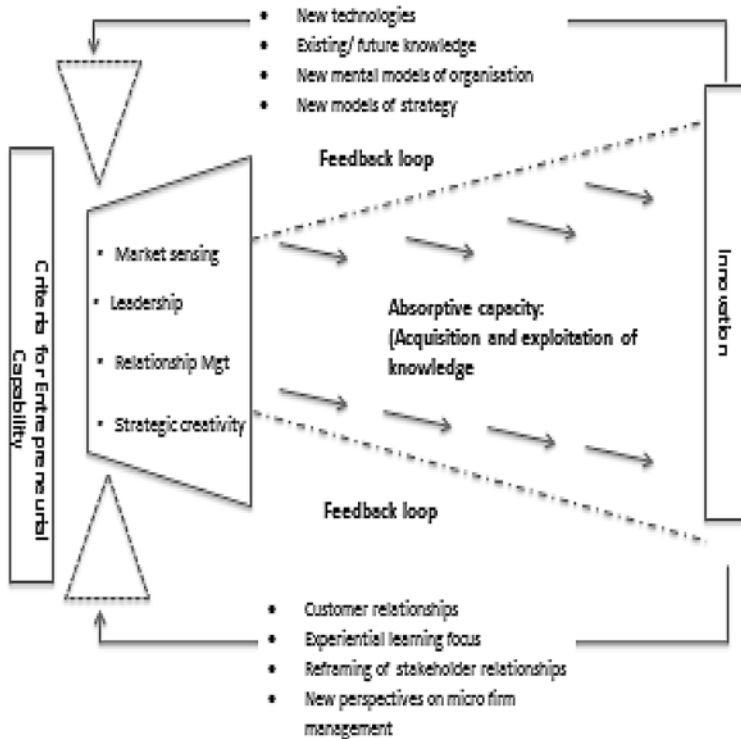


Figure 1: Proposed framework for entrepreneurial capability in tourism micro firms

Conclusion

The present chapter has proposed a framework of entrepreneurial capability for innovation. Thus a contribution has been made to the academic literature, building on Kearney *et al.* (2016 a; 2014) and Alonso and Bressan (2015) in regard to how owner/ managers in tourism micro firms can develop and shape innovation. The contribution is made through using an approach based on entrepreneurial capabilities of owner/ managers (Komppula, 2014) and, specifically, relies on the contextual approach to absorptive capacity developed for the tourism industry in the recent work of Thomas and Wood (2015; 2014). From a practitioner perspective the chapter contributes to a recent stream of practice oriented papers in the micro firm (Kelliher and Reinl, 2014; Kearney *et al.* 2016 a; 2014), where the specific contribution of the present chapter is to present an initial framework of how owner/ managers

can develop tourism micro firm competitiveness enhancing innovation through leveraging absorptive capacity.

There are limitations to the present chapter. The framework developed focuses on how four criteria of tourism micro firm entrepreneurial capability act through the absorptive capacity of the tourism micro firm to enable the generation of innovation. Though the framework suggests, almost intuitively, that owner/manager entrepreneurial capability will change over time through experiential learning effects of interacting with the firm's absorptive capacity, the chapter has not discussed the underlying processes inherent in such change. Absorptive capacity, as understood in the chapter, emerges from recent work undertaken by Thomas and Wood (2015; 2014). Given the nuanced context of the tourism micro firm, greater modification in the concept of absorptive capacity may be appropriate, and in this sense the chapter may be limited in not anticipating such conceptual development.

There are a number of possible avenues for future research emerging from the present chapter. The researched presented here is theoretical in nature and the authors suggest that there is a requirement for suitably developed empirical research. In particular, though the present chapter highlights mechanisms through which entrepreneurial capabilities act through absorptive capacity to produce innovation, this chapter offers limited investigation into the nature of how the interaction of capabilities and types of absorptive capacity is enacted. Given the focus of the present chapter on a dominant owner/manager, and recent suggestions for research into micro tourism firm entrepreneurial capabilities, there is, nonetheless, justification for empirical research in the form of an interview-based study or a case study. Finally, the focus of this chapter has been on micro tourism firms. Given the distinctions between micro firms and other small to medium sized firms, as well as the importance of small to medium sized firms in the tourism industry, the authors suggest that future research might be best achieved using a similar approach, based around entrepreneurial capabilities for innovation in the SME sector.

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CHAPTER 9

Local Authorities' Support for Entrepreneurs who wish to Sustainably Plan for Event Management in Ireland

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Dr James Hanrahan

Introduction

The event industry in Ireland has experienced phenomenal growth over the past decade, attracting over 3.4 million visitors from both the domestic and overseas markets annually (Wide Awake Communications, 2017). This exponential increase in growth is estimated to have an economic impact that reaches in excess of €1.3 billion in tourism revenue to the Irish economy. However, as the number of events continues to increase, there is a growing realisation of the need for events to be planned, organised and managed by event professionals and entrepreneurs (Getz, 2008). As such, the event management industry has experienced a transition towards a pattern of professionalism. This, in a large part, may be down to the recognition of events to create potential issues and risks to events stakeholders, participants and the wider population (Raj and Musgrave, 2009; Bowdin et al, 2012; Jones, 2014; Dowson and Bassett, 2015; Getz and Page, 2016). For this reason, the need to plan events in both a safe and sustainable manner has been placed centre-stage by many government organisations and indeed, professional event organisations worldwide. However, to guide the safe and effective process of planning for event management has been noted to rely heavily on local authority hands-on involvement and support (Damster and Tassiopoulos, 2005; Phi, Dredge and Whitford, 2011; Getz and Page, 2016). More specifically, it requires necessary support tools to be made available for

event professionals and entrepreneurs. Thus, local authority support, through the provision of specified planning guidelines for event management, may play a key role in laying the foundations for future sustainable planning for event management in Ireland.

This chapter sets forth to examine local authorities' support for entrepreneurs who wish to sustainably plan for event management in Ireland. This baseline doctoral study is centered on a mixed-method approach which examines all thirty-one local authorities throughout the Republic of Ireland. The findings from this study are discussed in the context of current national legislation (Planning and Development Licensing at outdoor event regulations 2001/2015), and current theory, in order to provide an up-to-date comparative assessment. This chapter presents a contribution to knowledge by providing the first baseline study on the current state of local authority planning for event management in Ireland.

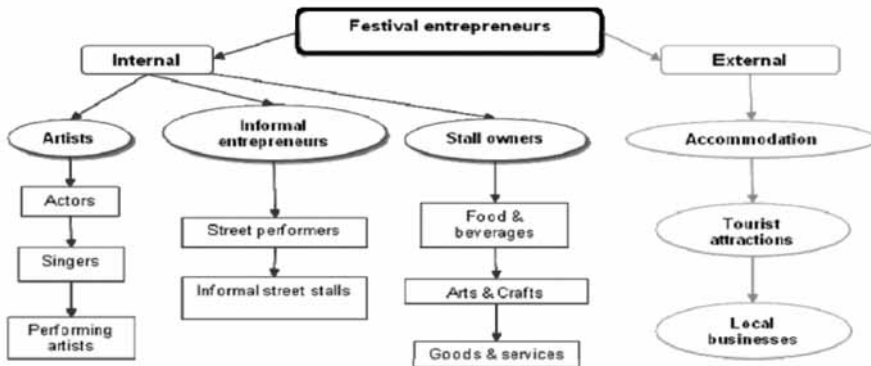
Entrepreneurs in the Event Industry

Event organisers and entrepreneurs are often the key catalyst to growing and managing events, shaping and defining the professional practice of planning for event management (Getz, 2008). Although in the past events such as these were increasingly volunteer intensive (Smith, Lockstone-Binney and Holmes, 2015). In recent years, however, the event industry has experienced a demand for and increasing reliance on well-educated, experienced and professionally expert event organisers to plan, produce and manage events (Arcodia and Reid, 2004; Getz, 2013). In fact, Getz (2008) acknowledges that events are all created for a purpose and what was once the realm of individual and community initiatives has largely become the realm of professionals and entrepreneurs. The reason for this is obvious, according to Getz (2008) who explains that such events are too important, satisfying numerous strategic goals and often too risky to be left to amateurs. Therefore, with the complexity involved in planning and managing events and with pulsating event management organisations and entrepreneurs commanded for events (Toffler, 1990) there is an apparent need for effective planning practices and support tools within an ever-expanding environment. Thus, increased pressure has been placed on government organisations to formulate plans, policies and guidelines specifically designed and aimed at supporting event professionals and entrepreneurs in the process of planning for event management.

The growing popularity of events and their reputation to contribute significantly to economic development (Jonker and Saayman, 2010) has created an increasing interest in entrepreneurial activity within the event industry (Damster and Tassiopoulos, 2005; Getz, 2008; Raj, Walters and Rashid, 2013; Getz, 2013; Getz and Page, 2016). As such, event professionals and entrepreneurs now play a fundamental role in the design, planning, promotion, advertising and delivery phases of event

management (Damster and Tassiopoulos, 2005). To illustrate the complexity of entrepreneur involvement in the event industry, Jonker, Saayman and de Klerk (2009), in their study on South Africa's largest arts festival, the National Arts Festival, produced a model illustrating the key categories of entrepreneurs at festivals, displayed below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Categories of entrepreneurs at festivals



Source: adapted from Jonker, Saayman and Klerk (2009)

While this figure illustrates broadly the internal and external entrepreneurs within a festival context, it is important to remark that entrepreneurs in the wider event industry have become even more extensive in scope (Bladen, Kennell, Abson and Wilde, 2012; Getz, 2013). Therefore, to add to Jonker, Saayman and de Klerk's (2009) model, additional entrepreneurs have been suggested including: event management organisation; health and safety officers; event controllers; stewards and security personnel; contractors and suppliers; traders and vendors; medical and emergency personnel; as well as entertainment entrepreneurs (Bladen, Kennell, Abson and Wilde, 2012; Getz, 2013). These professionals and entrepreneurs play a variety of roles ranging from providing safe venues to managing traffic, crowds and potential risks, ensuring the safe construction and removal of structures and facilities, providing catering services, emergency planning and ensuring the welfare and safety of event populations (Silvers, 2009; Dale, Robinson and Dickson, 2010; Bowdin et al, 2012; Dowson and Bassett, 2015). Furthermore, it is often entrepreneurs who are responsible for event ticketing, merchandising and marketing (Dale, Robinson and Dickson, 2010). Therefore, any given event could have anywhere between 50 to 500 entrepreneurs, all playing key roles in planning, creating and producing events. In line with this, as recognised in Jonker, Saayman and de Klerk's (2009) model, the event industry also involves complex interactions with entrepreneurs from boundary industries including local businesses, restaurants, accommodation providers and transport and travel agencies (Getz and Page, 2016). Therefore, local authorities

should place a high importance on supporting and guiding event entrepreneurs in their role in the delivery of events. This, in turn, may contribute to developing the industry in a more strategic way, improving the business environment in which entrepreneurs work.

In many cases, event professionals and entrepreneurs are self-employed, involved in events primarily for economic benefits (Raj, Walters and Rashid, 2013). Although some events might not be required to make a profit, the event entrepreneur has to do so (Damster and Tassiopoulos, 2005). As such, the role of the event entrepreneur is made even more complex, given the nature of events as temporary occurrences of limited duration (Getz, 1997; Jago and Shaw, 1998; Getz, 2005). Indeed, a number of festival and event entrepreneurs have highlighted that running a festival or event is a, *'tough gig for entrepreneurs'*, with many challenges and pressures associated with being independent (The Guardian, 2015). The financial risks and the issues associated with event management, such as overcrowding, traffic disruption and any problems affecting event safety, have created a need to ensure that events are planned effectively. In fact, the growth of the event industry and its accompanying issues and risks, has placed legal, ethical and professional ramifications upon event entrepreneurs to ensure event safety (Goldblatt, 2011). Therefore, entrepreneurs within the event industry require government organisations to play a more supportive and active role when it comes to planning events in a safe and sustainable manner. This should form a key agenda for government organisations worldwide.

Thus, as a result of recognising the importance of event entrepreneurs to the event industry, there is now a growing recognition of the need for a sustainable planning approach and support tools to be provided by local authorities. This is essential in supporting and guiding event entrepreneurs in the responsibility-laden task of planning for event management. Local authorities are in an ideal position to facilitate and support the process of planning for event management, in both a safe and sustainable manner in Ireland, given the statutory role they hold towards events in Ireland. In fact, this role has been made even more significant recently with the movement of local enterprise offices (LEOs) within the local authority network in Ireland. Local authorities now have a responsibility to offer a wide range of experience, skills and services, as well as to provide advice, information and support to entrepreneurs.

Local Authorities' Support for Entrepreneurs in the Event Industry

The need for professionalism in the event industry is required as a result of recognising the continuous growth and needs of this industry, not just in Ireland, but globally. The increasing complexity of the event environment has altered the way events are planned and managed (Getz and Page, 2016). As a result of this, there is now a prominent need to produce, promote and present fully professionalised events within the event industry. Even more importantly, there is now a need

to oversee event development in a safe and sustainable way throughout the developed world (Raj and Musgrave, 2009). Thus, the roles of event professionals and entrepreneurs are becoming progressively more crucial in the current event environment (Berridge, 2014). However, it is necessary that, here in Ireland, local authorities support event professionals and entrepreneurs in their myriad roles.

Entrepreneurs need strong support and an advisory system in order to develop and improve businesses (Enterprise Ireland, 2016). Local authorities in Ireland hold fundamental responsibilities and functions in relation to events and entrepreneurs in Ireland. Under the Planning and Development (Licensing at outdoor events) regulations 2001/2015, local authorities play a key role in planning for event management. The local authority planning process of events governed by Ireland's legislative regime defines the application and licensing process of events and underlines Ireland's obligation to sustainably plan for developments in respective regions. This provides local authorities with an obligation to perform a wide and complex variety of roles in the area of large-scale public outdoor events. In particular, it gives local authorities the ability to control the planning dimensions and delivery of public services for event management. This effectively makes them critical stakeholders to the overall planning, organisation and authorisation of events in Ireland, whilst providing a sustainable platform from which event entrepreneurs can work. Furthermore, the formation of entrepreneurial activity has become a government priority due to its potential to contribute to job creation and economic growth (Van Der Wagen and White, 2014). Therefore, the movement of LEOs within local authorities throughout Ireland has placed an important function on local authorities to encourage and support entrepreneurs in their efforts to establish high quality businesses that are sustainable. Hence, it is clear that local authorities are in a perfect position to effectively support and guide entrepreneurs in the event industry.

With the continued advancement of the national event sector and the rapid growth of large-scale public events taking place throughout Ireland in recent years, there is an increased need to manage the process of planning for events. Bowdin et al (2012) remark that local authorities are now some of the biggest players in the event field, with almost every local authority employing an event manager or team and most providing funding and support for a wide range of local event entrepreneurs. In Ireland, this has been officially recognised and a shift has been seen towards appointing event managers specifically to guide the process of planning events (The Irish Times, 2016). As a result of recognising this, local authorities have begun to oversee the application of state laws through event licensing, which governs the vast majority of entrepreneurial activity such as the safe implementation of events, reduction of risks, traffic management, waste and rubbish removal, health and welfare and creation and removal of temporary structures as well as other factors (LGMA, 2012). The responsibility for such functions falls to a number of departments within local authorities, specifically those who have a close and established

association with event management. However, effective planning of such functions lies in a functional planning system within local authorities.

To plan events in a manner that is both safe and sustainable requires consideration of the many entrepreneurial activities commanded for events. Local authorities are, therefore, encouraged to consider that the event professional has an entrepreneurial role within decision-making processes and event management planning processes (Phi, Dredge and Whitford, 2011; UNEP, 2012). Through the use of planning tools and guidelines, local authorities could provide valuable support instruments for entrepreneurs to more effectively guide the process of sustainable planning for event management in Ireland. However, it has been acknowledged that public sector departments responsible for event provision tend to have limited resources in terms of funding, time, staff and expertise (Thomas and Wood, 2004; Wood, 2009). Yet, the provision of staff with adequate training and expertise within local authorities for event management is incremental in supporting entrepreneurs in the practice of planning for event management. Therefore, it is integral that local authorities make adequate provisions to support entrepreneurs in the process of planning for event management in Ireland.

Research Method

This baseline doctoral comparative assessment employed a mixed-methods approach to research, using a content analysis of local authority planning guidelines for events, as well as interviews with local authority event personnel. This approach provided a comprehensive insight into the level of planning provided by local authorities with which to support entrepreneurs in the process of planning for event management in Ireland. The mixed-methods approach was chosen as it offered the best of both worlds (Giddings, 2006), by not confining the researcher to any single tradition of inquiry (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Creswell and Plano-Clarke, 2011), but instead, providing stronger evidence for conclusions through corroboration of findings.

Research Instruments

Initially, a quantitative approach in the form of a content analysis was applied. This assessed local authority event management planning guidelines to determine the level of local authority support for entrepreneurs in planning for event management in Ireland. To conduct a content analysis, the development of a theoretical framework was needed which was, subsequently, used to assess local authority guidelines. The theoretical framework was informed and developed using the key themes that emerged from reviewing a range of international and national event management planning guidelines. The criteria are outlined below in (Table 1).

Table 1: Criteria for assessing local authority planning for event management

Assessment Criteria		
Local Authority planning guidelines for event management provided		
Pre-Event planning guidelines Provision	Guidelines for structures and facilities	Guidelines for stewarding/security
Initial set up (build up/load in)	Barriers/fencing	Stewarding arrangements
Planning/design/construction	Stage/tented structures	Security arrangements
Contact with relevant bodies and agencies	Fire risk of structures/facilities	Briefing stewards/security staff
Delivery and installation of equipment/services	Electrical/lighting	Allocation of stewards/security
Recruitment of volunteers and workers	Guidelines for managing vehicular traffic	Designated fire stewards
Rubbish and waste removal	Ensuring access for emergency vehicles	Identification of stewards/security
Event Insurance	Vehicle movement	Guidelines for event stakeholders
Ticketing	Dealing with obstructions	Gardai
Marketing	Drop of and pick up facilities provided	HSE and insurers
Removal of structures	Adequate signage Provided	Local Authority
Welfare of participants	Vehicular access for the mobility impaired	Planning authorities
Remedial works	Guidelines for providing a safe venue	Building control
Load out and break down	Choosing a venue design/layout/site	Environmental services
Guidelines for managing Risk	Providing a safe space for people	Safety manager/officer
Identification of risks	Viewing/seating arrangements	Fire services
Categorization of risks	Site/venue infrastructure	Suppliers/contractors
Risk assessments	Safe ingress and egress	Medical officer
Evaluation of risk	Signs, way marking and circulation	Ambulance services
Cancellation of events	Entrance/exit capacity	Event Controller
Structure collapse	Access/parking	Guidelines for contractors and suppliers
Lost children	Venue capacity	Engagement of contractors and suppliers
Security risks	Venue regulations	Construction and tear down of structures
Adverse weather	Guidelines for emergency planning	Guidelines for fire safety and prevention
Crowd risks	Site emergency plan	Fire detection and alarm system
Dealing with discovery of fire	The activation of emergency plan	Casual trading facilities
Guidelines for managing people and crowds	Emergency resources and facilities	Cooking equipment
Measures to prevent overcrowding	Evacuation procedures	Firefighting and prevention equipment
Crowd anticipation	Location of emergency points	Fireworks and Pyrotechnics
Ensure ease of movement/escape	Guidelines for Medical and First Aid	
Crowd disturbance	Medical and first aid site facilities	

Source: adapted from (Department of Education and Skills, 1998; Department of Education and Local Government, 1996; Department of Environmental and Local Government, 1998; Ministry of Civic Defence and Emergency Management, 2003; EventScotland, 2006; Fáilte Ireland, 2007; DEFRA, 2007; Environment Canada, 2007; London Organising Committee, 2008; Government of Western Australia, 2009; UNEP, 2009; Fáilte Ireland, 2010; Events Melbourne, 2011; Louth County Council, 2012; EPA Tasmania, 2012; Mid Canterbury New Zealand, 2012; Dublin City Council, 2012; Health Service Executive, 2012; UNEP, 2012; HSE, 2014; City of Columbus, 2016).

It is important to mention that the criteria which emerged from the review of guidelines are essential aspects necessary in planning for event management and, ideally, should be implemented by local authorities. They may provide a valuable support system that local authorities could perhaps adopt in order to properly and adequately support event entrepreneurs in the entire process of sustainably planning for event management. The above criteria were used to develop a framework with which to illustrate the variations between each local authority in Ireland, particularly in relation to planning for event management in Ireland. While this represents quantification on a limited scale it is, nonetheless, anchored in the quantitative research paradigm. This approach was considered ideal in terms of gathering the information needed to produce findings for this study.

The quantitative approach to research was complemented with qualitative in-depth semi structured interviews with local authority event personnel. This approach added depth to the research and enabled initial results to be explained more comprehensively. This approach was particularly beneficial to the overall research as it provided an opportunity to generate rich data, enabling the researcher to make a link between what people say they do and what they actually do. In order to conduct the semi-structured interviews, it was necessary to first develop informal strategic open-ended questions. This enabled the researcher to probe more in-depth viewpoints from local authority personnel regarding planning for event management, as well as to clarify the findings that emerged from the content analysis.

Sampling and Selection

The quantitative phase of the research included a sample of 31 Local authorities, which included County Councils and City Councils. This provided a full population sample, since the current system of local government in the Republic of Ireland comprises of 31 local authorities. There are 26 local authorities responsible for local government, situated in twenty-four geographical counties including the County of Dublin. County Dublin has three local authorities; these are South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council and Fingal County Council. There are two City and County Councils who are responsible for local government in Limerick; these are Limerick City and County Council. Waterford also has two local authorities: Waterford City and County Council. In addition, nationally there are three city councils and they are responsible for local government in the cities of Dublin, Cork and Galway. The qualitative phase of the research was conducted on local authority personnel who have a responsibility for events in their respective counties and cities. Out of the cohort study population of 31 local authorities, one local authority declined to partake in this research. This phase of the research, therefore, included thirty local authority responses. Both approaches to research allowed for a comprehensive examination into the topic in question.

Data Analysis

To facilitate a constant comparison of results throughout the research process and to highlight the variations between each local authority, data gathered was first inputted into a content analysis tool. This procedure allowed the authors to identify the level of support provided by local authorities in their planning for event management, according to the range of criteria identified in (Table 1). The structure and layout of the content analysis tool is shown below in Table 2, which demonstrates how it facilitated the interpretation of results in a simplified manner.

Table 2: Example of matrix for assessing local authority guidelines

Local Authority Provision of Planning Guidelines for Event Management																															
Analysis of Guidelines	Local authorities in Ireland (abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal)																														
	CW	CN	CE	CK	Cc	DL	Dc	Dr	Ds	FL	GY	GC	KE	KK	KY	LS	LM	LK	LH	LD	MH	MO	MN	OY	RN	SO	TY	WD	WH	WX	WW
Events financially supported by Fáilte Ireland (2014)	33	47	64	34	22	41	22	26	12	23	62	29	32	27	46	20	29	58	36	31	35	112	29	37	53	47	59	56	36	48	27
Local Authority provision of guidelines for events							x											x	x		x										x
Provision of guidelines for managing risk								x												x		x									x
Provision of guidelines for risk assessment							x													x		x									x

X in a cell indicates the provision of guidelines for a particular activity

The above data analysis procedure enabled the researcher to utilise the content analysis tool (Table 2), in order to assess each local authority's approach to guidelines. This analysis technique allowed for direct comparisons to be made between thirty local authorities throughout Ireland. Table 2 clearly highlights how local authorities vary in the categories assessed. The first and last letter of the county they represent abbreviates the local authorities displayed in the matrix. For example, 'CK' abbreviates the first and last letter of County Cork. Furthermore, each category outlined in Table 1 was logged into numerical variables using SPSS data analysis software, which is a software package used for logical batched and non-batched statistical analysis. The analysis of findings from the content analysis approach was further supported with findings from the qualitative in-depth interviews, which were carried out with local authority event personnel. To analyse all the interviews, which were collected by means of audio recordings and, at all times, with consent from interviewees, it was necessary to transcribe the interviews. The transcription process aided a thematic analysis of key issues and patterns. A process of coding was applied which included labeling and categorising properties to allow for an exploration of topics. Here, a central pathway to theory construction was created where quotes and trends in data were identified. The identification of common themes and quotes was further aided through the help of NVivo, which is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer software package frequently used in this type of research. The comparison of results from both approaches is discussed in the context of current theory in the subsequent section.

Results and Discussion

The results provided nationwide perspectives on the level of local authority support for entrepreneurs in planning for event management in Ireland. Initially, the research assessed local authority provision of generic planning guidelines for event management in Ireland. Out of a complete population sample of 31 local authorities, results revealed that just five local authorities actually provided event-planning guidelines, each varying significantly in their content. However, upon conducting qualitative in-depth interviews with local authority event personnel, a number of local authorities stated that they provided event planning guidelines, although this was not determined through the quantitative approach taken. However, upon request of the guideline documentation, the local authorities contacted were not able to provide a copy of the guidelines with one local authority declaring:

'We have planning guidelines, but we tend to not make them available to the public or event promoters. Really, we just make organisers and promoters aware of what they must consider in preparing an event management plan.' (LA Event personnel 7).

This raised questions in relation to the actual provision of guidelines by local authorities for event management in Ireland. However, another local authority response acknowledged openly that:

'We have planning guidelines but nothing meaningful and nothing worth sharing.' (LA Event personnel 22).

The same respondent further stated that:

'It would be a good idea to develop detailed guidelines as a means of providing guidance to event organisers prior to the application process of events [sic].' (LA Event personnel 22).

In consideration of the fact that event guidelines have been noted to provide clarity on a range of planning issues (Raj and Musgrave, 2009) and that they support event entrepreneurs in their quest to sustainably plan for events, it is concerning that there is such a low level of local authority planning guideline provision for events in Ireland. Therefore, clearly, there is a need for planning solutions to support event entrepreneurs in the process of planning for event management in Ireland.

Table 3: Planning matrix to assess local authority pre-event planning

Local Authority Provision of Planning Guidelines for Event Management																																
Analysis of Guidelines	Local authorities in Ireland (abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal)																															
	CW	CN	CE	CK	Cc	DL	Dc	Dr	Ds	FL	GY	GC	KE	KK	KY	LS	LM	LK	LH	LD	MH	MO	MN	OY	RN	SO	TY	WD	WH	WX	WW	
Local Authority provision of guidelines for events						x												x	x		x											x
Pre event planning guidelines						x														x		x										x
Event set up (build up/ load in)						x														x		x										x
Planning/design/ construction						x														x		x										x
Contact with relevant bodies and agencies						x														x												
Delivery and installation of equipment/services						x														x		x										x
Recruitment of volunteers and workers						x																										
Rubbish and waste removal						x														x		x										x
Event Insurance						x													x	x		x										x
Ticketing						x														x												
Marketing						x														x												
Removal of structures						x														x												
Welfare of participants						x													x	x												x
Remedial works						x														x												x
Load out and break down						x														x												
Guidelines for structures and facilities																			x	x		x										x
Barriers/fencing						x													x	x		x										x
Stage/tented structures						x													x	x		x										x
Fire risk of structures/ facilities						x														x		x										x
Electrical/lighting						x														x		x										
Guidelines for managing traffic						x													x	x		x										x
Ensuring access for emergency vehicles						x													x	x		x										x
Vehicle movement						x														x												
Dealing with obstructions						x														x		x										x
Drop of and pick up facilities provided						x														x												
Adequate signage provided						x														x		x										x
Vehicular access for the mobility impaired						x														x		x										x

Following this, it was necessary to determine the local authority provision of guidelines for pre-event planning. The importance of pre-event planning has been regarded as an integral element to the ongoing success of events (Allen, 2008; Dowson and Bassett, 2015), enabling event professionals and entrepreneurs to plan for a number of event issues in advance of hosting events. However, upon conducting a content analysis on thirty Irish local authority guidelines, results revealed an overall disparity in local authority planning for event management (see Table 3). This gives serious grounds for concern, given that many entrepreneurs bear a responsibility for a range of pre- and post-event planning considerations

including: the planning, design and construction of events; the delivery, load in and installation of equipment and services; recruitment of volunteers; rubbish and waste removal; event insurance; ticketing and marketing; removal of structures; welfare of participants; remedial works; as well as breakdown, load out and removal of event structures. Therefore, keeping in mind the age-old adage, *'fail to prepare, prepare to fail'* (Yeoman, Robertson, Ali-Knight, Drummond and McMahon-Beattie, 2011), it is incremental that support systems be in place within local authorities in order to direct entrepreneurs in the responsibility-laden tasks of pre- and post-event planning.

Similarly, most events require the installation (load in) and removal (load out) of a number of structures and facilities from reputable sources, which comply with appropriate fire and structural safety standards (EventScotland, 2006; Health Service Executive, 2015). In many cases, event entrepreneurs are solely responsible for this task. However, again, limited provisions have been made by local authorities in supporting entrepreneurs in this role. Furthermore, the way in which customers/ participants are transported to an event has become an important part of the pre-event planning phase (Bowdin et al, 2012). Entrepreneurs from transport and travel companies are often contacted by event organisations for this task (Raj, Walters and Rashid, 2013). As such, the need to ensure adequate planning for traffic management at events should therefore be prioritised by local authorities. However, the examination of research findings here revealed a lack of planning and support for entrepreneurs in the area of traffic management. Upon conducting interviews with local authority event personnel, specifically on the provision of guidelines for pre-event planning, most respondents clarified that they didn't provide guidelines especially for this planning dimension with one respondent stating that:

'Pre-event planning and traffic management form part of a series of meetings with event organisers during the planning process of events.' (LA Event personnel 13)

This respondent further stated:

'There would be no need for pre-event guidelines as we provide advice on such matters in the case where guidance would be required.' (LA Event personnel 13).

Similarly, an interesting response in relation to pre-event planning and the responsibility of traffic management included the following:

'Event Management organisations normally plan and manage events in the area and are aware of the elements required in planning an event, so really there would be no need for guidelines on our part.' (LA Event Personnel, 8).

The same respondent also declared that:

'Most events require a permit for road closures and at times diversions would need to be put in place, but Gardai would normally be responsible for the overall traffic management at events, we personally wouldn't take on that responsibility.' (LA Event Personnel, 8).

Therefore, despite traffic management becoming an increasingly important aspect of event management and with regulations governing traffic management at events in Ireland (Planning and Development (Amendment, regulations 2001/2015), it is worrying that local authorities are not paying much attention to its significance. Yet, it is incremental that local authorities focus on providing guidance and assistance to entrepreneurs through planning practices and processes for event management in Ireland.

Following on from this, there was a need to examine local authority planning and support for entrepreneurs in terms of risk reduction and ensuring public safety at events. Entrepreneurs are often responsible for designing, constructing and providing safe venues at events, reducing risk and ensuring safety in their respective roles (Bladen et al, 2012). Notably, it is often entrepreneurs who are contracted by event organisations to prepare event management plans and risk documentation that are required by local authorities as part of overall event planning processes (Silvers, 2009). This, in turn, has been acknowledged to determine the licensing ruling at events from local authorities (Raj, Walters and Rashid, 2013). Therefore, it was surprising and unexpected when study results revealed that local authorities did not adequately make provisions for safety or risks at events in Ireland (see Table 4).

Silvers (2009), acknowledges that, all events, irrespective of type and scale, have some level of associated risk. Therefore, according to Getz and Page (2016), there is a clear need for adopting systematic practices in order to identify, evaluate, treat and monitor risks. Specifically, the risks of event cancellation, structural collapse and security risks to the public at events, place a fundamental responsibility on entrepreneurs to ensure general safety. In particular, security risks at events have become a major concern for event entrepreneurs in light of events becoming a target for terrorist attacks, with the Bastille Day celebrations at Nice in France on July 18th 2016 presenting a case in point. In Ireland, the Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald acknowledges the need for events to be better planned and policed in light of such attacks, although currently, there is no known threat facing Ireland (The Irish Times, 2016). However, clearly local authorities throughout Ireland have not recognised the need or duty for risk-planning, with just four local authorities providing basic guidelines. Crucially, they also have not acknowledged the need to plan for security risks at events, with no guidelines for this issue being offered or provided by any of the local authorities involved in research for this chapter.

Table 4: Planning matrix to assess local authority planning for safety and risk

Local Authority Provision of Planning Guidelines for Event Management																																
Analysis of Guidelines	Local authorities in Ireland (abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal)																															
	CW	CN	CE	CK	Cc	DL	Dc	Dr	Ds	FL	GY	GC	KE	KK	KY	LS	LM	LK	LH	LD	MH	MO	MN	OY	RN	SO	TY	WD	WH	WX	WW	
Guidelines for providing a safe venue							x													x											x	
Choosing a venue design/ layout/site							x													x		x										
Providing a safe space for people							x													x		x										
Viewing/seating arrangements							x													x		x									x	
Site/venue infrastructure							x													x												
Safe ingress and egress							x													x												x
Signs, way marking and circulation							x													x												
Entrance/exit capacity							x													x		x										
Access/parking							x													x		x										
Venue capacity							x													x		x										
Venue regulations																					x											
Guidelines for managing Risk							x													x		x										x
Identification of risks							x													x		x										x
Categorization of risks							x													x		x										x
Risk assessments							x													x		x										x
Evaluation of risk							x													x		x										x
Cancellation of events																																x
Structure collapse							x													x												x
Lost children							x													x												
Security risks																																
Adverse weather							x													x		x										x
Crowd risks							x													x		x										x
Dealing with discovery of fire																				x												
Guidelines for fire safety and prevention							x													x		x										x
Guidelines for emergency planning							x													x		x										x
Guidelines for Medical and First Aid							x													x		x										

In line with this trend, fire safety and fire prevention is required at all events, as a direct result of risks that can be posed by event entrepreneurs themselves through, for example, the provision and use of cooking facilities, energy generators, pyrotechnics and electrical equipment. This can be increasingly problematic at events and can adversely affect event safety, thereby requiring serious attention. As a result of such potential risks, events are now subject to fire regulations (Bowdin et al, 2012), which establish a minimum requirement that provides a reasonable degree of safety from fire. Directly because of this, it is incremental that local authorities plan for fire safety and fire prevention, as well as providing guidance to entrepreneurs in ensuring fire safety and fire prevention. Furthermore, emergency planning and the provision of first aid at events have become synonymous with risk management processes (Silvers, 2009). Bowdin et al (2012) point out that all large-scale public events require an emergency plan and medical plan as a means of ensuring overall

event safety. Hence, safety and risk at events should be given precedence in local authority planning processes for all events. Yet, from study findings for this chapter, it appears that there is an overall low level of planning, with just four local authorities providing planning guidelines for emergency planning at events, and only three providing guidelines for medical and first aid. In clarifying the level of planning for safety and risk at events with local authority event personnel, some respondents pointed out the following:

'The event planning process is based primarily on ensuring safety and reducing risks. We require event organisers to prepare an event management plan in accordance with health and safety practices which minimise the threat of risks.' (LA Event Personnel 16).

'Risks have become incredibly prominent in the event industry in Ireland and with Ireland having gained a reputation as a claims culture, risk management and safety have become an important planning practice for events [sic]': (LA Event Personnel, 3)

In essence, these findings illustrate that more support is required for risk and safety at events in Ireland. This is vital to supporting and guiding event entrepreneurs in the practice of planning for all future event management, in a manner that reduces risk and ensures safety, thus safeguarding the quality of an increasingly popular event industry.

It was then necessary to determine which local authorities, if any, who are planning or providing support for managing people and stakeholders at events. The results from this examination are illustrated in Table 5 below. Events are dependent on people and stakeholders (Jones, 2014). However, the most difficult aspect to manage at events is human behaviour (Event Scotland, 2006). As a result, managing people has become a top agenda for many event organisations, and government organisations have recognised that, without effective crowd management, event spaces become overcrowded and possible crowd-related incidents can occur (Ferdinand and Kitchin, 2016). Yet, findings have reported that just five Irish local authorities made basic provisions for crowd management. As a result of such issues, event stewards and general security have both become prominent forces in managing crowds at events (Raj, Walters and Rashid, 2009). It was, therefore, necessary to assess local authority input to planning and support for stewarding and security professionals and/or entrepreneurs in Ireland. However, again, there was an overall disparity in the results, with just five local authorities providing guidelines to support stewarding and security professionals and entrepreneurs.

Table 5: Planning matrix to assess local authority planning for people and stakeholders

Local Authority Provision of Planning Guidelines for Event Management																																
Analysis of Guidelines	Local authorities in Ireland (abbreviated by first and last letter DL = Donegal)																															
	CW	CN	CE	CK	Cc	DL	Dc	Dr	Ds	FL	GY	GC	KE	KK	KY	LS	LM	LK	LH	LD	MH	MO	MN	OY	RN	SO	TY	WD	WH	WX	WW	
Guidelines for managing people and crowds						x													x	x		x									x	
Measures to prevent overcrowding						x													x	x												
Crowd anticipation						x														x												
Ensure ease of movement/escape						x														x		x									x	
Crowd disturbance						x														x												
Guidelines for stewarding/security						x													x	x		x									x	
Stewarding arrangements						x													x	x		x									x	
Security arrangements						x													x	x		x										
Briefing stewards/security staff						x													x	x		x										
Allocation of stewards/security						x														x		x										
Designated fire stewards						x														x		x										
Identification of stewards/security						x														x		x										
Guidelines for event stakeholders						x														x		x									x	
Gardaí						x														x		x										x
HSE and insurers						x														x		x										
Local Authority						x														x												x
Planning authorities						x														x												
Building control																				x												
Environmental services						x														x		x										
Safety manager/officer						x														x		x										
Fire services						x													x	x		x										x
Suppliers/contractors						x														x		x										
Medical officer						x														x		x										x
Event Controller						x													x	x		x										x
Guidelines for contractors and suppliers						x														x		x										

Next, guidelines for supporting event stakeholders were examined. Events are now increasingly professionalised and command the involvement of many stakeholders (Reid and Arcodia, 2007). It is important to have provisions in place and to plan for the inclusion of stakeholders. Bowdin et al (2012) acknowledge that it is no longer sufficient for an event to meet just the needs of its audience. It must also embrace a plethora of other requirements for each stakeholder group (Bladen et al, 2012). Some event stakeholders are often self-employed entrepreneurs, such as contractors and suppliers, environmental services, safety officers and event controllers, and often all of these personnel require strong support and assistance in the process of planning for event management. Local authorities must, therefore, provide support for entrepreneurs to assist them in event management at both pre- and post-planning stages. In Ireland the engagement of the stakeholders, as outlined in Table 5, is a fundamental requirement of the event planning and licensing process in Ireland

(Planning and Development (Amendment) regulations 2015). However, just four local authorities acknowledged the importance of supporting stakeholders in the event context.

In conducting qualitative in-depth interviews with local authority event personnel on planning for people and stakeholders, most local authorities stated that they did, in fact, plan for people and stakeholders declaring that:

'Event stakeholders are crucial to the event management process, without them, events would simply not occur. As part of the event management planning process we require event organisers to consult with event stakeholders so we would provide advice on what stakeholders to engage with and consult with [sic].' (LA Event personnel 21)

However, this response contradicts research findings from the content analysis. These findings and responses highlight the need for a planning approach that supports entrepreneurs in the process of planning for event management in Ireland. Generally, the analysis of findings has found an overall dearth of local authority support for event entrepreneurs who wish to sustainably plan for event management. To further highlight the lack of local authority planning and support for entrepreneurs in the event industry in Ireland, it is important to draw attention to the case of the Croke Park Stadium concerts (Garth Brooks) in Ireland in 2014. This case caused the community residing around Croke Park Stadium in Dublin to object to five sold-out concerts, each with a capacity for 80,000 people. The objection came as a result of a pre-existing agreement between Croke Park Stadium and local residents under the planning permission granted for Croke Park to hold, 'no more than three events on consecutive evenings'. This, subsequently, in a long drawn-out event licensing process, resulted in the local authority granting permission for only three events, rather than the original five, but the artist cancelled all five concerts. This was estimated to have represented a loss of earnings worth €50m to the local economy, thereby affecting entrepreneurs from accommodation providers, transport providers, restaurateurs, retailers, as well as event promoters themselves. However, this entire issue may have been prevented had there been pre-existing support tools and a comprehensive local authority planning process for event management in place. As such, this case resulted in a change to event regulations in Ireland. Nevertheless, there is still a clear need for a consistent state-wide approach to planning by local authorities for the event management industry in Ireland. Through the use of support tools, such as event management-specific guidelines, local authorities could effectively guide entrepreneurs through the process of planning for event management. This, in turn, could contribute significantly to ensuring the future long-term support and sustainability of the event industry in Ireland.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined local authority support for event entrepreneurs in planning for event management in Ireland. The importance of entrepreneurs to the overall creation and production of events has been well documented throughout the research. More significantly, the need for local authority involvement and support, in terms of guiding event entrepreneurs throughout the entire process of planning for event management, has been clearly recognised. Furthermore, it has been established that local authorities do play a key role in encouraging entrepreneurs to stimulate job creation and promote economic growth. Therefore, through the movement of local enterprise offices within the local authority network, local authorities now have a fundamental role in supporting event entrepreneurs. However, it is evident from the disparity of results that little tangible support is actually provided by local authorities to entrepreneurs in planning for event management in Ireland, despite roles local authorities hold towards events and entrepreneurs. This is worrying and may have implications for the longevity of the event sector at a national level in Ireland. Hence, there is a clear need for local authorities to play a more supportive and active role in the event industry as a whole. Through a consistent state-wide approach to planning for event management, local authorities have the potential to efficiently guide and lay the foundations for event professionals and entrepreneurs, in order to sustainably plan for event management in Ireland. The implementation of this initiative alone will contribute to sustaining the progressive quality and growth of the event management industry in Ireland.

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CHAPTER 10

Attracting and Retaining Staff for the Irish Hotel Industry – An Intergenerational Perspective

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Introduction

Ireland's tourism sector has been an important driver of the country's economic recovery, based on increased international visitor numbers. The number of international visitors has risen by over 2.1 million between 2012 and 2015, and 2016 was a record year for tourism with 8.8 million visitors, up 10% on 2015 (Fáilte Ireland 2017). It is crucial that sectors such as tourism, which have substantial growth potential, are supported by the Irish government, in terms of investment for the future (ITIC/IBEC 2016). Underpinning the growth of tourism is the need for a vibrant hotel sector, and thus it is critical to ensure that impediments facing hotels in the Irish economy are addressed. The recruitment and retention of staff for the hotel industry is an area of significant concern, with hotels displaying some of the highest levels of employee turnover (CIPD 2016).

This chapter highlights some of the primary areas of concern, derived from a comprehensive review of literature in the areas of staff attraction and retention, employer branding and the intergenerational workforce. It is intended that this review provides a platform for future primary research, which may underpin future development of effective strategies to deal with the recruitment and retention problems currently being experienced in the Irish hotel industry.

Literature Review

The Hotel Labour Market in Ireland

As a service industry, tourism relies heavily on its people, and the development of a culture of hospitality, along with quality service provision, all of which are crucial to the competitiveness of the tourism sector (ITIC/IBEC 2016). Encouraging careers in tourism is a key factor for the industry's success in Ireland, and the creation of suitable training structures, along with action to encourage students to choose jobs in the tourism sector as a career, are essential if the success of the industry is to be sustained and built upon (DTTAS 2016). The Irish hospitality industry has a number of key features in terms of human resources, including the following: that it is characterised by seasonal fluctuations; part-time employment is an important element of the industry; foreign nationals make up a large percentage of the sector's workforce; average hourly earnings are rated as low compared to other businesses; and there are high exit rates amongst certain occupations in this sector (EGFSN 2015). The industry is capable of creating employment in regional areas where other export-focused fields are constrained. However, there are serious skills shortages at craft and entry level positions, which are inhibiting the growth of the sector (IHF 2014).

Employment Challenges in the Irish Hotel Sector

Whether it was through the buoyant so-called 'Celtic Tiger' years, or even in more recent recessionary years, the Irish hotel industry has always seemed to face the challenge of filling the gap between the supply and the demand for trained staff to meet customers' needs (Davern 2014). This increasing shortfall of staff to fill these positions has been blamed on the withdrawal of government involvement in direct skills funding through dedicated training centres, where hospitality professionals were trained during the off-season months. However, the traditionally poor reputation of the industry as an employer, means that a career in this industry is often discouraged, particularly at secondary school level, and actions need to be taken by industry to address this going forward (Davern 2014).

By the second quarter of 2015 there was an increase of 20,000 workers employed in the Irish hospitality sector, compared to its lowest point in 2011. However, the quality of these jobs is being questioned, as employers in the sector have a preference for a pool of part-time and flexible staff, rather than full-time employees on permanent contracts (TASC 2015). The sector is further characterised by low wages and, in 2013, 16.7% of all employees in the accommodation and food services sector earned only the national minimum hourly wage, with an average of 26.4 hours worked per staff member per week, which is significantly below the national average of 31.9 hours (TASC 2015).

Part-time employment is a key element of the hotel industry, and offers flexibility for both the hotelier and the employee. Full-time employment comprised sixty percent of the workforce in the hospitality industry in 2014, with the remaining forty percent employed on a part-time basis; this compared to a seventy-seven to twenty three percent split across all sectors of the Irish economy (EGFSN 2015).

It is clear that there is not enough investment in training in the hotel industry currently and, if it is to maintain standards and quality, it is necessary that stakeholders invest in training as a priority (Carbery *et al.* 2003, O'Leary and Deegan 2005, Lawson *et al.* 2013). By exceeding customers' expectations, through strong customer service, clients will become advocates for the hotel and recommend it to others; however, if a hotel does not deliver on their service promise, this will lead to guest disappointment and could tarnish the hotels brand (Watkins 2014).

The reform of training policies for the industry is essential, and these need to focus on areas such as continuous education, up-skilling and equipping workers for career progression into the future, by providing 'high quality, flexible and responsive education and training programmes' (ITIC/IBEC 2016, p.10).

One of the industry's primary challenges is the provision of appropriate training and education opportunities, along with the establishment of clear career path progression for those who choose the hospitality industry as a career. Furthermore, demand shortfalls are likely to emerge in occupations which are key to the hospitality industry's growth, should action not be taken in the short to medium term (EGFSN 2015). The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC) and the Irish Business Employers Confederation (IBEC), call on the government to provide education and training opportunities which are more in tune with the needs of the industry (ITIC/IBEC 2016).

As the tourism industry in Ireland is often located in areas where there is a weak industrial base, it is an important part of regional distribution (Ireland 2014). Much of the employment in the tourism industry is located in places where there are few other employment opportunities (ITIC/IBEC 2016). The ability of the tourism sector to grow further is linked to the range of skills which are available in the workforce to assist in this process and, while the state body established in 1963, the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training (CERT), previously provided training in the tourism and hospitality sector, Fáilte Ireland now supports the Institutes of Technology to provide this training (DTTAS 2016).

The issue of labour cost is a constant concern for the industry, and the Irish Hotels Federation (2015) encourages the government to take account of the specific circumstances of individual industries when determining national pay levels. Levels of pay and wage inflation are key factors in the competitiveness of the industry and, with Ireland's minimum wage of €9.25 in 2017 standing at one of the highest of twenty one countries in the EU, this exerts huge pressure on the competitiveness of

the sector (ITIC/IBEC 2016). Companies such as Dalata, Ireland's largest hotel group, caution that further increases in the minimum wage would erode competitiveness, causing them to alter their investment strategy, focusing more on the UK rather than Ireland because, after Luxembourg, Ireland's minimum wage is already the second highest in the EU (Mulligan 2016).

McCormack (2016) advises that there are almost 26,500 young people claiming unemployment benefits each week in Ireland, with 16,000 of these in long-term unemployment and 5,406 people on the Live Register for three or more years. Even though unemployment has fallen to a post-crash low of 6.6 percent, there are significant numbers of skilled people on the Live Register who are seeking employment in hospitality occupations, and may be in need of support to return to work (EGFSN 2015, McCormack 2016). Commentators have questioned how there could be as many as three thousand vacant positions in the hotel sector, with a cohort of so many unemployed, and have queried why it is that those choosing college courses are overlooking the sector which is, in turn, leading to a deficit of staff in Irish hotels (Clifford 2014). Each year the industry needs to replace over three thousand craft-level staff due to natural attrition alone (O'Brien 2014).

Responses to Skills Shortages in the Irish Hotel Sector

In 1997, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was established to advise the Irish Government on current and future skills needs in the economy. In November 2015, the EGFSN published a report which investigated the future skills needs of the hospitality industry in Ireland up to the year 2020, and it set out recommendations and measures which are designed to address skills requirements for the hospitality sector in Ireland (EGFSN 2015). The main skill shortage identified by that 2015 report was that of suitably qualified chefs, with shortages of commis chefs further linked with the staff shortages experienced at more senior levels. Gaps were also identified in basic skills at many entry level and junior level positions, waiting staff and other areas. Hoteliers in Ireland have long expressed concern at the gap of available staff trained in key skills such as: specialised front of house skills; yield management; sales and marketing; along with certain food and beverage skills. Concerns were also expressed, that gaps are apparent by geographic location, though these gaps were not always higher in remote locations (EGFSN 2015). The main reasons cited by the various stakeholders for these skills gaps include an insufficient number of people in Ireland with the appropriate level of training and experience, along with the poor reputation of the sector as an employer (EGFSN 2015).

An international review of initiatives to address such skills gaps, undertaken as part of the EGFSN Report, highlighted the broad consensus on the importance of balance between a strong vocational training system and general academically focused hospitality courses. The review also identified the need for the involvement of

industry in the design of courses, the need for active promotion of the industry as a career by hospitality representative bodies, and it also recognised the importance of the accreditation of skills due to the mobility of personnel in the hospitality industry (EGFSN 2015).

Hoteliers in Ireland are now looking to change the unfavourable image which the sector has experienced in the past, through increasing salaries for high skilled jobs in the sector and by putting a greater emphasis on training, with almost all hotels planning on hiring new staff as their business continues to grow (Hospitality Ireland 2016). Fáilte Ireland is also collaborating with cookery schools and education providers by offering new thirty-four week training programmes to produce commis chefs for an industry which requires five thousand new chefs each year until 2020 in order to meet increased demand (Digby 2016). This initiative, along with the reintroduction of kitchen apprenticeships, harks back to the traditional system where there were clear career paths, where those who completed apprenticeships could move up through grade schemes and, ultimately, achieve a decent position with a good salary. A proposed new chef-related apprenticeship programme, approved by the Apprenticeship Council, and involving the collaboration of the main hotel and restaurant representative bodies, is expected to deliver 130 to 150 apprentices on an annual basis (EGFSN 2015).

The casualisation of the workforce which the hotel industry has experienced over the last two decades, has flattened the promotional and occupational structure, with many grades removed from hotel industry training (TASC 2015). As career progression is a driving force for workers to stay on in their current roles, hoteliers must respond to this need by offering opportunities for workers to progress in the business, or employees will look elsewhere, even in spite of generous remuneration packages (Hunt 2015). Concerns have also been expressed that, although there is a wide range of education and training courses available for the hotel industry, they are of a somewhat fragmented nature (EGFSN 2015)

The Attraction and Retention of Hotel Staff

Staff retention levels in Irish hotels is an issue and, in a growing hotel sector, employers are finding it more difficult to retain staff and, therefore, must offer initiatives in the areas of training and staff development, in order to retain key staff (Hospitality Ireland 2016). Companies such as Jurys Inn, still see the benefits of offering staff training, even if an employee leaves shortly afterwards, as they become ambassadors for the company and talk positively about the opportunities they received while working there (Hospitality Ireland 2016).

Issues with the attraction and retention of trained chefs are changing how we eat, with the upper end of the industry struggling to find talent in a tight labour market, with investors moving towards restaurant concepts which rely less on original

and creative cooking and are, therefore, easier to staff (Naylor 2015). Employee categories, such as trained chefs, are experiencing acute shortages in Ireland, with the EGFSN citing that 5,000 chefs are needed annually up until 2020 to keep up with demand, even though 1,800 qualify annually from certified culinary programmes (OBrien 2016).

As the economy improves, so too does the competition for talent, and, 'talent attraction strategies and employer brand propositions remain a key focus for companies as they develop attraction and retention strategies to meet their workforce planning needs' (Morgan McKinley 2016, p.3). The attraction of suitable talent, along with areas such as retention and employee development, are all key aspects of many organisations' agendas; and, while basic salary is important, areas such as flexibility, pension benefits and work-life balance, can be equally important (Recruitment 2016). Employee benefits programmes lead to a significant multiplicity of investment for employers, but such benefits are essential as employers struggle to attract, motivate and retain staff to meet increased consumer demand (SigmarRecruitment 2016).

The sharp drop in birth rates experienced in the eighties and early nineties, along with outward migration during the recessionary years, now means that many companies in Ireland are having difficulty finding suitable staff to fill vacant positions, and the importance of employer branding, and differentiating an organisation from its competitors, is becoming more and more important (Recruitment 2016). While some level of staff turnover is expected and is indeed, often welcome, a strategy must be put in place to retain key staff in order to maintain a competitive edge, employee performance and productivity (Lanigan 2016).

So-called 'Millennials' (also known as 'Generation Y'), are challenging hotel employers to offer new forms of training in line with their constant need to access technology, and this is why companies such as the PREM Group offer self-paced training through mobile devices, and Jurys Inn offer an online portal where staff can access employment information instantly (Hospitality Ireland 2016). The engagement of employees is essential to enhancing their job satisfaction, and can be instrumental in the retention of Millennial employees (Park and Gursoy 2012).

Attracting and Retaining Inter-generational Employees

It is clear that major generational demographic changes are happening in today's Irish workforce. Each generation has its own unique set of values, skills and characteristics, which are shaped by their stage in life and life experiences. The so-called 'Generation Y', meaning people born in the 1980s and 1990s, is no different, meaning that employers have to comprehend the underlying value structure of this generation (Zopiatis *et al.* 2011, Park and Gursoy 2012, Gursoy *et al.* 2013). In modern workplaces, different generational groups also have certain expectations in terms of

employee benefits, which are shaped by their birth cohort, age, life stage, formative experiences and historical experiences (Dencker *et al.* 2007).

The main demographic groups which are represented in today's workplace are shown in Table 1.0, while the main characteristics of the most recent generations are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.0: Demographic Groups present in the workplace and descriptions

Generation	Years Born	Core Values
Baby Boomers	1944–1960	Optimism, personal gratification and growth
Generation X	1961–1980	Diversity, techno-literacy, fun, informality
Millennials/Generation Y	1981–2000	Optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement

Source: (Rood 2011)

Table 1.1: Main Characteristics of the most recent generations

Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials/Generation Y
Live to Work	Respond to instant gratification	The more the merrier
Respect authority and hierarchy in the workplace	Identify with the Lone Ranger	Rules are made to be broken
Live large and are in charge	Work to live	Here today and gone tomorrow
	Friends in high places	Show me the way

Source: (Gursoy *et al.* 2008)

The current workplace has a larger diversity of generations represented than at any other time in history, and these employees from diverse age groups react differently to the areas of motivation and retention (Glass 2007). The flattening of today's organisational structures has led to a mix of four generations in the same work environment, and resulting tensions have necessitated greater time spent handling intergenerational conflict (Wieck 2008). By the year 2020, Millennials will comprise 50% of the workforce (Agrawal 2016). The motivation of Millennials, and management's response to their attitude towards organisational membership and commitment, are areas which Human Resources (HR) must address (Myers and Sadaghiani 2010).

The terms 'Generation Y' and 'Millennials' are used interchangeably to describe the same generational cohort. It is suggested by Rothschild (2016) that retention issues are at their peak when dealing with Millennials, and that the hotel industry requires new paradigms to attract, motivate and retain this generation of workers. Millennials will make up seventy-five percent of the workforce by 2025 and are much different from their generational predecessors (Wiggins 2016). Differing work

values have an effect on the workplace due to the different beliefs, values, work attitudes, and attitudes towards leadership, exhibited by each generation (Rood 2011). The multiple generations in the workplace clash in many ways, and there are fundamental differences in the work values of each of the three generations currently in the workforce (Chen and Choi 2008). It is probable that three, or maybe even four generations, may be working together in the hospitality industry, and this is a matter which is in need of a strategic HR response (Zopiatis *et al.* 2012).

The hospitality sector typically hires a large proportion of Generation Y workers, and only a small number of studies have explored intergenerational differences in hospitality employment (Barron 2008, Zopiatis *et al.* 2012, Choi *et al.* 2013). It is argued by Gursoy *et al.* (2013) that there is little research which focuses' on the generational differences in relation to service contract businesses, which include the hospitality industry. This is worrying, considering that authors such as Zopiatis *et al.* (2012, p.118), suggest that adaption to the Generation Y employees' needs will be, 'one of the most challenging tasks of hospitality stakeholders in the next decade'.

There are significant differences between the various generations and similar to non-hospitality sector businesses, and hospitality stakeholders must respond to these differences (Zopiatis *et al.* 2011). Generation Y members have significantly different employment demands to previous generations, and also hold different preferences and perspectives than their predecessors towards education and careers in general. This all needs to be considered by both educators and employers (Barron 2008). The Y Generation are the hardest to retain in the workplace and are likely to bring a new perspective to their work-life, reshaping the perception of a desirable workplace (Choi *et al.* 2013, Brown *et al.* 2015). Millennials have a distaste for menial work and often do not possess the skills to deal with difficult people (Rood 2011). Generation Y workers are prone to switching loyalty quickly, and businesses are struggling with both their recruitment and retention, as this particular cohort of workers is resistant to traditional employment practices. This is a particular problem in the hospitality business where employee turnover is already a significant challenge (Choi *et al.* 2013, Chuah *et al.* 2014). Indeed, managers adjusting to Generation Y are often shocked to discover that the long-term commitment promised by Millennials initially, often amounted to a one year commitment (Martin 2005).

Managers in the hospitality industry face significant challenges in dealing with Millennial members in the workplace, as they grew up in an era of instant communication, they value freedom and leisure time, and they have higher expectations in terms of pay and promotions (Gursoy *et al.* 2013). The preferred methods of both communication and interaction needed by Millennials need to be respected, as they grew up in an era where they experienced different world views, expectations and values; and they are also the most technologically and technically literate generation yet (Glass 2007, Chuah *et al.* 2014). Members of Generation Y demand more flexible working conditions as well as flexibility in their working hours,

an issue which may be difficult to address in light of modern workplace demands (Myers and Sadaghiani 2010). Millennials also require the employer to offer creative approaches to career development in order to keep them fully engaged (Rothschild 2016).

There are considerable and inherent differences, in workplace expectations as well as attitudes to life in general, between the younger Generation Y workers and the older Generation X population. Millennials tend to be fun-loving, flexible and team-orientated, and they are more technically literate and more value-orientated; they also want management to care about their work-life (Glass 2007, Choi *et al.* 2013, Chuah *et al.* 2014). In line with this need for fun and flexibility, Generation Y employees evaluate fun-working environments in a more positive fashion than traditional work environments, and management need to recognise the positive effects which the creation of a fun environment can have on organisational performance (Choi *et al.* 2013). Millennials were raised during the years where empowerment was encouraged and, 'everyone got a medal'; they were taught to question authority and make their own choices; they value strong leadership, and technology is a significant part of their lives (Gursoy *et al.* 2013). The importance of a healthy work-life balance, leisure activities and relaxation cannot be underestimated for Generation Y members, and they are more socially minded (Glass 2007, Gursoy *et al.* 2013). Indeed, the most common cause of the current batch of hospitality graduates leaving the industry is that of work-family conflict (Brown *et al.* 2015). Millennials are results-orientated, but they do not focus on the methods which are used to achieve these results (Glass 2007). Generation Y-ers also view work as a part of a well-rounded overall life (Rood 2011). These characteristics may mean that older generations (namely Generation X), may not fully accept the incoming generation, and some Millennials may remain marginalised by more senior co-workers (Myers and Sadaghiani 2010).

Millennials seek jobs which offer professional development, along with an increased sense of responsibility and growth (Gursoy *et al.* 2013). Work is not performed for sheer survival, with life outside the workplace having more value; Millennials seek a balance between their personal and work lives (Gursoy *et al.* 2013). Generation Y-ers also enter the workforce with significant experiences which assist them in performing organisational roles as, due to a previously problematic job market, they may have gained extensive experience through travelling, volunteering, internships, or by gaining advanced qualifications (Myers and Sadaghiani 2010).

Employer Actions to deal with Millennials

Firms need to adapt their process of graduate recruitment to suit the current generation, and alter their publicity and advertising in order to create an image which communicates their values, as Generation Y members are looking for different

qualities in an employer (Terjesen *et al.* 2007). A person-organisational fit must be considered, as recruits seek out organisations which they perceive have value characteristics similar to their own; they will quickly leave organisations that have promised attributes that they cannot deliver (Terjesen *et al.* 2007). The realities of a career in the hotel industry also need to be explained in advance to those entering the industry, so that there are no misconceptions, which might lead to them leaving the industry when their pre-conceptions are not delivered on (Brown *et al.* 2015).

Awareness of the differences of attitudes to work that exists between generations, can lead managers to a more positive work environment and greater productivity in the workplace (Glass 2007, Gursoy *et al.* 2013). HR professionals need to focus on adapting this high-maintenance workforce into a high-productivity workforce, as they play a pivotal role in maintaining positive intergenerational relations in the workplace (Martin 2005, Zopiatis *et al.* 2011). The first step which a company must take is to adapt its HR policies and practices to suit the generational needs of Millennials (Glass 2007). Their need to work for a company which exhibits an awareness of corporate philanthropy and social awareness, and which offers collaborative decision-making, along with fast-track development, and where their efforts are recognised and rewarded, means that HR practices must be modified to suit this generation (Chen and Choi 2008). Generation Y workers also value their relationships with supervisors and their work environment, more so than their predecessors (Chen and Choi 2008).

Gursoy *et al.* (2013) contend that Millennial employees have lower levels of work engagement than previous generations exhibited and, that the nature of the hotel business, with its less rewarding and more challenging work, means that it is not aligned with Generation Y's expectations or work preferences. They are also the most confident generation yet, as they grew up in schools systems which encouraged the positive development of people's self-esteem (Glass 2007). Their confidence, however, should not be misinterpreted, as they still want clear direction and have a desire for collaboration, which seems to contradict their need for independence (Martin 2005).

Generation Y employees have a higher inclination to leave organisations than previous generations, particularly when they experience a lack of energy and difficulties in terms of mental resilience in the workplace (Gursoy *et al.* 2013). Millennials are easily bored and seek flexibility in the work environment (Martin 2005). It is, therefore, essential that organisations value and recognise the individuality which Millennials bring to a business, rather than the traditional norms which have been developed over time (Zopiatis *et al.* 2012).

Creating a greater awareness of intergenerational issues in the workplace is the first step in the management of today's multigenerational hospitality work environment (Zopiatis *et al.* 2012). Those managers who foster the unique psychological characteristics of Generation Y workers, and who improve their work environment

and resources, will be more successful in terms of the engagement of employees from that generation (Gursoy *et al.* 2013). It is the businesses that focus on Millennials' talents, and who energise them in the workplace, turning high-maintenance into high-productivity, that will reap the advantages of this generation, thereby gaining a strategic advantage over their competitors (Martin 2005, Zopiatis *et al.* 2012). Organisations should ensure that they are not suppressing the values and differences between generations in the modern day workplace, as this will affect the performance both of the individual employee and the organisation as a whole (Zopiatis *et al.* 2012). Adaption to the needs of Generation Y-ers may assist in establishing a business as a preferred employer, in a time where industries strive to both attract and retain key talent (Zopiatis *et al.* 2012).

The subject of multiple generations working together is likely to persist for longer, given that older generations are retiring later, or returning to the workforce post-retirement, as well as the fact that there is an increase in the level of non-standard forms of work (Saba 2013). Generational considerations are essential to take into account, and 'Generation Y' hoteliers need to be conscious, not only of how customers rate them in terms of quality using social media, but also in how their Generation Y employees rate them as employers, as this can have a profound effect on their reputation, either making them 'the place to work', or, alternatively, discouraging anyone to apply for their available positions. The hotel industry as a whole is encouraged to work together in order to improve its image as an employer, and to invest in staff training and development, while creating clear career paths for all employees, if the industry is to retain its best asset (Enz 2009).

Conclusion

We are living in an era where concepts such as globalisation, off-shoring and automation are gaining more prominence, not just in manufacturing, but also in services (Boxall and Purcell 2011). There is more competition from countries where labour costs are much lower, and areas such as central reservation call-centres, and even HRM, can be outsourced to more cost-effective destinations in developing countries. Businesses, however, cannot just concentrate on the area of cost reduction; they need to simultaneously consider social legitimacy as a strategic goal, and go beyond the satisfaction of the mere legal requirements, if the industry is to develop its reputation as an employer in society, in the long-term (Boxall and Purcell 2011).

Businesses must be cognisant of the environment in which they operate and HRM practices must fit with: the context at the time; a firm's stage in its business life-cycle; and whether or not it operates on a national or multi-national platform. Although a universally applied set of best practices cannot be administered in isolation, the underpinning principles of these systems can be adapted to suit the specific and unique context at that time, thereby improving the overall HRM in a firm (Boxall and

Purcell 2011). A firm may also adopt different ways of managing various types of workers, and their line-level employees may have HR practices applied which differ among hotel managers. The specific context of the firm will mean that different HRM principles may apply in small versus large companies, and in public versus private sector organisations (Boxall and Purcell 2011).

Hospitality professionals are faced with challenges caused by both diversity and competition in the marketplace for labour, along with consideration of the differences and similarities in values among multiple generations in the workplace (Chen and Choi 2008). Hoteliers must, therefore, choose the best practices in HRM which suit their specific business models, based on factors such as its life-cycle stage, the strength of its management and the generational attributes of its workforce, whilst always remaining mindful of the macro-environmental factors which impact on the firm. The strategic integration of traditional measures of performance, particularly those of management accounting, along with other measures such as HRM, has been applied in a number of hotels in recent years, with some success. This increased awareness and development of HRM capabilities should be continued in order to improve hotels' capabilities to operate in a competitive, modern environment and this, in turn, should improve the overall reputation of the industry, helping it to become an employment sector of choice.

The image of the hospitality industry, as a career or employment choice, remains poor, and it is essential that both educators and employers in the area address this image problem for the benefit of the sector (Barron 2008). Impressions of menial jobs, poor career opportunities, along with limited rewards, will have to be tackled if Generation Y members are to see the hospitality industry as a sector with viable, long-term career prospects (Barron 2008).

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PART 3: TECHNOLOGY AND DESTINATION MARKETING

CHAPTER 11

Netnographic Research on Destination Image and Tourism Content Creators

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Introduction

'Self-made' media are now at the dynamic boundary of an emergent system.
(Hartley 2008).

Over the last two decades, the global media landscape has undergone a transformation equal to the entirety of all its changes for the previous half-century. Indeed, the extent to which global media has progressed in recent times, reflects Hartley's (2008) suggestion that we are, 'in an evolutionary mid-step in the growth of knowledge,' which prompts a core research question: how do these changes in global media impact the population as a whole?

This chapter offers new awareness on destination image focuses on investigating tourist content creators and their motivations. Destination image is acknowledged as a key factor in destination choice and visitor satisfaction. This chapter may also offer useful insights from a variety of perspectives into the attraction of Ireland as a tourist destination. Understanding tourists' destination image from their perspective as stakeholders, as well as their behavioural intentions, offers entrepreneurs additional opportunities to enhance images of tourist destinations. In addition, understanding the motivations behind the production of creative content that is generated by tourists will allow destination marketing organisations (DMOs) an opportunity to utilise this in a sustainable manner. It will also assist entrepreneurs to more efficiently

allocate scarce resources to achieve positive word-of-mouth (WoM) and repeat visits (Prayag and Ryan, 2012).

It is clear from available literature that culture, atmosphere and media channels, to name but a few, can and do influence a tourist's decision-making process regarding holiday destinations. The impact of digital word of mouth (DWoM) should never be underestimated. Tourism-influenced representations of destinations visited comprise an important component of the overall reputation and potential success of that destination. Therefore, user generated content (UGC) which appears, for example, in online social networking sites, can play a significant role in tourist perceptions towards a destination.

This postgraduate research chapter focuses on a qualitative purposive sample of tourism content creators. In order to identify motives, psychographic analysis, variety of content created, education, training in content, and user-time dedicated to these activities, netnography was chosen as a preferred discipline. Netnography is an online research method originating in ethnography which is applied to understanding social interaction in contemporary digital communications contexts, which seeks to describe and theorise the human element of online human and technical interaction, social interaction and the resulting experience. Netnography adheres to strict and widely accepted standards of ethical online research. The data gathered in this research will be utilised to develop the foundations of a typology of content creators and factors which act as motivators and barriers to tourists' content creation. Desk research compliments analysis of blogs, images and videos posted online in relation to destinations. Gretzel et al. (2008) cite UGC in social media as the fastest growing forms of content on the Internet. The concept of UGC and the so-called participative web is nothing new (Failte Ireland 2013; Cook, 2008; IAB, 2008; OECD, 2007; MIC, 2006; O'Reilly, 2005, 2002). Placing 'self-made' media at the dynamic boundary of an emergent system, Hartley (2008) suggests creative production through the formation and public dissemination of cultural artefacts as becoming increasingly part of the logics of everyday life. A great deal can be learnt about remote places through self-made media, acquiring the type of information needed for planned tourist visits and travel logs (Goodchild, 2007). Destination image is a core construct in market positioning and this, according to Pike (2017), requires an understanding of perceived strengths and weaknesses relative to the competitive set of rivals for any given travel context.

Recent studies have shown a greater trust in UGC with evidence that this is surpassing the marketing message of DMOs in terms of credibility (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). Some studies have examined the effect of UGC in tourism (Fotis et al. 2012; Jacobsen and Munar, 2012; Litvin et al. 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Ye et al. 2009). Indeed, Munar (2010) expands on this concept to focus on the creative element of the content generation by tourists and introduces the idea of Tourist Created Content (TCC), a form of UGC. Although there has been some attempt to

identify a typology of the content that is created by tourists (Munar, 2010, OECD, 2007), there is limited available research to identify a typology of content creator in a tourism context.

Destination Image

The role played by a tourist destination's global image is significant in the overall decision-making process and ultimate choices made by visitors (Frais, et al. 2011; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a; Milman and Pizam, 1995; Woodside and Lyonski, 1989). The body of available literature suggests that, in conjunction with a number of other factors, the information sources that individuals are exposed to can influence the formation of their perceptions of a destination prior to an actual visit (Frais, et al. 2011). Image has been defined as,

'...the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others (Dichter, 1985), and is best understood as a dynamic construct' (Guthrie, 2007).

Destination image is defined as,

'...an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualizations and intentions towards a destination' (Tasci et al. cited in Zhou et al. 2014).

Destination image is complex and its influence on human behaviour is of interest to numerous academic disciplines. This phenomenon has been studied from a variety of perspectives, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, geography, semiotics, and marketing (Guthrie, 2007). It is generally agreed that image is composed of cognitive, affective and conative elements, as set out by Gartner (1993), and that these elements are interlinked. Although some researchers have considered affective and/or conative elements (Dann, 1996; McGregor, 2000; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Sternberg, 1997), the majority of research appears to have considered mainly the cognitive elements (Baloglu, 1998, 2001; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2001; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Kim and Richardson, 2003; McGregor, 2000; Oppermann, 1996; Selby and Morgan, 1996). The affective component of the d image denotes a person's feelings toward, and emotional responses to, a destination (Shani and Wang, 2011; Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997). Moreover, according to Gartner (1993), this only actualises during the evaluation stage of destination selection. The cognitive component comprises known attributes of a destination and mental images derived from facts. In other words, the sum of beliefs and attitudes which create a picture of the destination's attributes, comprising both organic and induced elements, as described by Gunn (1972). It is suggested that this distinction is in danger of becoming blurred with the current trend towards an increasing convergence of various media. Pike (2017) indicates that the generation of a mass of social media UGC through telephone applications (Apps) such as Facebook,

Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest, has the potential to influence the development of organic perceptions. Indeed, Oliveira and Panyik (2015), suggest that the power of organic image influence will intensify due to the sheer volume of UGC available on social media, and which is already swamping marketing communications. However, some previous studies (Beerli and Martin, 2004), have concluded that the Internet can positively influence the perceived image of a tourist destination, and generally assumes that the Internet is an induced source. By contrast, Llodrà-Riera et al. (2015), suggest that the Internet comprises various types of web platforms that can be classified into organic, induced or autonomous, all of which concurs with Gartner's (1993) classification of traditional, offline information sources.

Morgan and Pritchard (1998) have long argued that the division between organic and official, or projected images is increasingly artificial, as tourism promoters have been progressively exploiting imagery and icons from popular culture to further their business enterprises. In refining Gunn's notions of organic and induced images, Gartner (1993) introduced a distinction between 'overt induced images', where the involvement of the destination promoters is open and obvious to the consumer, and 'covert induced images', which appear to be independent of the destination promoter, such as celebrity endorsement or travel articles. He also posits that there is a clear difference between agents who are autonomous or independent and those who are solicited or unsolicited.

There is a general consensus amongst academics, destination managers and destination marketers regarding the significance of the role played by a tourist destination's image in the process of decision-making and choice (Frais, et al. 2011; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Chen and Kerstetter, 1999; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999a; Milman and Pizam, 1995; Woodside and Lyonski, 1989). Furthermore, image is acknowledged as an important factor in visitor destination choice behaviour (Baloglu, 1998; Dann, 1996; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Gartner, 1993; Govers and Go, 2003; Jenkins, 1999; Klenosky et al. 1999; Lengkeek, 2001; O'Leary and Deegan, 2005; Reilly, 1990; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000; Thirkelson, 2003).

Allied to destination choice is destination competitiveness. A competitive position is attained by maximising strengths that effectively differentiate the entity from competitors (Porter, 1980). In addition, Pike (2017) highlights the lack of temporality of a destination's competitive position, suggesting that the focus of marketing communications should be on reinforcing positively held perceptions that are representative of competitive strengths. Therefore, an understanding of tourists' destination image, as well as their behavioural intentions, offers tourist destination managers additional opportunities to enhance these stakeholders' images of their destination (Chi and Qu, 2008; Yuksel et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2014). This also assists entrepreneurs to more efficiently allocate scarce resources in order to maximise positive word-of-mouth (WoM), and to ensure repeat visits (Prayag and Ryan, 2012).

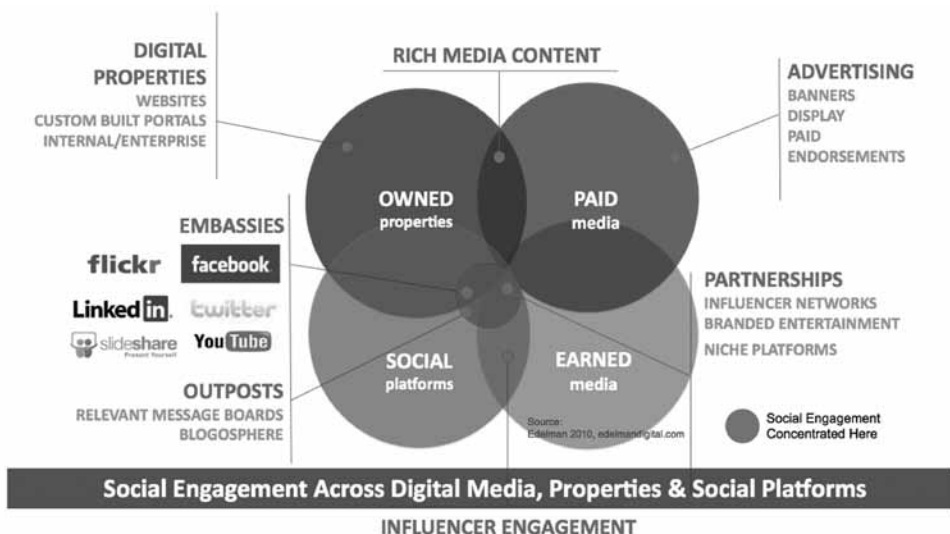
Electronic Word of Mouth (EWoM)

Tourism-influenced representations of destinations are an important component of the overall reputation and general success of a destination. This is due to the effect of digital or electronic word-of-mouth (EWoM) (Zhou, L 2014; Choi et al. 2007; Govers et al 2007; Reidl et al 2002). Studies on the influence of WoM communications have existed for many decades (Tseng et al. 2014, Brown and Reingen, 1987 and Richins, 1983), and the importance of WoM on business has been widely discussed and researched, particularly since the worldwide adoption of Internet technologies is universally acknowledged as having revolutionised the distribution and influence of WoM (Ye at al 2010, Anderson, 1998, Goldenberg et al., 2001, Stokes and Lomax, 2002 and Zhu and Zhang, 2006). EWoM can be generated in a variety of ways including: emails; instant messages; websites; blogs; online communities; telephone Apps; newsgroups; online chatrooms; hate sites; review sites; and social networking sites (Ishida at al. 2016).

User Generated Content and Tourism

Edelman (2010) outlines the type of content found online in relation to properties, platforms and social media. Social engagement occurs across paid, owned, earned and social platforms as outlined below in Figure 1. Owned content consists of tourism websites, Apps and custom portals or pages such as tourism providers' own online listings, blogs, videos or podcasts. Paid media refers to money exchanged for online space such as banner advertisements and endorsements.

Figure 1: Digital Properties, Platforms and the Media Landscape.



Source: Adapted from Edelman (2010)

Earned media can consist of reviews, articles, online television and radio. Finally, shared media consists of content shared, and online communities built on, third-party social networks. Consumer-generated content such as blogs; virtual communities; wikis, which are websites or databases developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to add and edit content; social networks; collaborative tagging and media files, all of which can be shared on sites like YouTube and Flickr, have all gained substantial popularity in online travellers' use of the Internet (Gretzel, 2006; Pan, McLaurin, and Croots, 2007; Ziang and Gretzel, 2008). However, such divisions are somewhat naïve as the spectrum of pay that can be associated with UGC is often underestimated.

Recent studies in digital marketing indicate the importance of online communities' platforms, in that they are becoming a part of everyday life (DTTT, 2015). Contemporary technology such as Web 2.0, which is characterised by the change from static web pages to dynamic or UGC, and the growth of social media in general, allows people to create and share electronic content globally (Cox et al., 2009; Munar, 2012). However, the factors that motivate tourists to generate content have received less attention in tourism literature (Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Berger and Schwartz, 2011; Bronner and de Hoog, 2011; Yoo and Gretzel, 2011). Whiting and Williams, (2013) demonstrate the importance of uses and gratifications theory applied to social media, and they have identified ten uses and gratifications for online users choosing social media: social interaction; information seeking; pass time; entertainment; relaxation; communicatory utility; convenience utility; expression of opinion; information sharing; and surveillance/knowledge about others. These findings could be broadened in the context of tourism content creators, to include education and identity which, along with social interaction and entertainment/escape, form the theory of basic model of uses and gratifications theory, as posited by Blumler J.G. and Katz, E. (1974).

The Tourist Gaze

The literature available addresses a number of issues: the role of image in tourist destination selection; the identity of dimensions of image; the structure of image; and, finally, the means of measurement and data collection (Ryan and Cave, 2005). It is acknowledged that many different approaches exist in interpreting and analysing text written by tourists. The text-content of blogs, for example, are recorded 'gazes' of tourists. As Urry (2002) has noted that there are different types of 'gazes' including, but not exclusively, the following: romantic, nostalgic, the collective, anthropological, and mediatised to mention. Gazes are social constructs: what is actually selected as the object of the gaze, the duration of surveillance, and the interpretation of what is seen. All these factors are associated with a social milieu within which the cultural framing of the gaze is important. Aspects of that cultural framing is implicit in much of what has been observed in online content, but cultural framing has,

like any attitude, a cognitive, affective and conative component. Lo and McKercher (2015) suggest that social media and photography facilitate social comparison and, thus, the tourist gaze is being rapidly redefined. With millions of people posting their travel experience online, travel blogs have become an important information exchange channel among tourists (Wenger 2008; Volo 2010). In addition to text, online blogs are known to contain multimedia content in the form of images, videos or audio recordings. With regard to tourism creation, online images, whether these are photographs or videos, are currently the most influential aspects of all online content. The organic image of place developed by bloggers can potentially increase tourist awareness, thereby creating a motivation for travel to a specific place (Fileri and McLeay 2013; Yeoh, Othman, and Ahmad 2013; Sun et al. 2014). Therefore, tourism content creators play a significant role in tourist perceptions of a destination. Netnographic research offers a useful tool with which to research tourism content creators and their influence on destination image.

Research Approach

Pike and Ryan (2004) suggest that image refers to peoples' beliefs, ideas and impressions towards destination. Image relates to how destination consumers see a tourist destination. Therefore, the image of any destination could vary and is, by its very nature, subjective. Comprehensive research is important for tourism destinations in terms of marketing strategy and targeting. Beerli and Martin (2004) emphasise that destination image highly influences consumer behaviour. Netnography seeks to describe and theorise the human elements of both human and technical online interaction, as well as social interaction and experience. As previously stated, netnography adheres to strict and widely accepted standards of ethical online research. This postgraduate research focuses on a qualitative purposive sample of tourism content creators, in order to identify motives, psychographic analysis, variety of content created, educational training in content uploads and time dedicated to these activities. The data gathered will be utilised to develop the foundations of a typology of content creators as well as factors which act as motivators and barriers to content creation.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is multi-paradigmatic in focus crossing the humanities and the social and physical sciences. Furthermore, it is committed to both the naturalistic perspective, and to the interpretative understanding of human experience (Nelson et al. 1992). Therefore, there is an established and proven value to this research approach. Tapachai and Waryszak (2000) contend that there has been little use of open-ended, unstructured, conversational and textual material used in data collection or in analysis of destination image. As online destination image is both dynamic and accumulative (Hunter, 2012), a research approach should be

adopted which reflects this aspect. Hunter (2012) also points to a lack of research into representations of tourist destinations which circulate independently online. According to Silverman (2013), the Internet provides us with a, 'rich seam of naturally occurring data'. Internet material can be a great source for ethnographic research (Koninets, 2010; Markham, 2011). Moreover, Kozinets (2010) describes such research as 'netnography'.

Netnography

Internet material can be a great source for ethnographic research (Koninets, 2010; Markham, 2011; Silverman, 2013), but certain aspects of Internet communication may make it particularly hard for us to adopt the ethnographer's gaze, according to Silverman (2013). As geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan (1974, 1977) illustrates, any conceptualisation of a place should include the meanings and values that people ascribe to it [*sic*]. Netnography research shares similarities with ethnography; both involve the researcher in participatory observation, which may be direct and/or indirect, in an attempt to understand people's emotions, languages, reactions, cultures and attitudes and, in this chapter, with specific regard to people's preferred choices of tourist destination. Overall, however, netnography offers a research process with engagement that differs from other ethnographic techniques.

Kozinets (2002; 2010) outlines that the netnography research process comprises four stages which are as follows: *entrée*, data collection, analysis and interpretation and research ethics. '*Entrée*' is the first step in conducting the research. With regard to this in the form of a research question, the researcher must identify the most relevant online community. Kozinets (2015) suggests that archetypal practices of netnography include the following classifications:

- Netnography focuses primarily on data collected through the Internet; simple observational downloads; so-called 'web-crawling'; or data-mining and are insufficient without researcher participation.
- Netnography seeks to describe and theorise the human element of online human and technical interaction, social interaction and experience; adheres to strict and widely accepted standards of ethical online research; and, always includes human intelligence and insight as a major, but not always exclusive, part of data analysis and interpretation process.
- Netnography provides a research process with engagement that differs from other ethnographic techniques. For example, netnography provides guidelines for the adaptation of participant observation methods to online communities and cultures that manifest through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets, 2010).

Silverman (2013) suggests that the ethnographer's gaze demands two things:

1. being able to locate the mundane features of extraordinary situations, and
2. to identify what is remarkable in everyday life.

Furthermore, by looking at what people are actually doing on the Internet, we might observe the following ethnographically related social facts (Markham, 2011; Kozinets, 2010):

- The text of a particular blog posting has been written and was posted
- A particular social networking group has been formed and users' accounts have been linked to it
- A photo was uploaded to an online photo-sharing community and received a number of comments

Netnography research should be carried out with consistent observation of the community (Bryman, 2012). Netnographic data can be collected in two ways, namely: direct copy/download of online content, or typed/handwritten notes taken, based on the researcher's own observations. One advantage of the flexibility of netnography is that previous or historic online interactions can also be collected. Qualitative data involves, among other aspects, gathering information about people's opinions, their feelings and the different meanings attributed to same. Therefore, the ability to identify fluctuations or changes in these opinions and feelings could prove to be important to the overall research.

Method

The research proposes an exploratory study of tourism content creators, drawing on netnographic research techniques. Initially, the research utilised a comprehensive literature review in order to ground the research in current theory on destination image and tourism content creators. An abductive strategy is employed. An abductive research strategy has a particular logic (Blaikie, 2007). The starting point is the social world and the social actors being studied. The aim is to discover their constructions of reality, their ways of conceptualising and giving meaning to their social world, including their tacit knowledge. Hence, the researcher is obliged, effectively, to enter the world of their research subjects, in order to discover motives and reasons that accompany social activities. Netnographic research challenges conventional ethnography by rethinking the research field and what it means to go 'into the field'. In this context, the 'field' is now a hybrid space where tourists tweet, blog, post digital photographs and podcasts, link to social networks, map their location, review and comment. A purposive sampling approach is taken to identify tourism content creators. Desk research complements analysis of blogs, images and videos posted online, in relation to destinations. The author has extensive

experience in the tourism industry spanning several decades and has ongoing, direct involvement with the tourism digital media landscape, in other words: where tourists post creative content. This knowledge and experience has been accomplished in a multi-faceted way over many years, and includes the following:

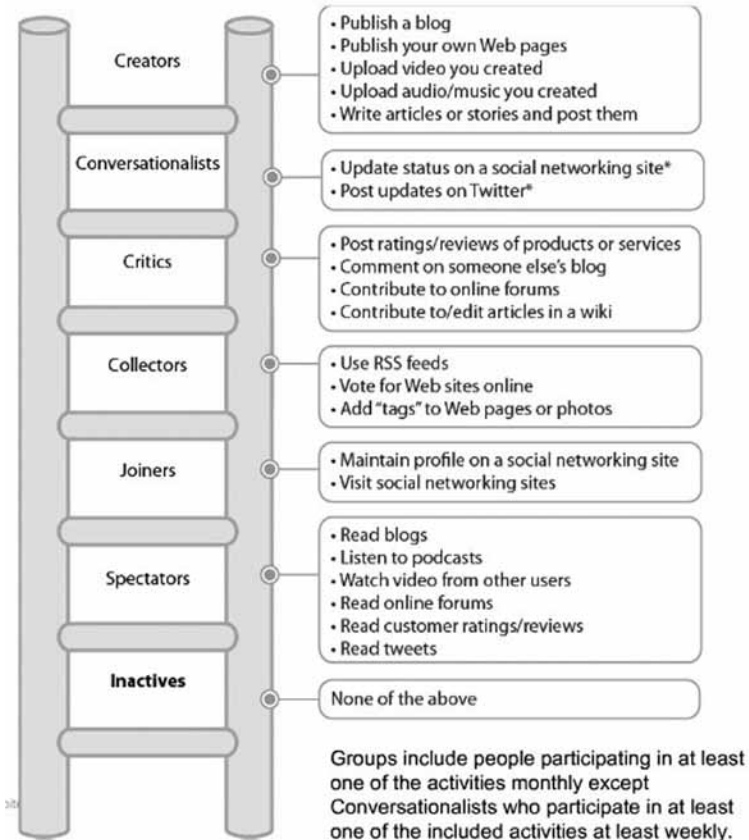
- hosting family trips for Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and Leitrim Tourism, which all involved bringing bloggers and journalists on 'slow adventure,' stand-up paddle boarding tours along the Shannon Blueway. The Shannon Blueway is the first of its kind in Ireland, offering an innovative and easy to use a series of on-water and land based trails;
- by volunteering as a judge for the Irish Blog Awards in 2016;
- by becoming a member of a Facebook group for Irish Bloggers.

These practical origins of hands-on, personal experience afforded the author direct and unparalleled access to observe bloggers and content creators in their natural habitat, as it were, while they engaged with their online communities and digitally uploaded tourist created content.

Preliminary Findings

This chapter forms part of a much larger research study area. Although primary research is still in the early stages, some preliminary findings have been documented. Forrester divides social media users into: Inactives, Spectators, Joiners, Collectors, Critics, Conversationalists and Creators. The determining factor regarding the motivation to create travel content which precedes the motivation to travel, appears, in effect, to be indicated by how far up the metaphorical 'social media technographics ladder' the content creator is actually situated.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2007), defines UGC as content that is made publicly available over the Internet; which requires a certain amount of creative effort; and which is created outside of professional routines and practices. As outlined in Figure 2, again, creators figuratively 'sit' at the top of Forrester's Social Technographics Ladder. In the context of this research, this represents tourists who write blogs, and who upload self-created videos and images online. This trend appears to confirm the theory already mentioned: that content creator positioning on the Social Media technographics ladder is the determining factor which precedes the motivation to travel.

Figure 2: TCC Social Technographics Ladder

Source: adapted from Forrester (2008)

McHenry (2004) Coleman et al. (2009) sub-divide contributors to online social networks in terms of into five overlapping categories along a spectrum.

- Neophyte – someone with no formal background in a subject, but possessing the interest, time, and willingness to offer an opinion on a subject.
- Interested Amateur – someone who has 'discovered' their interest in a subject, has begun reading background literature, has consulted with other colleagues and experts about specific issues, is experimenting with its application and is gaining experience in appreciating the subject. This person is already a regular contributor of edited map data and may assess others' online contributions.

- Expert Amateur – someone who may know a great deal about a subject, practices it passionately on occasion, but still does not rely on it for a living. This person is an expert with the requisite equipment, regularly assesses and edits online contributions from others and participates in online specification development and decision-making.
- Expert Professional – someone who has studied and practices a subject, relies on that knowledge for a living, and may be sued if their products, opinions and/or recommendations are proven inadequate, incorrect or libellous.
- Expert Authority – someone who has widely studied and long practiced a subject, to the point where he or she is recognised to possess an established record of providing high-quality products and services and/or well-informed opinions; someone who stands to lose that reputation and perhaps their livelihood if that credibility is lost, even temporarily.

Kozinets offers diagonal dimensions of so-called Newbies, Minglers, Devotees, Insiders, Networker, Maker, Lurker and Interactor (2010). The 'Lurker' is an active viewer who doesn't post online; they have the potential to and often do become Newbies over time. 'Newbies' lack strong online social ties and have only a passing interest in the topic or activity at hand. 'Minglers' are strong online socialisers and have many online personal relationships within the group, but like Newbies, they have only a minor interest in the consumption activity. 'Devotees' are the opposite of this: their interest in the topic is important, but they don't have strong online social relationships. 'Insiders' do have strong social ties to other online members, and also have a deep identification with the group (Kozinets, 1999). 'Makers' have highly developed online social skills and are highly connected to others within the group. They are the sort of people who build new online communities. Kozinets (2002) suggests that 'Interactors' reach out beyond existing offline communities into the online world. 'Networkers' reach into an existing community that may be topically related or unrelated, in order to develop strong online social ties, exchange ideas, or even poach members from another online group.

Motivations of Tourist Content Creators

Cooper et al. (2005) suggest that attitudes are dependent on an individual's unique perception of the world. Perceptions, in this context, are mental impressions of a travel product or destination. They are considered to be travel motivators, which explain why people want to travel; they are the inner urges that initiate travel demand. Images, in this context, are sets of beliefs, ideas and impressions relating to travel products or destinations. The affective component of destination image relates to the motives for travel. Gartner's third conative component is essentially the processing of the cognitive and affective components to reach a decision (Gartner,

1993). Dann (1996) argues that the conative component is the interactive element of the image, meaning that it is the way individuals imagine themselves behaving in the destination. Maslows Hierarchy of Needs (1943, 1954) provides a useful starting point with which to consider the motivations behind travel and content creation. Physiological needs include the need for escape, a sense of excitement and curiosity, as well as the need for eating, drinking and relaxation. There is a generally held understanding that 'escapes', whether physical or psychological, comprise the underlying motive for travel.

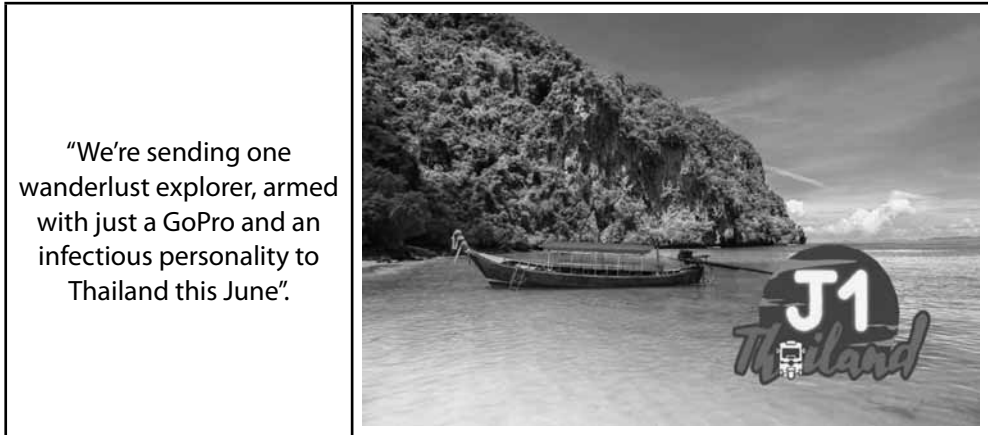
Figure 3: A Syrian refugee takes a 'selfie' on the beach after arriving on the Greek island of Kos with her family.



(Photo source: Reuters, 2015)

Moving up the hierarchy theoretical framework, safety and security needs include the need to predict and explain the world, as well as resource requirements and basic necessities relating to health and financial security. Visual examples of this are depicted in many international media reports: the above image shows content being created by a refugee that may later be uploaded, perhaps in order to communicate her 'safe arrival.' The image is of a Syrian refugee seen taking a 'selfie' picture as she, literally, walks onto the beach for the first time after arriving on the Greek island of Kos.

There seems to be a prevalence of content creators feeling obliged to document their travel experiences, but first they need the means and resources to do so. Several international tourist boards and travel companies offer content creators accommodation and, sometimes a salary, for periods ranging from a weekend to a year, in exchange for TCC. Examples include: Tourism Australia's 'Best Job in The World' and USIT's 'J1 Thailand Travel Ambassador'.



(Source: USIT, 2017)

Therefore, rather than being viewed as a free form of destination marketing, the contribution of content creators in the overall context of tourism is being both valued and rewarded. This shows that digital properties, platforms and the online media landscape, as outlined in figure 1, are all evolving and the spectrum of pay associated with tourism content generation warrants further investigation.

As progress is made up the hierarchy, it becomes more apparent that there is a greater desire to create content. Relationship needs include the requirement to connect with friends and family, or likeminded people. While travelling, these connections are now frequently being made online, as much as they are 'in real time' through person to person connections. Furthermore, content creators are sharing information about their creative processes and about the monetisation of creative content. The research findings in this chapter indicate that, in Ireland, rather than being amateur in nature, there is a professionalisation emerging within the TCC community. Current trends indicate that content creators are sharing travel experiences online, providing each other with support, advice and tips, as well as discussing issues that affect them directly, such as copyright theft issues, issues around Internet trolling and the debate concerning 'working for exposure'.

Self-promotion and self-expression are important motivators of Internet activity, according to Goodchild (2011), but content is also created as a convenient way of making it available to friends and relations, irrespective of the fact that it becomes

public. Goodchild (2007) outlines the contrast between websites which allows contributors to point others to them, and content on websites where content creators are comparatively anonymous. Self-esteem and development needs, therefore, fall into two categories: firstly, personal achievement, self-development and personal growth and, secondly, the personal need for status, respect and recognition. Finally, situated at the top of the hierarchy is optimal fulfilment, which relates to creativity and the need for flow experiences. This research has found that many of the most prolific online content creators are creating content for self-fulfilment needs.

Future Directions

An understanding of tourists' destination image and behavioural intentions, offers destination managers additional opportunities to enhance these stakeholders' image of the destination (Chi and Qu, 2008; Yuksel et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2014). Tourism-influenced representations of destinations are an important component of the reputation and success of a destination. This is due to the effect of digital or electronic word of mouth (EWoM) (Zhou, L 2014; Choi et al. 2007; Govers et al 2007; Reidl et al 2002). It is clear from available literature that culture, atmosphere and social media channels are among the features that can influence the tourist decision-making process. In addition, tourists' individual and personal knowledge, their own experiences and other linked and relevant information, all serve significant roles which motivate tourists in their choice of a specific destination and associated holiday experience. Therefore, tourist content creators can perform a significant role in tourist perceptions towards a destination.

Llodrà-Riera et al. (2015) demonstrate that UGC constitutes part of the information sources' latent variable, and suggest it would be interesting to determine the precise weight that UGC exerts on each type of image; whether or not it is cognitive, affective and/or unique. Similarly, Munar (2011) makes recommendations for developing an analytical strategy to examine, select, classify, monitor and evaluate content generated by travellers. According to Llodrà-Riera et al. (2015), such an analytical strategy has great potential to help marketing organisations understand destination image formation processes, and points to the suggestion by Martínez et al. (2012), that destination management systems may also work well, serving as a 'mash-up' of content that already exist in the online network, while consolidating the destination offer by maintaining an integrative, flexible and professional collaboration among administrations, the private sector, customers and residents.

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CHAPTER 12

The Habitual Nature of the U.S. Holidaymaker with Regards to Ireland and Social Media Usage

Colm Barcoe

Daphne Barcoe

Introduction

The closing scene from the classic John Ford film, 'The Quiet Man' conjures the vision of the all American boy, living happily ever after in the Isle of Innisfree, where his ancestors originated (Tourism Ireland 2017). This vision would dwell in the hearts and minds of Americans for decades and create a love affair with Ireland until eventually the idea had run its course in both natural and marketing terms (Wright 2008). Sanchez-Garcia, Callarisa, Rochina and Cardiff (2012), describe this type of branding as a powerful tool: engaging the psyche on an emotional and spiritual level. In the age of social media, Harrigan, Evers, Myles and Daly (2017), refer to this as 'behavioural stickiness.' As Fauver (2017) posits, this is a connection through electronic word of mouth (eWoM) that drives the desire of the American demographic to travel to any given destination which, in the context of this chapter, is Ireland.

Wright (2008) delivers eloquent imagery of Americans travelling to Ireland seeking their ancestral home. In the age of social media, TI (2017) use analytics to understand the imagery via YouTube and Instagram, both of which drive the American holidaymaker's desire to travel to Ireland. Harrigan *et al* (2017) highlight that brand engagement within destination marketing is garnering a lot of recent attention. This is due directly to its link with sales growth. Moreover, Morosan and Franco (2017)

believe that it is the digital connectivity of the American user while on holiday that enhances the engagement throughout the vacation experience. They like to share, and that is the central point. The trip experience is real and connected to various stakeholders through social media.

Social media in tourism research is in its relative infancy. It is clear from available literature that authors such as Fotis (2015) believe that the online and offline engagement of brands affects the decision-making process and, therefore, leads to destination sales. Thus, it is credible to posit that both tangible and intangible relationships between the variables are at play, those variables being: social media and the American tourist. The objective of this literature review is to bring clarity and understanding to the habitual nature of the contemporary American holidaymaker. It seeks to explain the exponential growth in American tourists' wishes to avail and immerse themselves in the Irish experience in a social media context.

The Literature

In 2016, the global integrated marketing firm focused on the needs of the travel, hospitality and entertainment industries worldwide, MMGY confirmed that Americans and Canadians now felt it was safe to travel again (MMGY 2016). Maynes (2016) suggests that Canadians will travel to the same regions as their U.S. counterparts, but will spend less time there upon arrival and, furthermore, that their heritage is slightly more varied. Thus, MMGY (2016) systematically divides the American traveller into four groupings and individualises each grouping. However, Morosan *et al* (2017), confirms that each one of the following groupings (see Table 1), are completely immersed and engaged with social media usage on their handheld devices.

Table 1: The Division of the American Demographic by Age and Generation (MMGY 2016)
1. Baby boomers (Age: 55–80)
2. Generation X (Age: 35–55)
3. Generation Y (Age: 24–35)
4. Millennials (Age: 15–24)

Notable advocates such as Ge *et al* (2017) and Morosan *et al* (2017) perceive and review the current usage of social media within all four of these demographics. Ge *et al* (2017), discern the differential in the use of humour in each category. Morosan *et al* (2017), highlight that, no matter which category, reflectively all categories express a desire to stay connected and engaged whilst on holiday. MMGY (2016) posit that each demographic has particular traits that set them apart in terms of holiday needs and vicarious experience.

TI (2017) analyses each demographic and deciphers the best marketing approach to each region of North America. This systematic approach has been found to be rather successful in the past five years (*ibid*). Maynes (2016) feels it noteworthy that the Canadian traveller expresses a desire to be more diverse in experience and choice than their apparently tamer U.S. counterpart. TI (2017) understands and acknowledges this in the customised marketing methodology for each region.

Harrigan *et al* (2017), suppose that each consumer demographic has two things in common. These are: eWoM and behavioural activity. TI (2017) speculates that the uncertainty and ambiguity that characterises a post-BREXIT market, requires detailed monitoring. Indeed, development of the American demographic will be crucial in the future in order to buttress such market uncertainty and ambiguity. Harrigan *et al* (2017) believe that a combination of monitoring eWoM activity and observing post-purchase behaviour can lead not just to clarity about the habitual usage of any targeted demographic, but may also allow opportunities for positive exploitation.

From Irish Immigration to the Worldwide Web

Wright (2008) provides an in-depth analysis of the rationale associated with Ireland's importance to American visitors as a whole. Throughout the centuries, huddled masses sought solace in the Land of the Free (Hout and Goldstein 1994). In 1980, the U.S. census finally included a question regarding ethnicity and origin (*ibid*). This established certainty about high levels of Irish and German immigrants to the United States (Davis and Smith 1992, as cited by Hout *et al* 1994). Throughout available literature, many noted authors such as Wright (2008), create a timeline of evacuation and milestones between the two nations (see Figure 2.1). This, at a glance, clarifies the reticulated tapestry between the two nations.

According to Hout *et al* (1994), the majority of white American and Canadian males have European lineage. In the case of the American male, this lineage is often Irish. The esteemed author's investigations into Irish-American heritage (Wright 2008–2.1), offers a timeline of mass evacuation of Irish patrons from the poverty-stricken Ireland of the 1800s to the newly emerging lands and prospects of the Americas. Hout *et al* (1994) charts the integration of Irish emigrants to their new lives within Canada and Mexico.

Miller, Schrier, Bolding and Doyle (2003) advocate that immigration to Canada and colonial America first began from the north of Ireland in the 1700s. Almeida (2001) charts the integration of Irish immigrants into the industrial infrastructure in New York and describes the impact of their influence on American prosperity. Miller *et al* (2003) portrays the development of colonial America through the construction of railways by Irish immigrants. According to Arora, Gambardella and Torrisi (2001), the Irish also played a major role in the technological advancement in Silicon Valley in the 1970s.

By the end of the 1950s, Hollywood had created a romantic vision of Ireland and the desire to return home reached a crescendo (Hout *et al* 1994). However, Wright (2008) delineates that Irish immigration to the U.S. peaked again in the 1960s and the 1980s, thus exponentially establishing new generations of Irish seeking to ‘return home’. Arora *et al* (2001) supposes that the emergence of the worldwide web in 1995 would begin to bring the world closer. Mehta (2013) posits that Ireland’s ‘The Gathering,’ which was initiated in 2013, further enlightened TI (2017) on the importance of social media when selling Ireland to the American holidaymaker. Wright (2008) accredits the attraction between Ireland and the North American dweller as being inherent. TI (2017) deems social media to be the best marketing tool to capitalise on this intertwinement within this unique demographic.

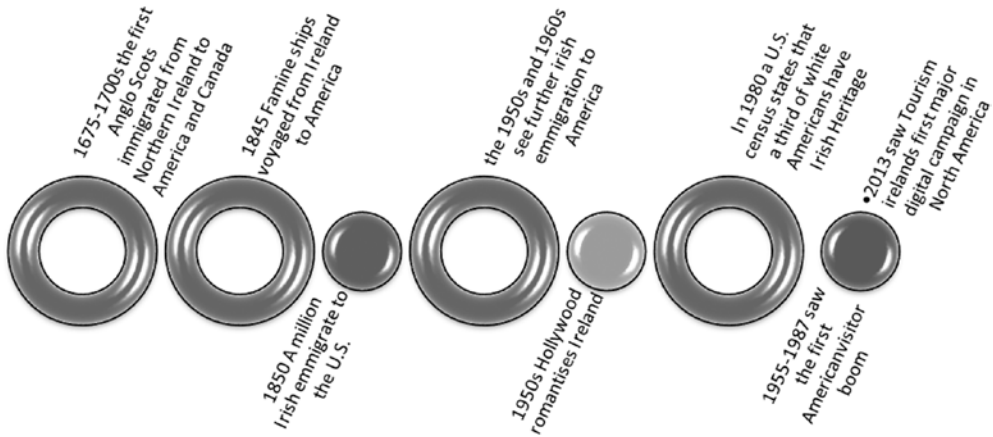


Figure 2.1: An Evacuation and Milestone Timeline of Irish-American Heritage (Wright 2008)

The Habitual Social Media Usage of the American Traveller in All Trip Phases

In order to garner perspective on the habitual nature of the American holidaymaker, Fotis (2015) offers his four-phase decision making process (Figure 2.2)

Song and Kim (2017), and Delic *et al* (2017) all affirm that the adoption of social media in all four phases is paramount to the purchase of a destination being completed by the consumer. Fotis (2015) accredits the sharing of information with friends and relatives while on holiday, to directly affecting the stimulus of those at home in making an informed decision to purchase a holiday in the same destination in the future. Delic *et al* (2017) conclude that peer predisposition of this nature allows the main influencer to dictate where a group or demographic will holiday in the future.

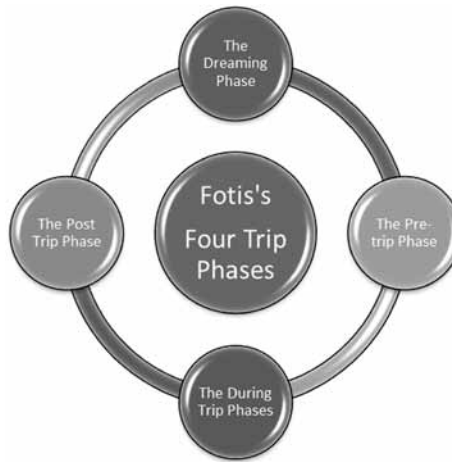


Figure 2.2: Fotis's Four Trip Phases (Fotis 2015)

However, Song *et al* (2017) contests that it is the mobile device that is the intermediary in the decision making process when in the 'during trip' phase. Jabreel, Moreno, Huertas (2017) all postulate that the sentiment of destination shared on any given social media platform is the biggest influencer on repurchase. Fauver (2017) highlights how Americans use social media platforms more than any other demographic while on holiday. Fotis (2015) introduces the concept of 'bragging rights' within all four trip phases, and suggests that this is a major influence on the desire to travel. Song *et al* (2017) confirm that Americans will constantly use their mobile device to brag to others about the 'awesome time' they are having while on holiday.

Morosan *et al* (2017) give credence to the fact that connectivity is the imperial factor when engaging the American on holiday. Fauver (2017) postulates that American purchase behaviour is directly influenced by imagery viewed through mobile devices and social media platforms while on holiday. Baggio and Scaglione (2017) affirm that the observation of visitor flow through mobile devices is a key performance indicator (KPI) when vending a destination in the future. However, Sigala (2017) believes that this technology can lead to deviant behaviour pattern analysis and is often difficult to interpret accurately. Fauver (2017) offers the following illustration (Figure 2.1 (1)) to bring further comprehension to the habitual nature of the American holidaymaker when discussing their promotional needs on the part of the DMO.



Figure 2.1: (1) The Habitual Nature of the American Holidaymaker (Fauver 2017)

Fauver (2017) elucidates through illustration Figure 2.1 (1) how Fotis’s (2015) decision making process interfaces with the American holidaymaker’s susceptibilities in all four trip phases. When analysing the DMO’s role, the diagram shows how Fauver (2017) conceives that there must be an examination of this habitual behaviour.

TI (2017) produces imagery via social media platforms to magnetise and manipulate the American psyche in all four trip phases. Ge *et al* (2017) proclaim that online message content directly impinges upon the behaviours of American holidaymakers when marketing through social media. Song *et al* (2017) postulate that American holidaymakers are captivated beyond saturation point with their mobile devices, particularly within, as Fotis (2015) chronicles, the ‘during’ and ‘post trip’ phases. This, again, is in concurrence with Morosan *et al* (2017) and Fauver (2017) and their inclination that both connectivity and engagement are purposeful instruments when attracting this chosen demographic to a destination.

Fessenmaier, Vogt and Choe (2017) revisit the habitual nature and rituals of the American holidaymaker twenty-five years on from Fessenmaier and Vogt’s original inquisition. Their inquiry suggests that today’s Americans are more educated now than any other previous generations (*ibid*). However, as Song *et al* (2017) exhort, there is a preoccupation among the American segmentation with social media usage through mobile devices. Where TI (2017) avail of blog testimony when concentrating on this marketable subdivision, other notable writers, such as Song *et al* (2017) and Fauver (2017), conclude that the American holidaymaker utilises the handheld device to contribute to the enjoyment and *obiter dictum* of their destination experience.

Online Behaviour of the American Social Media User

While there is some ambiguity within available literature regarding an exploration of the American on holiday, there are interesting observations of American users' vivacity whilst online (Sigala 2017 and Ge *et al* 2017). Sigala (2017) alerts the scholar to the aberrant behaviour of the social media user when it pertains to alacrity, as opposed to acquirement of subscription. Ge *et al* (2017) investigate the type of message content that resonates with American bloggers. Their inquisition focuses totally on the effects of humour communiqué within social media broadcasts while targeting the American demographic.

Choe *et al* (2017) intimate that American audiences have a greater amount of disposable income than other demographic populations, and yet, while people's general levels of formal education may differ, there is nonetheless a very high permeation of mobile phone usage across all territories. Leung, Dickinger and Nixon (2017) accredit this as the logic behind the utilisation of imagery within digital marketing crusades. Thao, Wozniak and Liebrich (2017) accentuate the paramountcy of the American holidaymaker projecting a particular hotel's image online for other Americans to accumulate stimulation to travel to that holiday destination.

MMGY (2016) analyse the online behaviours of each age demographic where it relates to social media usage (see Table 2.2), and delineates the fact that each segment has different needs and must, accordingly, be vended to individually. Sun, Law, Luk and Nang Fong (2017) investigate the diversity between channel-searching for hotel information, phantom pre-trip devising and the destination preference of a conscripted demographic.

MMGY (2016) feature the demand for Americans to acquire their information via social media. much like the expediency requirement of their sustenance producers. Morosan *et al* (2017) harmonise with these findings and posit that, if a hotel Internet broadband service is poor, the American traveller will attribute this to having been a poor vacation adventure. Fotis (2015) conscribes that so-called 'bragging rights' play a huge role in the 'during' and 'post trip' junctures. Song *et al* (2017) concur and articulate that Americans use their mobile devices on holiday to fulfil this yearning.

Choe *et al* (2017) propound that the American consumer is more beguiled than ever by the online decorum of others. Mae-Kim (2016) posits that marketing within the digital epoch needs to be done via circumspect user-generated content (UGC) that will create an integral residual activity which extends the gamut of the product or service. TI (2017) contemplates this vigorously when advocating 'brand Ireland' to the American Holidaymaker.

Table 2.2: The Social Media Habits of The American Audiences (MMGY 2016)

Age Demographic	Digital Capabilities	Percentage of usage
Baby boomers Aged 55–73	Surfs the web and blogs, books holidays online, uses a mobile phone, prefers package vacations	Uses social media 45 % percent of the time
Generation X Aged 35–55	Surfs the web, uses platforms, mini blogs, shares information with family and friends and uses mobile phone and all handheld devices intermittingly while on vacation	Uses social media 72% of the time
Generation Y Aged 24–35	Surfs the web, mini blogs, books online, uses mobile phone constantly and worries about Wi-Fi connection while on holiday	Uses Social Media 82% of the time
Millennials Aged 15–24	Surfs the web, use platforms constantly, mini blogs, worries about constantly and is never without their mobile phone	Uses social media 92% of the time, roughly once every twenty minutes

Marketing Ireland to America

TI (2017) allocates, on average, 22 million euro per annum to the process of advertising Ireland to North America. Mae Kim (2016) postulates that each marketer is obligated to comprehend the rituals of a proposed demographic before embarking upon a social media expedition. Minazzi (2015) affirms that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is the essence of any marketing campaign endeavoured upon via social media. Harrigan *et al* (2017) support this affirmation and hypothesise that, while there is no longer brand loyalty in the epoch of social media, there are exertions through co-equal predominance that lead, ultimately, to product patronage.

Mae Kim (2016) exhibits the following illustration to enhance the approach to a social media marketing campaign (Figure 3):

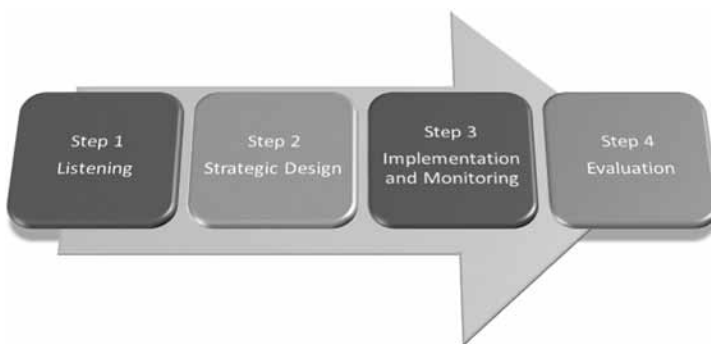


Figure 3: The Four Step Process of Digital Marketing (Mae Kim 2016)

Within available literature there is evidence that TI (2017) is integrating the illustrated formula and there is also a designation to persist with this marketing strategy for the foreseeable future. Minazzi (2015) asserts that the application of Buckners' (1965) 'Rumour Transfer Theory' best explicates the effect of eWoM in the social media genre. This is why TI (2017) utilise endorsements and promote correlation with American vacationers in the 'during trip' phase, as this upsurges radius and dynamic influence to those who monitor the holiday vicariously in conjunction with social media platforms.

Using Heritage and Imagery to Sell Ireland to the American Holidaymaker

Qi and Ning (2017) promote the adoption of consumer retrospectives on the part of hotels to further promote their geographical dwelling in the future. TI (2017) employs retrospective affidavits from past American visitors and imagery on YouTube to promote the diverse styles of holidays that Ireland has to offer the travelling American. Fauver (2017) elucidates that imagery and symbolism are the essence of all substance when DMOs endorse destinations through digital channels in these contemporary times. Song *et al* (2017) affirm that, unless there is technological wherewithal in operation within a destination, that the modern traveller will not relish their vacation experience. Morosan *et al* (2017) confirm that this is the reality with American patrons as it relates to the integration and engagement between the virtual existence of social media and the physical absorption of a dwelling as a commodity. TI (2017) deems that image targeting to American audiences should transition from region to region within North America.

Wright (2008) accentuates a different perception as to why Ireland will always be successful within the American market; she proclaims that ancestry is the substance of stimulation when conjuring aspiration of visitation among Americans. In the Web 3.0 eras, this is held to be true by MMGY (2016). Most Americans will now extensively scrutinise the Internet before travelling and concoct their own itinerary (*ibid*). TI (2017) export imagery of heritage through YouTube and Instagram in order to tantalise the appetite of the holidaying North American to visit Ireland.

However, Morosan *et al* (2017) proclaim that while engagement of aspiration is optimal in the strategic sense, the physicality of Internet connection is what the North American requires when visiting a destination. Merilniaen (2017) posits that in order to best sell heritage in the aeon of social media, there must be collusion between the DMO and the smaller enterprises within the dwelling that is being promoted. Fauver (2017) postulates that, if this does not occur then DMOs like Tourism Ireland may subsequently become irrelevant as a promotional entity.

TI (2017) affirms that their remit is to advocate Ireland through heritage and imagery. TI (2017) deems that returning to television adverts in 2017 will extend the epistle of Ireland

to more jurisdictions, as these adverts will be readily accessible via YouTube. Wright (2008) makes the analogy that Americans will always have a romantic perception of Ireland, with a perception of its 'cascading ruggedness,' as a second home. Mehta (2013) confirms that the visitation of friends and relatives is now an enhanced market since the dawn of the digital age. Wright (2008) proposes that when Americans visit Ireland, it is the acknowledgement of their own Irish-ness that they covet. TI (2017) uses this intimation to attract the American holidaymaker and creates the mystique of Ireland's heritage through cyber manipulation in the ultimate commercial genre of social media. TI (2017) emphasises that it is never accidental, but rather by deliberate investigation, if or when an American president's origins, for example, are linked with Ireland.

Morosan *et al* (2017) propose that within the social media epoch of tourism, network reciprocity and signal attribution is a necessity. However, Wright concludes that the internal cultural intertwinement of the Bostonian native with the so-called Emerald Isle, predisposes this audience to dream of visiting Ireland and, as Wright (2008) cultivates from her observations, this is far beyond a virtual presence of existence.

TI (2017) deduces that the most efficacious approach when promoting Ireland as a holiday destination to an American audience, is the generation of an affixation of a destination through the White House, *ergo* the advocacy of the ancestral origins of the American President. Clarke (2017) posits that the annual visit to the American White House by successive Irish Premiers may, in current times, be a futile exercise. TI (2017) contradicts this, conceiving instead that the Saint Patrick's Day visitation of any Irish luminary to the White House reaffirms the linear association that stimulates the American holidaymaker to visit Ireland.

Wright (2008) accentuates that each genesis of American inhabitants that supersedes the next will languish in the fantasy of discovering their own sustenance in Ireland. TI (2017) resolves to observe digital indices via social media, in order to conjure further prosperity in these territories of North America over the next few impending years. Wright (2008) presupposes that the mystique of the Emerald Isle will, through the complexity of origin, cultivate an ongoing curiosity for the North American to seek enlightenment regarding Ireland as a destination in the future, thus using information technologies such as the Internet to assist them in their quest.

Methodology within the Literature

Dissertations such as Song *et al* (2017) and Ge *et al* (2017), use both qualitative and quantitative mechanisms to analyse the *modus operandi* of the American demographic, especially in terms of tracking both visitor flow and return on investment. However, Sigala (2017) postulates that quantitative research is too susceptible and vulnerable to the deviant behaviour of the chic social media user of contemporary times. Wright (2008) elucidates the concept that most Americans align with Ireland through patrimony. This is seen to be both emotional and romantic, so

the qualitative methodology suits this demographic in the utmost, especially when marketing Ireland to North America.

Morosan *et al* (2017) employ qualitative practices when researching the American demographic. Choe *et al* (2017) conclude that, due to the experiential complexities of tourism and the varying cultures of North America, qualitative methods are the optimum disposition. MMGY (2016) utilise qualitative methods when analysing the identity of the American traveller in the domain of social media usage.

Conclusion

While TI (2017) are successful and award winning digital marketers to date, Fauver (2017) concludes that educating SMEs about the beneficial utilisation of mobile communications within the dwelling being marketed can only enhance the tourism service output (Figure 4).

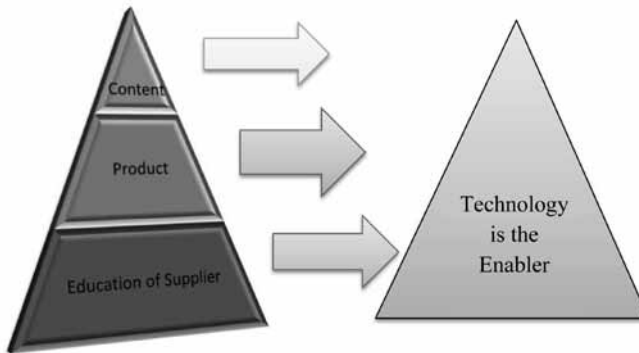


Figure 4: Educating the Tourism Supplier (Fauver 2017)

The above illustration shows that the perpetual education of the tourism service patriarch lies within technology. Mobile telephone usage among American holidaymakers is of a higher permeation than any other demographic (MMGY 2016). It is a prerequisite that TI (2017) comprehend the consequence of this form of commercial perspective when navigating the current technological aeon of online social media. Table 2.3 illustrates the differential in demographics derived from Tourism Ireland's Marketing Plan (2017).

Table 2.3: The Differentials between the American and Canadian Visitor (TI 2017)	
The American Visitor to Ireland	The Canadian Visitor to Ireland
Predominantly West of Ireland heritage 87% social media usage Influenced by other Peers from home through social media Visits predominately the Republic of Ireland often basing themselves in Dublin and travelling to the West Stays on average 8–14 nights	Predominantly Anglo-Scottish heritage 72% social media usage Moderately influenced by Peers from home through social media Visits Northern Ireland Stays on average 7 –10 nights

As indicated by the table above (TI 2017), most American holidaymakers are not only peer persuaded, but are also regionally disposed when it comes to the district of Ireland that they choose to frequent (Fauver 2017). Merilniaen (2017) concludes that when administering a service to this type of diverse demographic, alliances between DMOs and SMEs must endure. Thao *et al* (2017) affirm that the appraisal of appropriate practices within this genre should supersede the analytical tendencies of the airline industry.

Baggio *et al* (2017) accentuate that the most accurate way of monitoring the etiquettes of each demographic is by observing visitor flow via mobile devices while the social media user is on holiday. Xiang, Du, Mu and Fan (2017) confirm that it is the classification of data-mining implemented by DMOs that will ultimately lead to the future attraction of concentrated demographics.

When Wright (2008) describes the Bostonian returning home to the ‘land of his forefathers [*sic*], she could have hardly envisioned the role UGC and eWoM would bestow upon these proceedings. Wright (2008) epilogues the narrator portraying to the avid congregation, tales and fables of an Ireland conscripted to the annals of one’s imagination. Choe *et al* (2017) proclaim the importance of a robust use of eWoM via online social media among this current American population to mediate their vacation schedules.

There are copious approaches in contemporary times that actualise the returning of the next ‘Quiet Man’ to his ‘Isle of Innisfree.’ However, Marriott (2017) posits that in the age of online social media and the progression of technology, this trip in the future might just adopt a virtual complexion.

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CHAPTER 13

Engaging Social Media Communities within the Irish Hotel Industry – A Pilot Study

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Introduction

The volume of academic research about consumer behaviour and social media platforms has been a key interest area to researchers over the last decade. A prognosis of inevitability regarding future research on this topic is due, primarily, to the rapid rate of change in terms of the ways in which we access and use social media, our behaviours on these online platforms, as well as the effects such behaviours have on us as consumers.

Brands have sought to establish a presence on social media to achieve a myriad of objectives, from initial consumer awareness and engagement, to customer service and retention.

In order to maximise levels of audience engagement, a necessity has emerged for brands to formulate effective content marketing strategies, coherent with their audience's tastes and their own brand identity. This is being achieved through a saturation of social media platforms in terms of users, brands and consumers, as well as content. Nowhere is this practice of engaging communities more pertinent than in the tourism and hospitality industries: the experiential nature of offerings has led to an ever-increasingly influential role of digital content in the purchasing

decision of consumers, and in their behaviour along the entire holiday travel process. The objectives of this chapter are to determine the critical success factors of hotels' brand-created content in generating positive consumer engagement behaviours on social media platforms. This chapter remains part of a larger consumer behaviour study, exploring consumer engagement behaviours with tourism brands' social media content and, as such, represents an exploratory pilot study seeking to investigate current industry practice regarding social media content marketing strategies among hotels in Ireland.

Literature Review

Social Media and Tourism

In recent years, tourism and hospitality literature has addressed the role and use of social media in both travellers' decision-making and tourism operations and management (Sigala, *et al.*, 2012). A recent example includes Fotis (2015), whose doctoral study examines the use of social media by consumers at all stages of the holiday travel process, namely *dreaming, pre-trip, during the trip, and post-trip* (cf. Fotis, *et al.*, 2011; 2012). Recent examples of further areas which have been explored include: privacy (Hazari and Brown, 2013); the influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and reviews (Filiari, 2015; Chen, *et al.*, 2015; Kim, *et al.*, 2016; Fang, *et al.*, 2016); brand loyalty (So, *et al.*, 2016; Bohacek, 2015); and purchase behaviour (Xie and Lee, 2015; Murphy and Chen, 2014).

Engagement

While the term *engagement* has been employed across a myriad of academic disciplines, very few academic studies within the marketing and service literature used the terms *consumer engagement* (CoE), *customer engagement* (CuE), and/or *brand engagement* prior to 2005 (Brodie, *et al.*, 2011). Everyday connotations of engagement refer to: involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, zeal, dedication, and energy. Similarly, the Merriam-Webster dictionary describes being *engaged* as: 'emotional involvement or commitment and as being in gear' (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2014: 299). Recent iterations within literature have served to utilise the terms CuE and CoE almost interchangeably, with the main distinction being identified as the nature of the relationship between brand and individual, to establish whether or not they are a current CuE or a prospective CoE. Given online social media's ability to not only harness the relationships with current customers, but also to attract new customers through their content marketing efforts, the term consumer engagement (CoE) will be utilised here.

While it is not an original concept within the domain of business relationships, it has nevertheless garnered increased practitioner interest over the past number of

years (Brodie, *et al.*, 2011; Dessart, *et al.*, 2015; de Villiers, 2015; Harrigan, *et al.*, 2017), as organisations strive to generate engagement and participation with their brands (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Sawhney, *et al.*, 2005; So, *et al.*, 2016). Within recent literature, engagement has been attributed to key performance indicators for brands, including sales growth, customer involvement in the development of products, customer feedback, referrals and in the co-creation of value for consumers (Sawhney, *et al.*, 2005; Nambisan and Baron, 2007; Bowden, 2009; Bijmolt *et al.*, 2010; Kumar, *et al.*, 2010; van Doorn, *et al.*, 2010; Jaakkola and Alexander, 2014). Within a tourism-specific setting, CuE has been proven to increase customer loyalty, trust and brand evaluations (So, *et al.*, 2016), with much of this engagement activity occurring on social media platforms (Malthouse and Hofacker, 2010). However, neither social media nor CuE are well established within tourism research (Harrigan, *et al.*, 2017).

Brodie, *et al.* (2011) summarise several conceptualisations of CuE and CoE stemming from previous marketing-focussed studies published in recent literature, a task also undertaken more recently by Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie (2014). A brief summary of their findings is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Conceptualisations of Customer/Consumer Engagement in the Marketing Literature (adapted from Brodie, *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, Glynn, and Brodie, 2014)

Authors	Concept	Definition
Brodie, <i>et al.</i> (2011)	Customer engagement	A psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand) in focal brand relationships
van Doorn (2010)	Customer engagement behaviour	Customers' behavioural manifestations toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers such as word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, helping other customers, blogging, writing reviews
Hollebeek, <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Consumer brand engagement	A consumer's positively valenced cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-related activity during, or related to, specific consumer/brand interactions

Given the ability of social media to harness the creation and exchange of information (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), these online spaces represent the ideal platforms with which to endeavour to engage not only existing customers, but also potential customers (Tsai and Men, 2013). Leckie, *et al.* (2016), in order to highlight the increased attention received by consumer brand engagement within recent literature, despite the entire area remaining largely unexplored (Brodie, *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek, *et al.*, 2014).

Social Media Content Engagement Behaviour

The definitions of engagement depicted in Table 1 outline the disparity spanning some authors' conceptualisations of engagement. While Brodie, *et al.* (2011) describe CuE as a 'psychological state' occurring by virtue of customer experiences, van Doorn, *et al.* (2010) focus on the behavioural aspects of engagement 'beyond purchase'. Furthermore, Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) depict engagement as a multi-dimensional construct, consisting of 'cognitive, emotional and behavioural' activity. This chapter will focus on engagement as a behavioural construct, as it explores consumers' behavioural engagement with brand-created content on online social media platforms.

Recent research into the behavioural aspects of engagement includes Dolan, *et al.*'s (2016a) typology of social media engagement behaviours (SMEBs), which they describe thus: *co-creation, positive contribution, consumption, dormancy, detachment, negative contribution, and co-destruction*. The authors further note that, due to the work's conceptual nature, the positioning of social media content as an antecedent to SMEBs may serve as a basis for further exploration. Moreover, this typology highlights the importance of recognising negatively valenced engagement behaviours (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014), despite the majority of current literature examining CuE focusing on positively valenced engagement behaviours (van Doorn, *et al.*, 2010). At the top end of the scale, *co-creation* represents the *highest* level of *positively* valenced SMEB, indicating a departure from consumers' passive consumption of marketers' messages towards an active role as co-producers of marketing messages, such as positive eWOM or the creation of other user-generated brand-related content. The co-construction of the marketing message becomes a contextual possibility due to the viral process that entails a message being spread from one person to the next, who then spreads it to others and so on (Blichfeldt and Smed, 2015). At the low end of the scale, *co-destruction* users display a *high* level of *negatively* valenced SMEB, often in the form of negatively valenced content on brand pages, interacting directly with the brand, other customers and consumers in general (Dolan, *et al.*, 2016a).

Characteristics of Social Media Content

Previous literature has categorised four distinct groups of social media content: *informational, entertainment, remunerative and relational* content (see Muntinga, *et al.*, 2011; Taylor, Lewin, and Strutton, 2011; de Vries, *et al.*, 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013; Lee, *et al.*, 2014; Dolan, *et al.*, 2016a). Previous research has also outlined how *information*-seeking remains an important motivating factor for individuals to utilise social media platforms (Lin and Lu, 2011; Park, *et al.*, 2009). In addition, the value of *entertaining* media is rooted in its propensity to fulfil an individual's need for escapism, hedonistic pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment and

emotional release (McQuail, 1983), whilst the entertainment value of a social networking site has also been cited as an important factor for using it (Lin and Lu, 2011; Park, *et al.*, 2009). Indeed, several social media (SM)-focused studies have signalled *remuneration* as a driver of online community contribution, involving engagement with social media as a means to gain some future reward (Muntinga, *et al.*, 2011), such as sales, promotions, prizes and exclusive deals (Dolan, 2016). Finally, Dolan (2016) describes *relational* content as appealing to fans' needs for social interaction by asking the audience questions, providing fun quizzes, or posting photos of customers or staff members. Such content can appease consumers' needs for integration and social interaction and their desires for social benefits, all of which have been highlighted as key motivators for Internet usage (Hennig-Thurau, *et al.*, 2004).

More recent work by Dolan, *et al.* (2016b) sought to attribute the significance of content types in generating engagement behaviours. Research findings concluded that informational content has the strongest effect on the prediction of creating engagement behaviours with, specifically, seven elements of informational content present. A lower level of remunerative content was also found to have been a significant predictor in the generation of engagement behaviours, with content containing only one element of remunerative content having a significant and positive effect (Dolan, *et al.*, 2016b).

However, the quantitative nature of Dolan, *et al.*'s netnographic study omits several key factors: the evaluation of engagement behaviours only measures users' propensity to post an online comment, overlooking other forms of content engagement, such as the use of the options to 'like', give personal reactions, to share, and so on. The sentiment of the comments, although lying outside the remit of the research design, was also ignored, eliminating the possibility of attributing certain characteristics of content with both positively and negatively-valenced engagement behaviours. Further, the quantitative design of the study neglects the possibility of exploring consumer perceptions of certain forms of content, the perceived value of said content, the reasoning behind their engagement behaviours, their expected and perceived outcomes and, ultimately, the influence of such behaviour on consumers' propensity to consider making a purchase or indeed proceed to make a purchase from that brand. Further qualitative inquiry might address these issues within this growing area engagement within social media communities.

Methodology

The interview remains the most common method of data gathering in qualitative research (King, 2004; Yin, 2011). The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to gain access to another individual's perspective and ways of being, with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit

(Patton, 2002). Cater (2011) notes how factors such as time and financial constraints, geographical dispersion and physical mobility boundaries of research samples have often limited the scope of the more conventional face-to-face interview format. Technological advances over the last few decades have, however, enabled interviews to overcome these barriers within both synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (non-real-time) arenas (Janghorban, *et al.*, 2014).

Following a thorough consultation of extant literature on analysis strategies, it was concluded that a thematic analysis would be the method of choice for the present study, based on the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Their framework proposes six distinct steps in data analysis:

Familiarising yourself with the data; Generating initial codes; Searching for themes; Reviewing themes; Defining and naming themes, and; Producing the report.

While Braun and Clarke (2006) outline a framework of linear progression, such procedures within a thematic analysis are often concurrent and even recursive, entailing constant re-examination of data gathered and code refinement (Saunders, *et al.*, 2016).

In order to conduct the pilot study in this research, it was determined that a sample of Social Media Managers within hotels in Ireland would be interviewed. The rationale was to investigate their current social media strategies in terms of the content they publish for their audiences; their reasoning for such an approach; and the methods of ascertaining the success or failure of their content. In order to be eligible for selection for the present study, the only criteria that needed to be satisfied was that the hotel must be currently active on at least one online social media platform. A comprehensive list of all registered hotels in Ireland was procured from Fáilte Ireland, and other hotels were subsequently discovered via the search engine Google. Upon locating the hotel's official website, it was scanned for external links to official online social media presences. Once it was ascertained that a hotel had an active social media presence, which included factors such as posting regularity, audience size, and levels of engagement behaviours generated by content were considered, it was then directly contacted via social media to enquire as to their interest in taking part in the study. In all cases, participant hotels were contacted via Facebook.

A total of five interviews were conducted, with running times between 35 minutes and 55 minutes. Two interviews were conducted in-person, while the other three were conducted via telephone, due to time and geographical restrictions. All participants were assured of their own and their hotel's anonymity in the study. In terms of star rating, two of the participants represented three-star hotels; a further two represented four-star hotels; and one participant represented a five-star hotel. A brief overview of their current online social media presences is outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Participants’ Current Active Social Media Presences

Participant	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	YouTube	Pinterest	Google+
A	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x
B	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
C	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
D	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x
E	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x

The interviews lasted from between 34 minutes and 55 minutes, resulting in fifty-one pages of transcripts in total. It should be noted that, due to the interviews being conducted as part of a larger study, not all findings from these interviews were deemed appropriate for satisfying the criteria of this report. More specifically, the interview transcripts were coded and analysed for the purposes of ascertaining patterns or themes in the current approaches by hotels toward social media content marketing.

Findings and Discussion

Following on from the brief examination of social media content types included above, this sub-section will track a structure of individually examining each of the four content types and the participants’ current approach in designing and publishing each of those types of content. All potentially identifiable information was redacted from the transcripts in order to ensure anonymity.

Informational Content

Previous research has outlined how information-seeking remains an important motivating factor for individuals to utilise social media platforms (Lin and Lu, 2011; Park, *et al.*, 2009). Social media users consume brand-related content in the pursuit of information (Muntinga, *et al.*, 2011) and, if brand content contains the requisite information regarding the brand or product, then the user’s motivations to participate or consume the content are met (de Vries, *et al.*, 2012).

Informational content plays a pivotal role within the MC strategies used on social media platforms by participants in this study. However, rather than placing all of the emphasis on the hotel product, amenities and services, participants were very vocal in their intentions to inform users of what the *destination* within which the hotel is located, has to offer prospective visitors.

‘...and as part of the whole [brand] social media strategy...it tries to incorporate not our hotel, but [city] as a destination or [city] as a destination, depending on which hotel you’re looking at.’ (Participant A)

'...overall content which we would apply to our channels and the local content which would be like [city] activities, weather, em [sic], current events in [city], and just general eh [sic], promoting the positive things in [city].' (Participant D)

'...we're selling [city] as a destination as well, so we have to think okay, well, these people who are nearer to the start of the funnel [sic] and they connect more with the [city] content than say our hotel content [...] so the [city] content definitely does work better than the branded content because with a brand, you're more openly trying to sell something and people do not like that. People like it more when you're trying to inform them, trying to be helpful about something.' (Participant C)

The main justification offered by participants for this approach was the presence of consumers at the early stages of the buying cycle, such as 'awareness' or 'consideration', and hotels place an emphasis on reaching consumers through social media content at these preliminary stages of travel. While at these beginning stages, consumers seek to reduce risk by procuring as much information as they can in order to make an informed purchase decision. Unlike other forms of content, which will be explored in subsequent sub-sections, *informational* content simply seeks to provide the most relevant information in a factual way. As a result, such an emphasis on marketing the *destination* can increase the chances of the hotel making a conversion once the consumer decides to travel to that general location, before the hotel can seek to generate a sale through more *remunerative* content that will be examined later on.

Examples of *informational* content offered by participants include blog posts, outlining the amenities and attractions of the locality around the hotels, and promotional content surrounding key events being hosted within the city/ surrounding area of the hotel. Such events are bound to generate online traffic and, importantly, social media focus, regardless of the hotel content strategy. In this way, it stands to reason that 'piggybacking' on such online exposure of the destination can only serve to increase overall awareness of the destination, as well as the tourism-generated prosperity in the region.

One further source of such content, highlighted by a couple of participants, was the locals living within the vicinity of either the hotel itself, or within the broader destination area. Targeting content toward locals allows hotels to not only promote services other than overnight accommodation, such as food and beverage and spa offerings, but also presents the unique features of the locality which would serve to instil some sense of local pride among residents in the vicinity:

'...mostly it is kind've [sic] local people who will follow the local pages and then yeah [sic], we definitely would try and cater the content towards those people, so maybe it's different events that are happening in the local area,

or things or issues that would affect people in the local area or things that they might be interested in... we try and gear our content towards that.'
(Participant B)

'...the location where we are, we're just blessed with it being absolutely gorgeous so people always react really well to that...' (Participant E)

The authors were surprised that this wasn't a more prominent theme throughout the interviews, especially considering the earlier note regarding how hotels have recognised the value of informing prospective travellers of the merits of the surrounding locality as a potential destination. It becomes even more surprising given the acknowledgment of participants of the value of user-generated content, for example: online reviews on platforms such as TripAdvisor, in the purchasing decision of consumers.

'I'd love for our hotel to have more client interaction, because when they take pictures of their dinner, it's more credible than me getting a food photographer in [sic]...' (Participant A)

'TripAdvisor is a massive thing down here, it's very eh, very similar that way [sic]. Literally, if a four-star review goes up around here, everyone's on their back as to why we didn't get a five star so it would be literally every single comment [sic].' (Participant E)

'I think that we live kinda [sic] in an age of where peer reviews are kinda [sic] more valued than y'know [sic], critics and journalists, y'know [sic] people can kind've [sic] review and leave their own opinion and things [are] freer and easier and that is kind've [sic], very valuable to customers.' (Participant B)

Given the above assertions by participants that third-party advocacy can be a key component within the minds of actual or potential consumers, the lack of local community engagement seems unexpected. This may be symptomatic of a lack of clear and concise audience segmentation and content targeting within hotel brands. As will be examined further in the *relational content* section of this chapter, participants have been active in corporate social responsibility endeavours, and yet these initiatives seem to lack a concerted effort to keep the local community actively engaged with the hotel brand. Realistically, such activities should seek to consolidate the hotel as a key pillar within the local community, demonstrating that not only is the hotel supporting local employment and overall prosperity in the locality, but is also offering an authentic, trustworthy brand with genuine people supporting and promoting it, of which locals can be proud. This positive sentiment may then be translated into positive engagement behaviours throughout digital platforms, thereby increasing the chances of prospective visitors choosing that hotel as their holiday destination.

In summary, by a hotel brand using its resources and online presence to promote their specific destination, whilst also engaging the local community in spreading

positively-valenced engagement behaviours about the hotel brand can, collectively, lead to increased levels of online brand awareness and, thus, increase hotel bookings and overall profitability.

Entertaining Content

The value of *entertaining* media is rooted in its propensity to fulfil an individual's need for escapism, hedonistic pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment and emotional release (McQuail, 1983). The entertainment value of a social networking site is also an important factor for using it (Lin and Lu, 2011; Park, *et al.*, 2009). If a brand post is entertaining, brand fans' motivations to participate or consume the content are met (de Vries, *et al.*, 2012). While it may be argued that a fine line exists between content that would be deemed *entertaining* and that which would be considered *informational*, with perhaps even some overlap existing between both groups, the dichotomy, for the purposes of this study, exists in the form of utility that is to be gained from consuming the content. Simply, if the content is created in order to provide the user with information, clarification and other salient details, it is deemed to be *informational*. However, by contrast, if the purpose of the content is to provide an *entertainment* value to the user, then it should be placed within the *entertaining* content category.

Instances of *entertaining* content, as outlined by participants, mostly pertained to the promotion of activities and amenities available within the respective hotels, displayed online through the use of imagery, as outlined by the following quotes:

'I know the images that will work best are food photography [sic], shots that are outside the [hotel], those that are more picturesque.' (Participant C)

'I think video and images definitely stand out and blog posts tend not to do as well [...] I think social media is very visually led anyway, em and people respond best to imagery, always, and that's the popularity of the likes of Instagram, kinda shows that in all its glory, y'know [sic]?' (Participant B)

'... we would definitely go with more of a visual strategy, always seems to work better for us em, and obviously stuff that's more organic in terms of we actually go out, make the videos, take the pictures ourselves and always make sure to use people in it [sic].' (Participant E)

While the use of imagery obviously continues to be a very prominent component of brands' content strategies, video is fast-becoming a pivotal aspect of content strategies. The recent introduction of live-streaming functionality to platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, to complement the platforms already established in terms of live-streaming, such as YouTube and Periscope, has catapulted rich video media content to the forefront of both brand strategies and users' content creation, as well as influencing consumption habits. However, in the

opinions of the participants in this study, video was not determined to be a very large priority, with the most common reasoning being cost and quality concerns.

'Video is not really, because it's harder to get the quality that our brand asks for with amateur posts. I know that we do have a lot of free reign over what we do post on social media...you need it to be, I mean sometimes iPhone quality just isn't good enough [sic].' (Participant A)

'... and then YouTube we don't use as regularly as we could because video production is very expensive so we don't do it very often, so we're not very active there [sic].' (Participant C)

It is clear, therefore, as previously mentioned, that hotels place a lot of value in the advocacy of other consumers through positively-valenced engagement behaviours and user-generated content. Yet, still there exists reluctance on the part of brands to amplify content that they feel does not hold a production value that would be consistent with the hotel's brand identity and previous marketing activities.

Some improvisation strategies illustrated by participants included the employment of *influencers*: individuals or groups who have amassed a following of their own and who are utilising their influence to amplify the messages of the hotel brand. Some examples given include the following:

'...like, we did have say, a couple of, ah, say back there last September [sic], we had a couple of international bloggers staying and they happened to have a really nice sunset which was 'liked' a couple of hundred times on Instagram. Now that was kind've luck that they happened to be there and they had a big following on Instagram [sic].' (Participant D)

'Twitter's a bit different because we use it as an outreach tool for bloggers and people mention us on a blog post as well...' (Participant C)

The main consideration for brands in these instances would be to ensure that influencers, projecting the hotel brand to their own audience, are closely aligned with the hotel's target market. Influencers utilise the qualities which have led to the accumulation of their audience in the first instance, such as their personality, content quality, opinions and viewpoints or knowledge and expertise, in order to engage with their audience in a way which will effectively resonate with them. While widespread awareness and exposure can, of course, be beneficial, a more concerted effort to target the *right* people will see more of a return for the hotel. With the current saturation of social media platforms with content from a plethora of sources vying for user attention, a premium has now been put on ensuring that content is specifically targeted to the most relevant audiences. This will be further examined in the next section, *remunerative content*.

Remunerative Content

Several social media-focused studies have signalled *remuneration* as a driver of online community contribution, involving engagement with social media as a means to gain some future reward (Muntinga, *et al.*, 2011), such as, for example, sweepstakes organised within Facebook (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013). Dolan (2016) adds that remunerative content may take the form of online posts providing details about sales, promotions, prices and exclusive deals to social media users. Past research has found remuneration to be a primary motivation for visiting a brand's social media page (Tsai and Men, 2013). However, Dolan *et al.* (2016) uphold the importance of offering users the opportunity to learn something new, obtain exclusive content and gain acknowledgement and support from fellow consumers, as having a far greater impact on consumers' motivation to engage in virtual communities.

Offers and competitions have been a staple of content strategies of hotels participating in the present study. It has been established that these sections of content have performed best for the participants, as highlighted by the below quotations.

'...you do get an element of, I suppose, people who will follow anything that is running a competition [sic].' (Participant B)

'...we actually ran a wedding competition to give away a wedding at the beginning of the year and it went absolutely crazy. I think there was something ridiculous like the winner had, oh my goodness, it was like...hundreds of thousands of votes going towards people to win the competition and it literally just took off [sic].' (Participant E)

'Other stuff that works, definitely competitions [...] stuff that gets a lot of engagement are competitions, because people want to win something, they want to get something for free [sic].' (Participant C)

While the promise of a perceived 'luxury prize', such as a wedding or hotel stay, is enough in itself to generate consumer engagement behaviours, some of the participants in the study did advocate caution in ascertaining the actual value of such behaviours for the brand.

'I know the number one reason for people to follow brands is for offers and discounts and then for competitions as well, so I'm not naïve to the fact that people are following us for a reason [...] I'm also not naïve to the fact that we have the same people entering our competitions all the time...' (Participant C)

'I suppose you're just wondering if you see a big competition like, maybe it's a weekend in one of the top suites, and they do [build] up kinda traction [sic]... are people just looking for when there's a competition [sic]...they may not

be thinking of [our hotel] as a place to go...and that once the competition is over, we'll move onto the next competition.' (Participant D)

While the short term awareness and exposure offered by advertising competitions has a certain value, there will, inevitably, be a section of the audience whose prime motivation will be to try and win something for free. As a result, the propensity to engage with a hotel's future content may potentially be extremely low. This presents a problem for hotel brands, particularly when using Facebook, whereby algorithm changes have decimated the potential reach of content that is posted organically, simply meaning: without financial investment to boost its reach. While it is still, of course, possible to achieve reasonable levels of reach with branded content through user engagement, having an audience who is not willing or interested in engaging with a hotel/brand's content, will only cause Facebook's algorithm to assign a low 'quality score' to that content, which may further negatively affect content reach. It is, therefore, imperative that competitions are sparsely leveraged and are only seen as being complementary to the brand's central content strategy.

Relational Content

Hennig-Thurau, *et al.* (2004) highlight consumers' needs for integration and social interaction, as well as their desires for social benefits, as all being key motivators for Internet usage. This can be extended to social media, as Muntinga, *et al.* (2011) explain sub-motivations as gaining a sense of belonging; connecting with friends, family and society; seeking support or emotional support; and substituting real-life support. Dolan (2016) explains that *relational* content is appealing to fans' needs for social interaction by asking the audience questions, providing fun quizzes, or posting photos of customers or staff members. Internet users have expressed that, through the online content generation process, they are presented with the opportunity to be recognised, to publicise their expertise, to learn more of the world, to socialise with connections, and to be entertained (Leung, 2009).

This form of content was by far the factor most commonly highlighted by participants in this study, with several examples being provided of sponsorship of charitable and community events.

'...what we're doing as part of HR initiatives like we had, em, a bake off [sic]... for the [charity] there in October for [charity initiative]. Those posts always do really well because they like to see the personal side of it, who they're gonna be dealing with when they come and stay with us [sic].' (Participant A)

'I suppose that there's a lot of things that we would sponsor, y'know small events and things in the hotel that we, maybe, organisations like [sic] [charity], they might have an event and we might sponsor, ah, a raffle prize or something like that [sic]. That would generate reactions and interactions

and next month we're even fronting the nationwide venue for the [charity] fundraiser [charity initiative], which is going to be good PR and social coverage as well [sic]...' (Participant D)

These initiatives have certainly fuelled engagement behaviours on social media platforms, as the altruistic nature of these endeavours have proved successful in resonating with the online community. However, as previously mentioned, these instances seem to have been implemented as positive PR campaigns, with little to no concerted effort to continue to build on these patterns of engagement beyond their short term use. Updates, follow-ups, as well as prolonged engagement with these charitable causes' online presences on the part of the hotels, can significantly boost their relations with these organisations, further solidifying their support of their causes and increasing community engagement. Currently, these initiatives are seen to be short-term deviations from the regular content strategy and, as a result, may be inhibiting the levels of positive sentiment and *long term* engagement on the part of consumers.

Another central feature of participants' content strategy, which feeds into the above discussion, is the portrayal of the humanistic side of the brand, publishing 'behind the scenes' content or 'staff stories', all of which have served to overcome barriers between consumers and brands, an important feature of brand building on social media, especially within the hospitality sector.

'...y'know if it's just a picture of, oh, y'know we have a staff party today and then a picture of everyone enjoying the staff party, people tend to respond better to that [sic]. I suppose it kinda puts a face to the brand, y'know, and that seems to go down better than if it's kinda a very brandy post, or a very salesy feeling to it [sic] [...] Yeah, I suppose there is a very human element to hospitality anyway, so it would make sense that those are the things that people look for and expect from it.' (Participant B)

'People love people so, em, that's one thing we've definitely noticed that, eh, if we put our staff in it, that gets a lot more views and a lot more hits than if we don't [sic]...Again, with using things like, y'know, the area, and we have staff here who've been here since the hotel opened, which people obviously love, so we try to make it personal here so that's it's personal to them during their stay as well, and we really find that that works [sic].' (Participant E)

'Like, for example, if I post something about a staff story here at the hotel, that's not going to sell a room rate, but it's going to drive active engagement among our community.' (Participant C)

Given the increased saturation of content and marketing material on digital platforms, many of these processes have become more automated. One instance is the rise of customer service Internet 'bots' on Facebook; continued artificial intelligence development; even simple online scheduling tools such as Buffer and

Hootsuite, have sought to detract the 'human-to-human' element of social media in favour of an 'always on' presence for brands. Efforts need to be maintained in this regard, in order to continue to portray the brand in a more human light, allowing consumers to engage with people at all stages of the consumer cycle, in this case, before and after travel via social media platforms, and then in-person during their stay at the hotel.

A major challenge in achieving effective levels of engagement throughout varying stages of the consumer process is the need for consistency in the tone of voice used within content strategies. Several participants alluded to the importance of such authenticity, as illustrated by the following quotations with reference to discussing unsuitable content:

'Or maybe it might be something in the language or tone that just isn't really us [sic]...I suppose you would treat every customer as if they were standing in front of you. Y'know that kind've tone, that voice, em, friendly, helpful [sic].'
(Participant B)

'...people like to see that face of people here at the hotel, but also they don't like something that's very staged [sic]...People like natural settings, this is the flow of what's happening in [the hotel]...' (Participant C)

Such challenges may be overcome by clear and concise guidelines being set out by management as to the nature of brand communications through social media. While a more relaxed and approachable manner is to be recommended, given the innate nature of social media, the tone of voice utilised by all brands must be reflective of the brand throughout all marketing material, while also resonating with, rather than alienating, their target segments. The human element becomes even more important here, for as long as the individual(s) maintaining the brand's presence online is able to portray the brand in a consistent and effective tone of voice, the levels of engagement among the online community will continue to grow.

Future Research

This chapter represents a pilot study investigating current practice among hotels in Ireland regarding the form and characteristics of their online social media content. Findings include a heavy reliance on *relational* content for the purposes of showcasing the more humanistic and altruistic qualities of the hotel brand. *Remunerative* content was also found to be a very prominent component of content strategies, mostly owing to the motivation among users to win prizes and competitions through their engagement behaviour, although hotel brands remain wary of the potential long-term value of such activities in terms of consumer engagement with the brand. Further qualitative inquiry may explore anticipated outcomes and motivations for consumers in engaging with hotels' social media

content. Further research may also study the value of certain forms of content from the consumers' perspective, and the subsequent impact on levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement with the hotel brand. Finally, the extant literature remains devoid of specific studies on consumer engagement behaviours with hotels' social media content across multiple stages of the travel process. Current research examining levels of engagement behaviours with social media content (see Dolan, *et al.*, 2016b) lack the contextual evidence to ascertain which forms of content are most effective at varying stages of the travel cycle in order to generate engagement behaviours and influence consumer behaviour and, ultimately, increase engagement with the brand.

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CHAPTER 14

The Wild Atlantic Way– 2,500 Kilometres, One Destination

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Introduction

The Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) is a self-guided driving route along the western seaboard of Ireland, conceived by Fáilte Ireland and launched in 2014, ostensibly to fill a niche gap in the Irish tourism market with this unparalleled attraction (Fáilte Ireland, 2015, p.5). The WAW is the longest defined coastal route in Europe, spanning 2,500km. Fáilte Ireland has marketed the WAW as an experience brand defined by stunning scenery and an authentic experience of life on the edge of Europe. According to Fáilte Ireland,

‘...it is synonymous with great experiences of Atlantic heritage, culture, landscapes and seascapes in a high-quality environment.’ (Fáilte Ireland, 2015, p.5).

There are numerous recommended stops along the route, as well as many ‘hidden gems,’ or lesser known tourism spots and look-out points. The stops already existed as tourism destinations, but the WAW synthesised them under a unified destination brand in order to raise their profiles and their appeal to digital travellers. The attraction to digital travellers comes in the form of the WAW’s well-designed mobile telephone application (App), as well as the branding initiative’s effective incorporation into general social media.

From 2007 to 2010, international tourism in the West of Ireland experienced a decline, with the national as well as international economic challenges of 2009

exacerbating the situation. Fáilte Ireland sought to reverse this trend by developing a tourist initiative specifically to attract and increase the numbers of overseas tourists visiting the west of the country. The WAW was developed to deliver on Fáilte Ireland's strategic objectives of, 'generating incremental international revenues and job creation' (Fáilte Ireland, 2015, p.5). An initial capital investment of €10 million was assigned to the project in 2014, and a further €3.5 million was allocated in 2015 in order to upgrade 188 so-called 'discovery points'. A record number of overseas visitors came to the West of Ireland in 2015, a fact which is largely attributed to improved tourist initiatives and upgraded external factors. This research explores the WAW's effect on destination branding in Ireland, how it influences consumer experience, and how hospitality marketers in the West of Ireland are using the WAW to complement their own marketing and branding efforts.

TripAdvisor, Travel 2.0 and eWord of Mouth

TripAdvisor is an online travel website company which focuses on travel and tourism and encourages users to review accommodation, attractions, restaurants, and anything else they may have come across on their holidays. This is most often achieved through TripAdvisor's own App, but can also be completed through their website using other devices than a mobile telephone, as long as they are connected to the Internet. According to a report released by PhoCusWright (2015) on behalf of TripAdvisor, over half of the individuals surveyed in the global study did not habitually commit to travel bookings without first thoroughly researching and, notably, reading reviews provided by other travellers (hotelmarketing.com, 2015). By TripAdvisor's own account, sites which bear its brand,

'...make up the largest travel community in the world, reaching 350 million unique monthly visitors and 320 million reviews and opinions, covering more than 6.2 million accommodations, restaurants and attractions' (TripAdvisor.com, 2016).

Social media has revolutionised marketing directly because information, influence and content control have shifted from marketers to, 'the individuals and communities that create, share, and consume' content online (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p.242). Marketing has undergone a major transformation, from a one-way platform to a direct conversation between consumers and marketers. The transformation from online content being created by web developers to that being created by any individual with Internet access, has largely happened because of social media. The online content created across blogs, social media sites, review sites and other online platforms, has been termed Web 2.0. When that democratisation of online content creation is applied to the travel industry, it is known as Travel 2.0.

The advent of Travel 2.0 has reshaped the way in which people research, plan and pre-consume holiday information. Travellers are now personally proactive

in searching for information and planning their own holidays, when in the past they may have employed a travel agency to do all or most of the work for them. The Internet offers a wealth of Travel 2.0 user generated content (UGC), as well as electronic word of mouth (eWoM). TripAdvisor reviews, in particular, have become a powerful form of eWoM, which includes,

‘...[a]ny positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet’ (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p.40).

TripAdvisor encourages users of its platform to post reviews of hotels, restaurants and attractions by ‘gamifying’ the experience. Users earn points based on the number of reviews, ratings, posts, and photos they have contributed to the site. Those points translate into contributor levels. In the post-holiday phase, TripAdvisor users are encouraged to add to the trove of UGC by providing future researchers with up-to-date UGC and personal experiences.

The significant role of UGC and eWoM in personal purchase decisions should not be underestimated. Marketers and sociologists have recognised the importance of word of mouth (WoM), proposing that it affects the majority of all purchase decisions, both online and offline (Arndt, 1967; Buttle, 1998; Cheung et al, 2009; Almana and Mirza, 2013). In marketing terms, WoM has been described as the, ‘ultimate test of the customer relationship,’ because it is perceived to be a highly trustworthy information source (Bendapudi and Berry, 1997, p.30). Furthermore, trust in eWoM does not decrease, despite the fact that a personal offline connection may not exist between online peers. Since the target audience in tourism may span multiple countries, personal connections are unlikely to exist between potential consumers. Hence, eWoM provides a cost-effective and efficient way to allow a brand’s reputation to spread through credible online channels. Research in the area of eWoM’s influence on tourism is lacking and, recent studies,

‘...have failed to present the characteristics of social network[s], namely the effect of social features on tourists.’ (Luo and Zhong, 2015, p.274).

Opinion Leadership and Tourism Consumption

On the Internet, every user has the ability to share his or her opinions and experiences with complete strangers (Cheung and Lee, 2012, p.218). Where traditional WoM activity is restricted by physical distance and personal connections, WoM conducted through social media has the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of recipients, most of whom may be unknown [to one another] (Dahl, 2015, p.173). In the case of traditional WoM, opinions and recommendations do not endure once spoken, as they do not tend to be recorded (Stern, 1994, p.51). In a

digital world, however, communications and eWoM are recorded and shared widely. The increasing level of UGC means that there is a remarkable amount of product information available online. As a result, eWoM has become a dominant player in influencing purchase decisions and is,

'...especially important in the hospitality and tourism industry whose intangible products are difficult to evaluate prior to their consumption.'
(Litvin et al., 2008, p.458).

Consumer culture theory (CCT) offers an explanation as to why reviews form such an influential and powerful part of the tourist's decision-making process. CCT explores the 'experiential, symbolic and ideological aspects of consumption', rather than focusing solely on the utilitarian function of the product or service consumed (Arnould and Thompson, 2006, p.868). In tourism, personal opinions and experiences are especially valuable when it comes to tourism reviews and assessments. Consumers take an active role in the post-consumption of their experiences by sharing stories, emotions and thoughts not only directly, but also indirectly through a variety of online social media platforms currently available. In doing so, they extend their experience to people who are not present during the process (Kozinets, 2001). CCT explores how consumers,

'...actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals' (Arnould and Thompson, 2006, p.871).

This theory is useful in analysing TripAdvisor reviews, especially in order to further understand how consumers perceive and experience the WAW, as well as how visitors share their experiences. According to CCT, holidaymakers who have absorbed the brand message of the WAW will repurpose its language and key selling points in TripAdvisor reviews at a later date.

Research Methodology

The WAW branding and its strong digital presence have presented hospitality providers with a unique opportunity for co-promotion and co-marketing. The central research question is: How does the WAW brand affect online travel communities and opinion leaders? Associated questions related to this research are: to what extent and for what reasons do hospitality providers, such as hotels and B&Bs, embrace the WAW branding in their marketing, and how can they improve on these efforts?

The WAW was established in 2014, but data collection only commenced from 2015 onwards, as it takes time to establish a new brand (Keller, 2012). The selected timeframe for this data collection includes one peak tourism season, April 2015 to September 2015, during which consumers were expected to take more trips and, consequently, to write

more reviews. One aspect of the research focused on hotels along the WAW route in County Galway. In total, forty-eight hotels were identified and their TripAdvisor reviews analysed for mentions of the WAW. Reviews for hotels located in the West of Ireland which mentioned the WAW, and which were written within the timeframe between the 1st of January 2015 and the 1st of June 2016, were analysed to gain primary insights into consumer experiences and their perceptions of the route, as well as the brand itself. In total, forty-six reviews were assessed through netnography, a research technique coined by Kozinets (2002). Netnography is an online research method originating in ethnography and which is applied to understanding social interaction in contemporary digital communication contexts. As a research method it provides a means for assessing the behaviours, trends and social customs of online communities and market segments (Kozinets et al. 2010; Kozinets, 2015). Therefore, there was a clear rationale for its use in conducting research for this chapter. In addition to the forty-eight hotels analysed for their TripAdvisor reviews, the Facebook pages of twenty-three accommodation providers, primarily B&Bs and inns, were examined via netnography in order to gain insights into the success or otherwise of different promotion strategies on the platform. In research terms, netnography can provide detailed information and is less intrusive and more natural than surveys or focus groups. Data analysed through netnography is not solicited by the researcher and is freely available online. The software product NVivo was used to explore the text content of TripAdvisor reviews and Facebook posts in order to determine a balance of posts and perceptions of the WAW.

Finally, face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with hospitality professionals between the 1st of April 2016 and the 1st of June 2016. These interviews were designed to assess the hospitality providers' degree of adoption of the WAW branding in their own social media marketing, and also to determine the best ways in which the WAW could be used for future destination branding. Interviews were conducted with volunteers from the Connacht Hotel, the Meyrick Hotel, the Radisson Blu Hotel and Isle Inn Tours. All interviews were carried out face-to-face, with the exception of one telephone interview with Isle Inn Tours, as this company is based in Alexandria, Virginia, USA.

Analysis of TripAdvisor Hotel Reviews

Four factors have been identified as motivators for the writing of reviews: egoism, collectivism, altruism and principilism (Cheung and Lee, 2012). Egotistic motivation refers to the reviewer's own welfare and gain. Collectivism motivation is the collective benefit gained by the entire group. Altruistic motivation is a benefit gained by the group other than oneself, and principilistic motivation is the goal of upholding a moral principle for the greater good of the group.

While it is reasonable to expect that the reviews of TripAdvisor's top contributors would carry the most weight, it was actually found that negative reviews receive the

highest number of ‘helpful’ accolades from readers. Similar interests also play a part in influencing purchases. The initial similarity begins when an individual selects an attraction to research. As reviews are being read, the reader will form a ‘tie’ or bond with the reviewer. A tie is a loose connection between individuals and plays a part in the process of forming opinion leaders and opinion followers, as outlined by the Social Network Theory (Dahl, 2015, p.178). Previous research supports the theory that relationships formed online can be formed by complete strangers and between individuals from any demographic (Cheung and Lee, 2012, p.218). Therefore, anyone who writes an online review, with sufficient detail to enable a reader to form a ‘tie’, can readily become a community influencer. The reviewer assumes the position of opinion leader and disseminates product or service information to opinion followers in their online network. As noted previously, the reviewer can then influence a reader’s purchase decision by forming ties with travellers of similar interests through the content of their review.

Negative online reviews are often written from a place of digital altruism, simply meaning altruism that is mediated by digital technology (Klisanin, 2013). Contributors want to protect others from negative experiences and consumers, in turn, feel as if they have formed a connection with the reviewer who advised them. Fortunately for the WAW, the negative reviews studied for this chapter reflected an underperformance in the hotel sector, rather than an overall failing with the WAW. In one instance, the WAW actually compensated for a perceived shortcoming in a hotel. One reviewer commented that,

‘...the hotel could do with redecoration [sic] to bring a more modern feeling to the place. However, the décor could be said to add to the character of this remote hotel on the Wild Atlantic Way.’ (TripAdvisor reviewer, 2016).

TripAdvisor reviewer opinions about the WAW were found to be overwhelmingly positive. The WAW’s TripAdvisor page itself has over 800 ‘Excellent’ ratings, 126 ‘Very Good’ ratings and very few ratings ranging from ‘Average’ and ‘Poor’ to ‘Terrible’ (TripAdvisor, 2017). One of the key features of the WAW, mentioned by reviewers, was the importance of seascapes and landscapes (See Table 1).

The strength of the WAW branding is apparent, even though the reviews are not written specifically for the WAW. Instead, consumers freely offer unprompted mentions of the WAW as an added asset to their overall hotel stay and holiday experience. However, the research conducted for this chapter highlights the need for managers and marketers to understand eWoM and opinion leadership in order to capitalise on ‘Good’ reviews from key influencers and, in doing so, improve upon their own brand image.

Table 1: Selected Extracts from Galway Hotels' TripAdvisor Reviews

'The surrounding area is blessed with outstanding natural scenery and the Wild Atlantic Way has opened up the area for travelling.' (Abbeyglen Hotel Reviewer, 2015)
'The Wild Atlantic Way is quaint, but beautiful.' (Abbeyglen Hotel reviewer, 2015)
'Spent a wonderful four days exploring Galway City and surroundings and we also drove some of the Wild Atlantic Way – the scenery was incredible.' (Ardilaun Hotel reviewer, 2015)
'We were recommended to drive via the 'Wild Atlantic Way' en route and by the time we reached the hotel [we] were blown away by the amazing scenery.' (Ballynahinch Castle Hotel reviewer, 2015)
'Enjoyed Clifden and especially liked The Wild Atlantic Way sky loop. Breath-taking scenery.' (Clifden Station House, 2015)
'The sea and coast truly belonged to the Wild Atlantic Way. We were comfortable, warm and snug in our room or within the hotel as the wind blew and the rain fell outside.' (Galway Bay Hotel, 2016)
'The hotel is also located on the Wild Atlantic Way, a great scenic drive.' (Galway Bay Hotel, 2015)
'The drive is amazing along Wild Atlantic Way.' (Menlo Park Hotel reviewer, 2016)

Destination Branding and Consumer Experience

The strength of a brand lies in the mind of the consumer and the way in which a consumer interprets a brand message may not always be as intended by the marketer (Aaker, 2002). The overwhelmingly positive reviews of the WAW indicate that consumers are interpreting the WAW brand image as intended. There is no disconnect between the message and the experience (Cai, 2002; Qu et al., 2010). Brand awareness is an essential ingredient for a consumer to even begin to consider a particular brand as an option in the decision process (Aaker, 2002; Keller, 2012). Therefore, tourism brands need to promote themselves to make consumers aware of the brand message, and the message must be clear so consumers receive it as intended (Keller, 2012). The Internet has given marketers more opportunities than ever before to promote and communicate with the right consumers (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2012). However, it is ultimately the consumer who is in charge of the conversation, thanks to the co-creation opportunities via Travel 2.0.

Many destinations do not offer specific 'goods or services'. However, they do offer the consumer an experience. In the case of the WAW, while the natural location of the western seaboard of Ireland is the unifying factor, the wild and rugged visual experience is what defines the WAW brand. However, it is not enough for the tourism industry to push this attractive image in isolation. The tourist must share the idea cognitively through brand associations. A factor contributing to the creation of positive associations for the WAW is a distinctive location, creating a unique image

(Cai, 2002; Qu et al., 2011). The visitor must encounter consistency across the destination to receive the desired brand image effectively (Cai, 2002). With the wealth of tourism destinations on offer to visitors seeking a European holiday, destination branding, as a part of the WAW, allows a tourism company to create a well-defined and recognisable appeal. Effective destination branding requires creating identification and differentiation in order to offer credibility and a value proposition for visitors (Aaker, 1996; Cai, 2002; Qu et al., 2010). The WAW's value proposition and point of difference is its natural ruggedness and the unparalleled scenic experience it offers. Since a desirable and unique brand identity has already been established for the 2,500km route, a tourism company can easily take advantage of the pre-existing identity in order to enhance its own credentials as an authentic and associated tourist destination.

The WAW route holds a significant appeal for international tourists, particularly with Americans. International visitors are more likely to spend longer exploring the WAW and participating in activities such as day-tours offered by hotels. By contrast, Irish visitors tend to pursue shorter trips along the WAW. As a result, consumer expectations and experience may vary between domestic and international holidaymakers. In twenty-two of the TripAdvisor reviews analysed for this study, writers mentioned that they were already travelling the route before they decided to stay in the reviewed hotel. This finding is evidence of interest and focus on the WAW brand.

Hospitality Marketers' Perception of the WAW's Brand Value

To gauge hospitality marketers' perceived value of the WAW as a brand, interviews were conducted with hospitality professionals working in hotels and tour companies. All interviewees praised the WAW's branding and considered it among the best branding initiatives in Ireland to date. They noted that it has a particular appeal to international travellers, since Irish tourists are more likely to take day-trips or weekend breaks and, therefore, may not have the same opportunity to experience the route as their international counterparts. Each hotelier specified Facebook as their preferred social media marketing (SMM) platform, and stated that they mention the WAW frequently in promotional posts. Mentions occur in the form of hashtags and articles, as well as photo and video shares. Instagram was identified as their second preference as a SMM platform. These marketers found promoting the WAW particularly effective on Instagram because it is such a visual platform and it was generally agreed that a visual experience brand, such as the WAW, should perform well there. Participants were asked whether or not being featured on the WAW website and associated App had benefited their business. The general consensus was that consumers tend to trust the advice of their online community over the WAW-specific material. Customers view information gathered from eWoM platforms such as TripAdvisor, as being more credible than official sources such as company websites

or printed material (Steffes and Burgee, 2009, p.45). Greater faith is placed on eWoM opinions, as opposed to messages created by marketers.

'Consumers evaluate the credibility of eWoM messages carefully and the perceived motives behind the articulated comments determine the credibility of the source.' (Pöyry et al., 2011, p.3).

One interviewee, a marketing professional with a tour operator, was impressed with Fáilte Ireland's branding of the WAW, as well as the route's signposting which enables tourists to find their way easily. The firm added a number of new tour routes simply to encourage visitors to experience different parts of the WAW; these packages have proven to be extremely popular. Hotel marketers are satisfied with the WAW brand, with some going so far as to state that it is among the best Irish tourism campaigns to date, promoting Ireland as an experience and not just a holiday destination.

Leveraging the WAW Brand via Social Media

'Eighty-four per cent of travellers use the Internet as a planning resource, visiting an average of twenty-two sites before booking.' (Noone et al., 2011, p.299).

Social media has been used extensively by holidaymakers to search for information (Leung et al., 2013). Online social networks, including Facebook and TripAdvisor, have become a virtual space where people can co-create content, share information and personal experiences, all within a virtual community environment. By posting messages to Facebook, companies can provide information which users can then check against TripAdvisor reviews in order to verify the credibility and authenticity of a particular destination.

Social media is vital for growing relationships with customers and increasing brand awareness (McCann and Barlow, 2015). Marketing through social media is an arena in which smaller companies can be particularly competitive against larger brands. Using Facebook as a marketing tool allows businesses to gain access to growing numbers of users from varying demographics in order to increase their following online (Bulearca and Bulearca, 2010). Facebook has been transformed into a powerful marketing tool because of its ease of use (Lipsman et al., 2012). Furthermore, social media platforms provide tourism destination brands with an opportunity to build trust and direct relationships with customers in a way that has never been seen before (Öztamur and Karakadılar, 2014, p.512). Online sites such as TripAdvisor give small and medium enterprises (SMEs) an opportunity to gauge consumer sentiment and communicate directly with the customer by responding to reviews. These responses also grant SMEs the opportunity to take a proactive approach to negative feedback by addressing any issues mentioned by reviewers. By replying to negative comments, marketers are able to halt the spread of negative eWOM (Muñoz Leiva

et al., 2012). Social media can enhance the visibility of businesses to their potential customers in a competitively growing market. That increased visibility is where marketers can leverage the WAW's strong online presence and create a positive influence on opinion leaders in order to amplify the overall impact of their own social media efforts.

A number of hospitality marketers noted that the time commitment to Facebook marketing was a drawback in using this particular online platform. Business owners are sceptical about investing time, people and money in social media promotion, primarily because they believe that it is difficult to track conversions from postings on social media platforms into actual increased business. A common question that arose was: Do visitors to social media really make a reservation after reading positive reviews, posts or comments? The increase of Facebook fans and followers does not necessarily have a direct correlation with growth in sales (McCann and Barlow, 2015). Most social media platforms have built-in analytical services such as, for example, Facebook Analytics, which can help marketers determine what types of posts are performing best and whether or not peaks in activity correspond with an increase in bookings.

Hotel and B&Bs' WAW Promotion via Facebook

Reviews of the Facebook pages of twenty-three additional hospitality providers, primarily B&Bs, all located along the WAW, revealed how varying types of content performed on social media. Generic content, such as content posted as text without an accompanying photo or video, does not garner much traction on social media. Facebook posts relating directly to the hotels themselves were the most widely used, accounting for 36.5% of the total number of posts analysed, closely followed by area posts at 31.7%. From an assessment of reactions, shares and comments, area posts generated more positive comments and engagement than generic posts about B&Bs along the WAW. Given that the WAW's emphasis is on its scenery, and that the experience of driving along the route is entirely area-based, its social content can effectively be repurposed to increase engagement with B&Bs' Facebook pages and, thus, increase value to the content posted therein. Marketers can share or repost content from the WAW's own official pages in order to align their brand image with the WAW. This leads not only to a reduction in the amount of time and energy spent in sourcing content, but also it eliminates the need for duplication of content.

Interestingly, the B&Bs promoting the WAW on social media also have the highest number of WAW mentions within their TripAdvisor reviews. There is a 75% correlation between Facebook promotion and TripAdvisor reviews. Hotels and B&Bs situated along the WAW are now ideally positioned to seize the opportunity to identify with such a popular destination brand. As previously mentioned, brand sentiment for the WAW is overwhelmingly positive. By linking with that positive sentiment, hospitality

marketers encourage additional customer confidence in their TripAdvisor reviews. The increasingly positive reviews can then serve as a key conversion tool in attracting new customers. Of the Galway hotels and B&Bs studied along the WAW route, 52% make no mention of the WAW on social media. This finding is not unique to Galway, as an analysis of 205 Facebook posts from a number of other hotels and B&Bs along the route revealed that social media posts rarely mention the WAW, either as a location or as an associated brand. Hotels and B&Bs creating associations with the WAW increase their reputation exponentially by simply linking their brand identity to another well-known and positively perceived brand. Once that connection is made, community influencers are indirectly encouraged to spread that positive association to others through authentic and valuable eWoM reviews on online sites, such as TripAdvisor.

Conclusion

This research aims to assess the influence of the Wild Atlantic Way on consumer experience. Also, the research set out to explore the potential of enabling hotels to improve on the purchase decisions of WAW tourists for their destination marketing through eWoM opinion leadership. It was clearly established that TripAdvisor reviews do enable communication between opinion leaders and followers and, as an online social media platform it also definitely plays an important role in the visitor's decision-making process. It is through the attributes and content of reviews that WAW tourists can form ties with reviewers who, in turn, are potentially influenced into making a consumption choice. Furthermore, there is ample evidence to suggest that consumer experience of the WAW is highly positive, especially amongst international visitors. Similarly, hospitality providers gave uniformly positive responses to their perceptions of the WAW's brand identity and its use as a promotion tool for tourism initiatives. This research also clearly established that hotels and B&Bs which mention the WAW through their own social media marketing, have seen a corresponding increase in the number of consumer mentions of the WAW in their TripAdvisor reviews. Research presented here shows that consumer mentions of the WAW are positive, regardless of the writer's accommodation experience, meaning that the WAW influence on hotels' and B&Bs' marketing messages can often compensate for potential perceived shortcomings elsewhere in the overall holiday experience. Only 48% of Galway hotels and B&Bs mention the WAW on Facebook, indicating that there is currently limited competition among hotels seeking to adopt the WAW branding. It was also found that Hotels and B&Bs who leverage their association with the WAW's destination branding, can positively enhance the perceived quality of their premises and, consequently, improve opinion leaders' online reviews.

With a view to future research, it is recommended that the impact of the WAW outside of Galway, especially in areas that are not widely known tourism hubs,

should be explored. Analysis of hotel reviews and guest numbers in the North West regions of the country may provide further compelling evidence for the success of the WAW branding. Additional research, regarding the influence of the WAW destination branding and opinion leadership on other social media platforms, such as Instagram, may also serve as another educational area of study. Since the WAW brand is focused on a visual experience of the unique and photogenically spectacular Irish western coast, eWoM for the WAW is expected to be particularly influential on the aesthetically-focused Instagram App. One of the hospitality professionals interviewed during this research noted the prevalence of WAW-related posts on Instagram. An exploration of the concepts of pre- and post-consumption in the tourist's holiday planning phase posted on Instagram would be of an area of particular research interest, as would the idea of vicarious-consumption. Research carried out in additional regions of the country and on a second social media platform, might provide additional information to marketers on how best to leverage the WAW's strong destination branding in efforts to promote hotels via digital marketing.

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Endnote: Research data was collected by Aghna Cooney, Sean Higgins and Brian Murphy, 2016 graduates of NUI Galway's MSc Digital Marketing.

CHAPTER 15

County Sligo – The Creation of a Destination Brand along the Wild Atlantic Way

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Introduction

The North West of Ireland is a largely rural peripheral location where the potential of tourism has not yet been fully realised. Recent policy changes and national tourism strategies offer an interesting context within which tourism stakeholders might potentially build a sustainable tourism product. Throughout available literature, there is evidence of sustained interest in building tourist brands and much attention is paid to Irish cities and particular regions such as, for example the Ring of Kerry. There is less of a focus, however, on brand building in areas of Ireland that are smaller or, perhaps, less well-known. This chapter draws on many disciplinary areas which include: branding; tourism; public policy; regional development; and community. The interdisciplinary nature of this research is intended to provide an informed insight with regard to identifying the multi-faceted considerations in terms of building a local, region-specific tourism brand, namely a destination brand along the Atlantic Way.

Destination Marketing and Regional Development

Destination marketing represents an area of sustained interest for academic enquiry (Baker and Cameron, 2008; Naipaul, Wang and Okumus, 2009; Pike, 2016; Pratt, McCabe, Cortes-Jimenez and Blake, 2010). Indeed, Michailidou, Vlachokostas, and Moussiopoulos (2016, p.1) recognise that,

'...tourism is a key driving force for socio-economic progress. It accounts for 5% of direct global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), offering 235 million jobs worldwide.'

There is a diversity of research interest that includes, but is not exclusive to, regional development (Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus and Naipaul, 2013); competitiveness (Botti, Peypoch, Robinot and Solonadrasana, 2009; Webster and Ivanov, 2014); image (Cherifi, Smith, Maitland and Stevenson, 2014; Martín-Santana, Beerli-Palacio and Nazzareno, 2017); development (Haugland, Ness, Grønseth and Aarstad, 2011), and personality (Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal, 2006; Mathews, 2015).

Destination marketing can be an especially effective tool with which to pursue sustainable regional development through tourism. Increased revenue from tourists can impact positively on a region's economic, social and environmental development. Areas within a tourism sector can further benefit from repeat visits from tourists, as well as the many ancillary paybacks offered by an effective branding campaign. All of these factors cannot be understated in terms of destination branding.

Branding a Tourist Destination

Branding a long-established pillar of marketing (Aaker 1991 & 2005) can be used more extensively in tourism theory and practice. In relation to brand definition, Holloway and Robinson (1995) refer to the use of name, sign, symbol and/or design to distinguish some products from those of their competitors. Likewise, Campelo, Aitken and Gnoth (2011) refer to the importance of brands as a powerful communication device. Within Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, 'differentiation' presents both an opportunity and a challenge. DeChernatony (2001) and Hogan et al. (2005) all offer advice on how to strategically build tourist brands.

While there is evidence of growing investigation in this area (Anholt, 2005; Baker, 2007; Balakrishnan, 2009; Cai, 2002; Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004 & 2011; Park, and Petrick, 2006), research is not, by any means, exhaustive. There may be tension between residents' notions of their 'sense of place' and a destination brand identity. Place branding relates to countries, regions, cities and towns. Hakala, Lemmetyinen, and Kantola (2013) explore country image as a nation-branding tool, while Hall (1999) looks at national image projection. Braun (2012), Baker (2007) and Larsen (2014) offer research findings which explore city branding.

What a resident interprets as a place identity may, in fact, be in total contrast to the tourist destination identity. Is the branding designed for all stakeholders, or merely the tourist? Kerr (2006) postulates that destination branding focuses on tourists, while place branding targets all groups. Gertner (2011) acknowledges that, as a research domain, place branding has evolved rapidly. Research into destination

branding might be more successful and beneficial if a resident's sense of place is first identified. Zenker, Braun and Petersen (2017, p.17) acknowledges, 'the special role of residents in the place branding process, not only as a target group, but also as part of a place.'

At a basic level, destination branding sets out to achieve two simple goals: to differentiate one destination from its rival destinations, and to attract potential visitors, residents and investors to a given area. Throughout available brand literature, there is extensive discussion about brand communities (Banerjee, S. and Banerjee, 2015; Breivik and Thorbjørnsen, 2008; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002; Muinz Jr. and O'Guinn, 2001). The concept of brand community could be another interesting parameter to explore, within the tourist brand context.

According to Rashid and Ghose (2015, p.5),

'...the brand of a product or service needs to have its own unique identity that makes it stand out and be recognisable.'

An effective brand is one that is easily recognisable and which should 'tell the story', in other words: a mechanism by which to positively and effectively promote the goods, service or organisation in question. It is clear from available literature that brand research, in the context of destinations, is a mix of traditional brand domains such as: personality; identity and image; strategy; internal branding; and brand equity. While all these factors are highly relevant to tourist destinations, what is most valuable in the context of developing a place brand is inclusion and consultation with relevant business stakeholders, as well as and especially, with existing residents of the area. Given the general collaborative nature of branding tourist destinations, these dimensions may be considered as instrumental to its overall success.

Cai (2002) explores cooperative destination branding, a theme reflective of the collaboration imperative. Balakrishnan (2009, p.613) refers to five components of the destination branding process and these are:

1. Vision and stakeholder management;
2. Target customer and product portfolio matching;
3. Positioning and differentiation;
4. Communication strategies;
5. Feedback and response management strategies.

More specifically, Pike (2016, p.189) maintains that there are also five steps involved in the development of destination brand identity. These include:

1. The appointment of a brand champion;
2. The identification of the brand community;

3. A destination audit to identify sources of competitive advantage;
4. An analysis of brand image;
5. The production of a brand charter for stakeholders.

Key concepts in branding are reflected in destination brand literature and include destination image and destination personality, as referred to by Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal (2006). Furthermore, Henderson (2000) cautions against a potential loss of 'authenticity' when marketing tourism destinations.

Interestingly, Rojas-Méndez (2013) refers to the nation brand components as: economy; tourism; geography and nature; culture and heritage; society; science and technology; as well as government. Are these matters collectively relevant to destination marketing and, more importantly, can they assist in the formation of destination branding criteria? The literature available on this topic clearly indicates that the interest in destination branding is still expanding (Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2004; Morgan, Pritchard and Pride, 2011; Park and Petrick, 2006; and Pereira, Correia and Schutz, 2012). Given the critical need for collaboration, successful destination marketing and branding the role of stakeholders is also featured in branding research. Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott (2003) are authors who discuss, in particular, destination branding and the role of stakeholders. According to Braun (2012), the management of stakeholders is an important factor regarding the positive effect of any branding strategy. Creating strong brand awareness can become an asset (Aaker, 2005).

A strong focus within destination branding is personality (Murphy, Benckdorff and Moscardo, 2007; Pereira, de Jesus and Schutz, 2014; Usaki and Baloglu, 2011). This could be instrumental to develop an Irish county, or a specific Irish region, like, for example, The Wild Atlantic Way, as a destination brand. Ruzzier et al (2015) draw attention to the significance of sustainability in place branding. Alves, Ballester, Rigall-I-Torrent, Ferreira and Benavente (2017, p.198) note:

'Public investments in environmental education, environmental protection, [public] facilities, as well as enforcement efforts, must be considered in order to increase both market and non-market economic values. A simple but true consideration in this respect is: 'no beaches, no tourists' [sic].'

What is poignant about tourism branding is, perhaps, the inherent dependence in many cases on the existing natural environment. In a coastal county such as Sligo, situated in the North West of Ireland, where a lot of tourism activity is built around natural resources, the issue of environmental protection must be considered at all times and with extreme care and sensitivity.

Collaborative Modelling of Destination Branding (DB)

Evident throughout available literature is the need for collaboration (Fyall, A. and Garrod, 2005 & 2012; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Kastenholz and Pinto, 2011; Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus and Naipaul, 2013; Williams, 2006). Indeed, Bruhn (2003, p.29) maintains that,

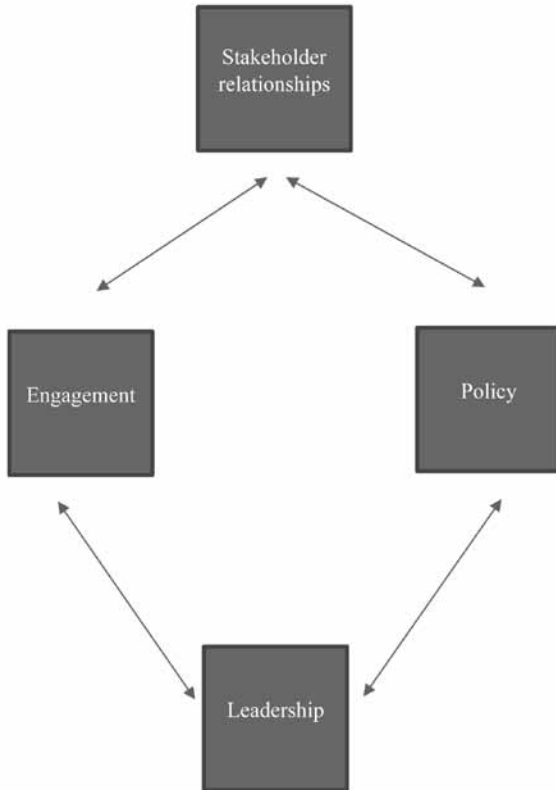
'...the central element of any network is the cooperation between the network members, where cooperation implies joint execution of activities on the provision of products in order to achieve higher profitability and economic efficiency for the members.'

Collaboration is representative of a somewhat complex combination of mutually dependent factors which work best when all parties are in accord. These factors might reflect the views of stakeholders (Bornhorst, Brent, and Sheehan, 2010); relationships (Vangen and Huxham, 2003); stakeholder engagement (Lally, O'Donovan, and Quinlan, 2015); and policy (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999). Collaboration is a:

'...partnership between a cross-section of stakeholders for the protection of mutual benefits and interests, leading to progress and development.'
(Swain and Mishra, 2012, p.725).

Benefits and drawbacks exist when taking a collaborative approach to any destination marketing. Some advantages do exist, according to Fyall and Garrod (2005, pp.289–290). These authors refer specifically to the advantages of collaboration which include: risk reduction; mutually beneficial exchanges; positive economic impacts; counter threats of channel powers; as well as innovative marketing campaigns. Drawbacks include: mistrust and suspicion among collaborating partners, primarily due to governance or inappropriate structures; inability of various sectors within the destination to work together, often due to reasons of a political, economic or even an interpersonal nature; and competition between municipal authorities. Ultimately, what may be required for sustained success is leadership (Zehrer, Raich, Siller, and Tschiederer, 2013). Figure 1 illustrates the complexities involved.

Figure 1: DB collaborative modelling complexities



Given the collaborative nature of destination branding, careful consideration needs to be given to four key pillars. These are: stakeholder relationships; engagement; policy; and leadership. In the opinion of the authors, the successful development of County Sligo as a destination brand for tourism requires a further and more extensive exploration of these four pillars. Zehrer, Raich, Siller and Tschiderer (2013) discuss the need for leadership in destination networks. The governance of any destination brand should clearly document and articulate the following:

- Where is the leadership function?
- What level of engagement is there?
- How do the stakeholder relationships work? And,
- How can policy be articulated, informed and developed?

The Wild Atlantic Way is a tourism brand within the Irish national context. Many local Irish villages and towns already carry out branding activities, which poses an

interesting research question regarding scale: where should tourism brand levels actually be focused? Jeuring (2016, p.65) suggests that,

‘...the ‘intraregional’ perspective of tourism and its societal dynamics have, for a long time, remained largely overlooked.’

An exploration of the approach to this theory, currently adopted by County Sligo and, specifically, in relation to the Wild Atlantic Way, could provide useful insights towards destination branding in the region.

County Sligo in Context

County Sligo is located in the North West of Ireland, situated between counties Donegal, Leitrim and Mayo. There is an especially rich heritage of literature in County Sligo. In particular, and perhaps most notably, the region is synonymous with the Nobel Prize winning Irish author and poet, William Butler Yeats, who had a strong and direct association with the area. Yeats wrote extensively about Sligo; indeed, the entire region had a huge influence on his work. The local authority, Sligo County Council, adopted a phrase taken directly from one of Yeats’ poems, as an apt description of the county, ‘Land of Heart’s Desire’. The county’s capital town, Sligo, takes the Irish form of its name from the river Garavogue which meanders through the town centre. The Irish word for Sligo is ‘*Sligeach*’, literally meaning: the shelly river, or river of shells. The southern part of County Sligo is internationally famous for its traditional Irish music, with many world-renowned traditional musicians such as Michael Coleman and James Morrison being associated with the area.

Therefore, in terms of attracting tourists, County Sligo offers visitors a wide selection indeed of Irish cultural and activity-based holiday events and destinations. In recent years, surfing has become one of the most internationally sought after tourist activities in the whole of the North West of Ireland. There is an abundance of natural, archaeological, musical and literary heritage in the area to occupy a variety of tourist pastimes. In addition, County Sligo has, for example, many splendid beaches, lakes, waterfalls, natural woodland and forests. These natural features collectively present excellent opportunities for adventure tourism. The unique and spectacular natural inland landscape of the region, too, boasts its own unique beauty. The mountain, Benbulbin is one of Sligo’s most famous and iconic natural resources, frequently used in advertising campaigns throughout Ireland, as well as internationally. Similarly, nearby Knocknarea, which annually attracts hundreds of hikers and visitors, is a visually striking hill, at the summit of which is a large cairn associated with the legendary Irish queen, Medb (Maeve). Sligo is also renowned for its ancient settlements, such as the megalithic tombs at Carrowmore, near Sligo Town and further the south in the county at Carrowkeel. For further insight and valuable information regarding all the diversity that County Sligo can offer in terms of developing a regional tourist destination brand, especially along the Wild Atlantic

Way, the authors direct the reader to the following websites:

<http://www.discoverireland.ie/places-to-go/sligo;>

[https://www.facebook.com/SligoTourism/;](https://www.facebook.com/SligoTourism/)

And: [http://www.sligotourism.ie/.](http://www.sligotourism.ie/)

Even a cursory review of these webpages reveals the veracity of the formerly used tourist advertising message, 'Sligo is Surprising,' and lends credence to the more recent tagline that refers to Sligo as a place that 'sets your spirit free'.

Methodological Approach

This chapter offers a review of collaborative efforts to brand County Sligo as a tourist destination along the Wild Atlantic Way. Various stakeholder organisations are studied with regard to their roles and responsibilities in marketing County Sligo as an effective tourist brand. The methodological approach of this chapter is a literature review with empirical research. De Souza Bispo (2016, p.170) notes that,

'...the increase of academic tourism studies over the last two decades has revealed several epistemological, theoretical, and methodological possibilities.'

A mixed-method design of enquiry, not uncommon in tourism destination research (Palmer and Bejou, 1995), consisted of in-depth interviews along with the use of a tailored research questionnaire. Effectively, this represents a case-study approach which is quite prevalent in tourism research (Haven-Tang and Sedgley, 2014; Jeuring, 2016; Michailidou, Vlachokostas and Moussiopoulos, 2016; Page, Hartwell, Johns, Fyall, Ladkin and Hemingway, 2017; Swanson and DeVereaux, 2017; Zemla, 2014; Valente, Dredge, and Lohmann, 2015).

The use of questionnaires is widely used in tourism research (Paker and Vural, 2016), and in branding research (Kladou and Kehagias, 2014; Li, Robson and Coates, 2014). To this end, research questionnaires were completed by tourism businesses and operators from around the town and county. The 'Marketing Sligo' questionnaire was designed to capture perceptions of how County Sligo is currently being marketed to tourists, as well as to invite suggestions about how future developments of the county, promoting it successfully as a tourist destination, might be best achieved. Tourism product providers were also invited to complete the 'Marketing Sligo' research questionnaire. Due to the nature of the questionnaire, purposive sampling was used for this survey, with names of tourism product providers being selected from an industry list available on the following website: www.discoverireland.ie.

The method used to distribute the research questionnaire was an online survey, using the online Internet platform, www.surveymonkey.com. Prior to distribution to

potential respondents, initial testing was conducted on the questionnaire, in order to ensure that it was fit for purpose and able to deliver the research objectives. A total of 233 tourism product providers were listed on the www.discoverireland.ie website. Using business information from this same website, a database of all tourism providers was compiled. Then, using this database, an email was sent to all these business contacts in February 2017, with an explanation of the overall survey objectives and which contained a link to the online survey. A subsequent reminder email was sent to all contacts one month later, in March 2017. A total of fifty responses were received to the online survey, representing an overall response rate of 21%.

The use of interviews is well documented in tourism studies (Cox, Gyrd-Jones and Gardiner, 2014; Datzira-Masip and Poluzzi, 2014; Pearce, 2015). For the purposes of this research, organisers from various collaborative tourist destination marketing initiatives were interviewed. The survey findings were supported by a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with representatives of collaborative projects, all from County Sligo. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to gain further insight and a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by key stakeholders involved in current collaborative tourist initiatives. Again, testing was conducted on the in-depth interviews in order to make sure the interviews were fit for purpose and able to deliver the research objectives. Non-probability sampling was used during the in-depth interview process which was conducted during February 2017. Following completion of the interviews, a collation and analysis of data took place.

Findings

Sligo's Unique Selling Point

Questionnaire respondents were asked to identify what they believed to be 'Sligo's unique selling point' (USP). After analysing the responses, key emerging categories included: Adventure; Scenery; William Butler (WB) Yeats; Archaeology; Culture; Location; the Wild Atlantic Way; People; Variety on Offer; and the Experience. Scenery was the most mentioned category as being Sligo's primary USP, followed by Adventure and WB Yeats. Culture, Location and the Wild Atlantic Way were also mentioned frequently, along with Variety on Offer and the Experience.

It is evident from the results gleaned from this questionnaire that tourism product providers in Sligo believe that Scenery is Sligo's most significant USP. This is consistent with the literature that addresses the need for careful ecological consideration (Ruzzier et al, 2015; Alves, Ballester, Rigall-I-Torrent, Ferreira and Benavente (2017).

Rating Sligo’s Marketing Efforts to Attract Potential Visitors

Questionnaire respondents were asked how they would rate the current marketing efforts being undertaken to attract potential visitors to Sligo. The results are presented below:

Table 1: Rating of Current Marketing Efforts

Very Poor	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Good	Very Good	Total
4%	16%	28%	36%	10%	4%	2%	
2	8	14	18	5	2	1	50

The majority of respondents believed that current marketing efforts to attract potential visitors to Sligo are Average, with 36% selecting this as their answer. It is also evident from the responses that there is the response are much more negative than positive with regard to current marketing efforts, with Below Average at 28%, Poor at 16% and Very Poor at 4%, making a combined total of 48%. Meanwhile, a total of 16% answered the question positively, with Above Average at 10%, Good at 4% and Very Good at 2%.

How to Market County Sligo Better as a Tourist Destination

Participants were asked for suggestions regarding how to market County Sligo better. Certainly, it was very apparent that the tourism product providers would like County Sligo to increase its promotional and advertising activities, not just in Ireland, but also specifically in Europe and the USA. A need for increased promotion and advertising was mentioned by many respondents. There were also suggestions that it would be advantageous if there was one organisation solely in charge of promoting County Sligo, while there was also interest in the establishment of a networking group for all tourism businesses in the county.

Marketing County Sligo to Potential International Visitors

Participants were asked two questions designed to invite suggestions regarding the marketing of County Sligo to potential international visitors:

- 1) What organisation do they think is currently responsible for marketing County Sligo, specifically to potential international visitors?
- 2) In your opinion, what organisation do you think should be responsible for marketing County Sligo specifically to potential international visitors?

It transpired that 40% of all respondents indicated that they thought Fáilte Ireland is currently responsible for marketing Sligo specifically to potential international visitors, while 32% of all respondents indicated that they believed it was Tourism

Ireland's role to actually do this task. Only 4% of respondents thought it was the current role of the Sligo County Council, while 6% of respondents indicated that they thought it was the role of Sligo Tourism, and 2% of respondents indicated a specialised marketing consultant agency would be advantageous in the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. A further 16 % of respondents answered 'Other' and, on further analysis of the answers in this category, it transpired that 12% referred in their answers to a collaborative approach being a preferred option.

When asked what organisation did they think should be responsible for marketing County Sligo specifically to potential international visitors, questionnaire results were drastically different from the previous question. Only 18% of respondents believed that Fáilte Ireland should be responsible for marketing Sligo specifically to potential international visitors. This represents a significant drop of 22% of respondents from the previous question. At 24%, almost a quarter of all respondents indicated that they felt it was the role of Tourism Ireland. This represents a drop of 8% of respondents from the previous question. Responses suggesting that Sligo County Council should take on the task showed an increase from 4% to 6%, while those responses advocating that the Sligo Chamber of Commerce should be responsible showed an increase from 0% to 6%. Sligo Tourism was also advocated as a tourism promoter and here, responses showed an increase from 6% to 16%. The most significant percentage change in respondents' answers was shown where a specialised tourism marketing consultant agency was proposed by 20% of respondents, up from 2% on the previous question. While 10% of all respondents referred to a collaborative approach, which was down from 12% on the previous question.

Marketing County Sligo to Potential Domestic Visitors

Participants in the research were asked two questions with regards to marketing County Sligo to potential international visitors:

- 1) What organisation do you think is currently responsible for marketing County Sligo, specifically to potential domestic visitors?
- 2) In your opinion, what organisation do they think should be responsible for marketing County Sligo specifically to potential domestic visitors?

Of all the respondents to these questions, 52% indicated that they think Fáilte Ireland is currently responsible for marketing County Sligo specifically to potential domestic visitors. However, 18% of respondents indicated that they felt it was Tourism Ireland's role. Only 2% felt it was the current role of Sligo County Council, while 24% indicated that it was the role of Sligo Tourism, and 0% indicated a network option of both the Sligo Chamber of Commerce and a specialised tourism marketing consultant agency. Four percent of respondents answered 'Other' and, on further analysis of the answers in this category, two percent of respondents referred to a collaborative approach,

with a further two percent responding, 'None of the above' in their answers.

When asked what organisation they thought should be responsible for marketing County Sligo specifically to potential domestic visitors, again results were drastically different from the previous question. Only 20% of respondents felt that Fáilte Ireland should be responsible for marketing County Sligo specifically to potential domestic visitors. This represents a significant drop of 32% in responses to the previous question.

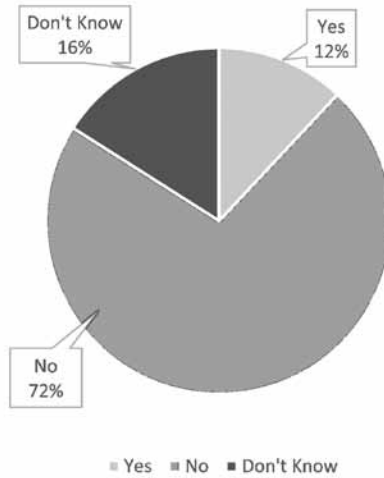
Six percent of all respondents indicated that they thought it was the role of Tourism Ireland. This represents a drop of 12% of responses from the previous question. Those respondents advocating for an increased role for Sligo County Council in tourism marketing for Sligo saw an increase from 2% up to 10%, while suggestions for the Sligo Chamber of Commerce saw an increase from 0% to 12%. Meanwhile, Sligo Tourism remained the same at 24%. A specialised marketing consultant agency was chosen by 10% of respondents, which is an increase from 0% in responses to the previous question, while 18% of respondents chose 'Other', which is an increase from 4% on the previous question. On further analysis of the answers in this category, 16% refer to a collaborative approach which is up from 2% on the previous question.

Overall then, it is quite clear that respondents feel that both Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland should not be solely responsible for marketing County Sligo specifically to potential domestic visitors; that rather, it should be orchestrated from a local level with all the relevant local bodies playing a bigger role with regards to marketing County Sligo to the domestic market. In available literature, Pearce (2015) is a string advocate for the consideration of structural effectiveness needs. The fragmented response may indicate that such structural development in County Sligo may be pre-emergent.

Destination Marketing Officer in County Sligo

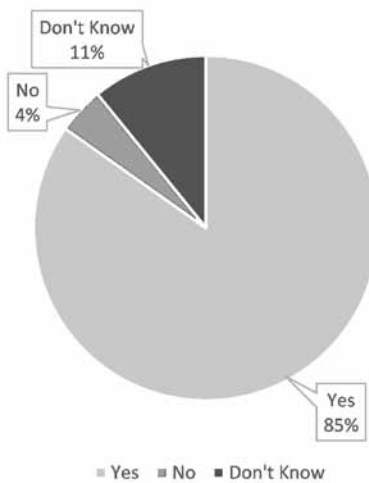
Respondents were asked whether or not they were aware of any Destination Marketing Officer (DMO) specifically appointed to market Sligo. The responses received showed that 12% indicated 'Yes' and 72% indicated 'No,' while 16% said, 'Don't Know'. The results are displayed in figure 3:

Figure 3: Awareness of DMO in County Sligo



Respondents were asked, in a follow up question, whether or not they would support the appointment of a Destination Marketing Officer (DMO) for Sligo. Just under 85% indicated 'Yes' and just over 4% indicated 'No,' while just under 11% said, 'Don't Know'. The results are displayed in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Support for the Appointment of a DMO

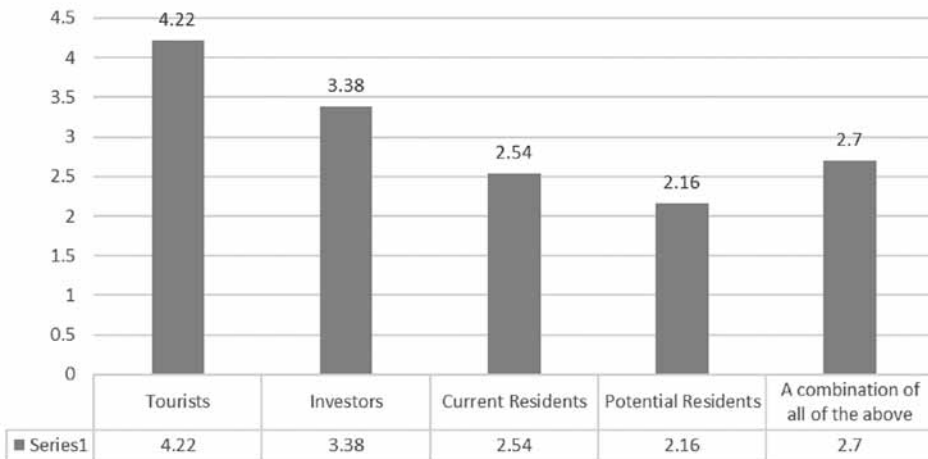


Respondents were then asked for their opinions regarding the best organisation within which should a Destination Marketing Officer (DMO) for Sligo might be based. In response, 26% respondents indicated that a DMO should be based in Sligo Tourism; 14% indicated they felt the DMO should be based within Fáilte Ireland, while 4% of respondents mentioned Tourism Ireland; 16% chose Sligo County Council; 10% chose Sligo Chamber of Commerce; and 12% selected a specialised marketing consultant agency. 20% of respondents answered 'Other' and, upon further analysis, there was no emergent theme from the respondents with answers varying from: *'New blood – preferably successful in own field [sic];* to: *'I don't care but we need them on place ASAP [sic].*

Target Audience for Marketing County Sligo

Participants were asked to rank (from 1–5) which target group should be prioritised with regards to marketing County Sligo. The target group comprised: tourists; investors; current residents; potential residents; or a combination of all of the previous mentioned. The resulting weighted average out of 5 shows that, with 4.22, 'Tourists' ranked highest, while 'Investors' was next at 3.38. 'Current Residents' ranked 2.54, and 'Potential Residents' scored the lowest with 2.16. A combination of all the categories ranked third overall with 2.7. The results can be seen below in figure 5:

Figure 5: Target Group for Marketing Sligo



This indicates that marketing and branding efforts should primarily target tourists. This is interesting as, throughout available literature, there are extensive discussions on branding to various stakeholders. The reasoning for this might be based on what

Michailidou, Vlachokostas, and Moussiopoulos (2016) refer to as the socio-economic benefits. As documented in the literature review, brand community plays a key role (Banerjee, S. and Banerjee, 2015; Breivik and Thorbjørnsen, 2008; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002; Muinz Jr. and O’Guinn, 2001). In the context of the County Sligo region, further investigation is place branding versus destination branding is merited. Nonetheless, this response shows strong support for destination branding aimed directly at tourists.

The collaborative imperative

In relation to marketing County Sligo as a tourist destination, respondents were asked to describe how important they consider collaboration among stakeholders to be. Results are shown below in Table 2:

Table 2: The importance of collaboration among stakeholders

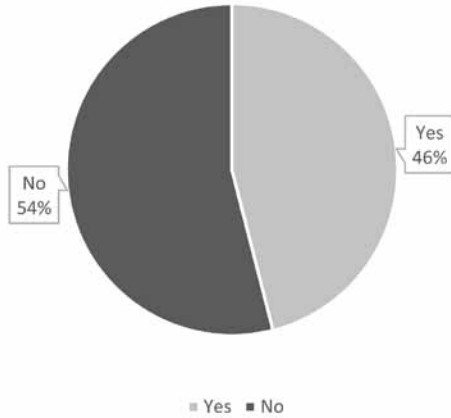
Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important	Total
18%	0%	2%	28%	52%	
9	0	1	14	26	50

The majority of respondents felt that, in relation to marketing County Sligo as a tourist destination, collaboration amongst stakeholders is ‘Very Important’ with 52% of respondents selecting this answer. 28% of respondents believed that collaboration is ‘Important,’ with only 2% selecting the ‘Neutral’ option. 18% of respondents chose ‘Very Unimportant,’ while 0% selected ‘Unimportant.’ It is evident from the responses that participants considered the importance of collaboration to be an imperative, with a total of 80% responding that it was either ‘Important’ or ‘Very Important.’ This finding alone largely supports what is articulated throughout available literature: the importance of collaboration (Bruhn, 2003; Fyall, A. and Garrod, 2005 & 2012; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Kastenholz and Pinto, 2011; Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus and Naipaul, 2013; Williams, 2006).

Branding County Sligo

Participants were asked whether or not they were aware of any current brand which is marketing County Sligo as a tourist destination. The results are displayed below, in Figure 6:

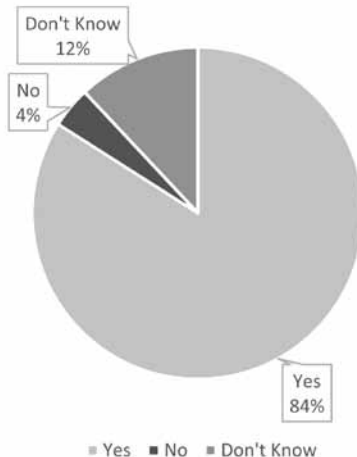
Figure 6: Awareness of any Current Brand Destination for Marketing County Sligo



As shown above, 54% of respondents answered ‘No,’ while 46% respondents answered ‘Yes.’ Current efforts in brand destination marketing for County Sligo are clearly not successful when 54% of respondents claim not to be aware of a destination County Sligo brand.

Participants were then asked whether or not they would support the development of a County Sligo brand. The results are displayed below in Figure 7:

Figure 7: Do you Support the Development of a County Sligo Brand?



84% of participants responded ‘Yes,’ with 4% indicating ‘No,’ and 12% choosing ‘Don’t Know.’ This finding is very positive. Nonetheless, it does indicate that substantial work remains to be carried out in the area of developing an effective County Sligo brand.

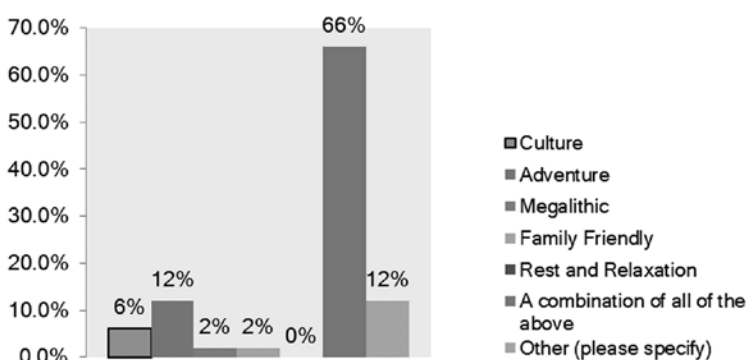
Participants were asked what personality traits they considered might constitute a County Sligo brand. The key personality traits which respondents identified in this regard included the following: Exciting, Spirited, Adventurous and Friendly. Respondents also identified additional characteristics including Relaxed, Mystical, Authentic, Inspiring, Creative, Surprising, Charming and Wild.

Respondents identified the private sector, Sligo Tourism and Fáilte Ireland as being the key stakeholders of a Sligo brand, while also identifying Fáilte Ireland, Sligo Tourism and Sligo County Council as organisations that could potentially assist with building a successful and effective County Sligo brand.

Participants were asked for their ideas regarding critical success factors for building a successful brand. Respondents identified: Collaboration, Cooperation and Funding as being critical success factors for the building of a successful brand.

Participants were then asked for their opinions regarding key components of a County Sligo brand. Respondents had a choice between Culture, Adventure, Megalithic, Family-friendly, Rest and Relaxation (RnR); a combination of all of the above; or Other. 66% of respondents indicated that a County Sligo brand should consist of a combination of all of the above categories, with 12% selecting Adventure. 6% of respondents selected Culture, while 2% chose Megalithic. 2% of respondents selected Family-friendly. 0% of participants selected RnR. 12% of respondents selected Other and, upon further analysis of the answers within the category, it was found that 2% indicated Scenery, while Adventure was mentioned by another 4%, and a combination also mentioned by further 6% as being a key component. The results can be seen below in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Key Components of a Sligo brand



This finding shows a lack of clarity with regard to brand definition. While many chose a combination of key factors, from a branding perspective it would be useful to examine this in more detail. A concern raised by the results of this research concerns the lack of clarity about brand meaning with regard to County Sligo branding. In

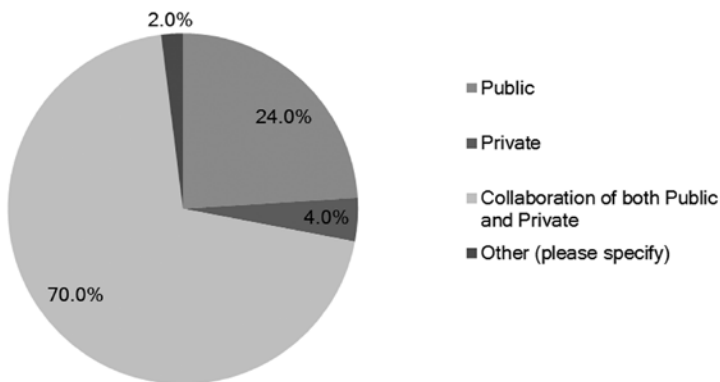
available literature, Rashid and Ghose (2015, p.5) advises that,

‘...the brand of a product or service needs to have its own unique identity that makes it stand out [from competitors] and be recognizable.’

The development of a unique County Sligo brand needs to carefully consider this advice; if a brand lacks clear definition, then problems may occur at a basic level and its overall success is severely undermined. The findings of this research suggest that brand parameters in the Sligo context are at an early developmental stage. Further research is recommended to address issues of brand image (Tasci and Gartner, 2007; Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal, 2006; Hankinson, 2004; Agapito, do Valle and da Costas Mendes, 2013); identity (Marine-Roig, 2015; Kennedy and Guzmán, 2016; Konecnik and Go, 2007); as well as personality (Usaki and Baloglu, 2011; Murphy, Moscardo and Benckdorff, 2007; Pereira, de Jesus and Schutz, 2014; Murphy, Benckdorff and Moscardo, 2007).

Respondents were next asked for suggestions regarding how a Sligo marketing initiative might be funded. Results are illustrated below in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Funding a County Sligo Marketing Initiative



70% of participants indicated that they believed that a County Sligo marketing initiative might be funded through a collaboration of both Public and Private funding. 24% of respondents indicated that any such initiative should be funded by public funding, while 4% suggested that it should be funded from the private sector. 2% selected ‘Other’ and, on further analyses of the answers, it was suggested that it might be funded through a Government Department. This shows that stakeholders recognise that there is a definite need for resource in order to successfully develop a County Sligo destination brand.

The authors of this research consider that a broader study into creating a destination brand along the Wild Atlantic Way would be more beneficial if members of collaborative initiatives from around County Sligo were interviewed. The initiatives range from voluntary initiatives to public/private collaborations. The respondents in this research claimed that each of their collaborative initiatives was born out of necessity and that public bodies were not doing sufficient work within each initiative's area. The initiatives were supported by most businesses in their geographic location and funding for these initiatives were primarily dependent on a collaboration of public and private, with just one initiative being completely privately run. Each initiative researched stated that somebody within their organisation had taken on a leadership role, with all identifying a leadership role as having evolved organically, except for one initiative which specifically hired a person for the role. Particular roles were assigned within each initiative to individuals who had both an interest and a specific skill that matched each role.

Participants identified two key skills required within a collaborative initiative which were: Networking and Management. These skills were identified as being important because respondents claimed that tasks within their initiative needed to be managed by individuals and, in order to manage expectations of members supporting the initiative, all members need to be kept informed.

Respondents considered their ongoing initiatives to be successful and measured this not just through tourist foot-fall, but a combination of foot-fall, so-called 'bed nights', and an overall increased level of awareness. Respondents also identified a 'willingness to work together' and a 'shared desire' as factors to enhance the success of each initiative. Some negative downsides included stimulating wider members' engagement within the initiative, along the constant struggle surrounding funding.

In order to maintain continued success, respondents identified initiatives in some key areas of interest, primarily surrounding the size of working groups of individuals involved. Respondents agreed that keeping the individual working group small was vital to ongoing success and, furthermore, that more productivity and the overall achievement and successful completion of tasks worked better within smaller groups. Respondents also identified that there must be a willingness for businesses to work together and maintain their focus over time if overall success is to be achieved.

Respondents believed that collaboration initiatives have a tendency to be cyclical, that they go through phases of highs and lows, but they all agreed that collaboration will play a highly significant role in the future development of County Sligo as a successful tourist destination along the Wild Atlantic Way.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that there is support for the creation of a destination brand for County Sligo along the Wild Atlantic Way. Destination branding knowledge and discourse, such as the advice of Pereira, Correia and Schutz (2012) and Park and Petrick (2006), needs to be further embedded in the County Sligo brand development story. Previous marketing and branding efforts do not appear to have had a fundamental impact on the overall development of the destination brand for County Sligo.

On a positive note, stakeholders have shown that they support the marketing and development of the County Sligo brand as a tourist destination. From a research perspective, County Sligo does represent a rich area for further investigation in this regard. Available positive support with which to build such a brand has a great deal of success potential, given the environmental, cultural and social heritage of the area. In the authors' opinion, a challenge that might warrant further clarification is the exact nature of, and a clearly defined, USP for the brand. In terms of structure and governance, a discussion needs to take place with which to harness the optimum tourism potential of the area. Ultimately, this requires strong, unambiguous leadership to achieve success. County Sligo, as a tourist destination brand along the Wild Atlantic Way, has not delivered in a consistent or ambitious manner, to the extent that other destinations have. County Sligo as a destination brand along the Wild Atlantic Way requires further exploration of leadership, governance, engagement and stakeholder relationships.

Research Implications

- How a destination brand is defined in the context of County Sligo, with particular attention to exploiting the Wild Atlantic Way, requires much further exploration. If County Sligo as a tourist destination is a composite of several factors, there is a risk that a dilution of brand strength potential could occur.
- There is also a need to further research the role of leadership within the context of the development of a County Sligo tourist destination brand along the Wild Atlantic Way. There is currently no clear leadership to drive this development forward.
- Inter-regional collaboration also requires further study.
- Further policy development could serve the interests of stakeholders in their efforts to support and build local destination brands.
- Funding and resource requirements would benefit from further exploration too, in order to ensure the most effective balance between public and private investment as well as the overall delivery of 'value for money'.

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PART 4: TOURISM PEDAGOGY

CHAPTER 16

Lecturers' Perceptions of e-Portfolios as a Means of Assessing Hospitality Student Work Placement/Internship

Ciarán ÓhAnnracháin

Patrice Duffy

Introduction

The Irish economy requires an education system that ensures the workforce can be educated, re-educated and upskilled to a level that will be able to respond quickly and innovatively to the challenges faced in the knowledge economy. Higher Education (HE) has seen a dramatic shift in focus toward the provision of work-ready graduates and, as a result, many programmes of study include a Work Placement and/or Internship as part of the overall learning experience. A Work Placement/ Internship module is a compulsory component of many programmes in third-level education and, within the Irish HE sector, this is set to increase by 25% by the year 2021 (DES, 2016). The challenge for educational institutions is to provide formal structures and frameworks to ensure that students benefit from a period of Work Placement and/or Internship, while ensuring that the Work Placement/Internship meets the needs of the student, the employer, the education institution and the accreditation programme.

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education has identified 'Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning' as its theme for 2016 to 2018. This theme encourages the engagement and empowerment of students in

the assessment processes across all programme provision in the university and non-university sectors of Irish higher education.

The effective assessment of students undertaking a Work Placement and/or Internship can result in some difficulties, because of the inherent variations in Work Placements and Internships undertaken by students (Brown, Bull and Pendlebury, 1997). Furthermore, some of these difficulties can be defined as the lack of control over the learning environment, as the learning is taking place away from the educational institute. Traditionally, Work Placements and Internships were assessed by the completion of a written piece of work, which was summative in nature and not conducive to on-going reflective analysis.

The academic assessment of learners has presented many ongoing challenges. Alam et al (2015) identify the progressive introduction of various educational technologies as a means of overcoming some of these challenges. The use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) has grown exponentially in recent times. Innovative digital technology has become a feature of the higher education landscape and its widespread utilisation is now frequently used a mechanism for learner engagement and empowerment. There has been a growing movement in the Irish HE sector towards more integrative learning, with e-portfolios have emerged as an effective learning and assessment tool resulting in a move away from the more traditional paper-based report. Used efficiently, e-portfolios have the potential to assess learning outcomes and to demonstrate a learner's proficiency in professional competencies. E-portfolios are defined by Alam et al (2015) as:

'...a digital collection of individual and group demonstrations, resources, and accomplishments, team work etc. via online or offline [access].' (Alam et al (2015).

This chapter presents the results of a scoping study, which examines how hospitality lecturers perceive e-portfolios as a means of assessing student placements within the hospitality industry. The literature review addresses the following: the perceived value of Work Placements / Internships; the modernisation of higher-level education; and the use of learning technologies, namely e-portfolios in assessing learners on Work Placement.

Literature Review

As the boundaries between the educational setting and the workplace become more fluid, the differences between the business and academic environments are becoming less distinct and, thus, the need to learn and grow in an integrated manner is becoming equally important across both settings. Hospitality organisations are now focusing on capturing and utilising student learning which happens in the workplace, which also helps in knowledge-management, meaning that it helps the hospitality

organisation to learn from previous and current employees. Academic institutions tend to engage more pro-actively with employers when designing new programmes or re-designing existing ones. The concept of graduate attributes has become a key driver of programme design, where educational institutions re-orient their programmes to produce graduates with particular qualities, characteristics and skills.

The Value of the Work Placement / Internship

Work Placement / Internship is an integral part of curricula in many hospitality programmes, as it provides an opportunity for learners to apply academic theory and concepts they have studied to an organisational setting, whilst continuing to learn new skills from industry professionals. Studies have shown that students who are involved in practical training as part of their course, have an increased likelihood of finding employment than their counterparts without relevant work experience (Wan, Yang and Su, 2013; European Commission, 2014; Tomlinson and Holmes, 2016). There are numerous benefits for learners who undertake a Work Placement / Internship. These include the fact that students learn how the industry works; how to apply practical skills they learned in college; and how to develop their own professional skills. It is regarded as an extremely valuable learning tool (Kim and Park, 2013; Dredge, Airey and Gross, 2015). Not only is this synthesis of theory and practice important for the immediate programme requirements, but it also lays the foundation for an approach to lifelong learning with which the individual learner may engage over the course of his or her career. Work Placements / Internships are, by their very nature, experiential learning opportunities. It has been recognised that 'work' provides the opportunity for learners to learn in many different ways, and that all workers are involved in learning (Schmidt and Gibbs, 2009; Scheers, Solomon, Boud and Rooney, 2010). The key task for educators is to effectively assess the student learning that has taken place.

'Work-based learning will only work if the work environment is capable of supporting learner-managed, reflective learning at an appropriate level.'
(Lester and Costley, 2010).

The Work Placement / Internship period may also present some challenges for both educators and students alike. Educators are faced with the challenge to improve the opportunity for the learner to actually learn, to encourage reflective practice in their own learning and to instil an understanding of the need for continuous professional development (CPD) (Wang, Cai, Yang and Qu, 2015; Dunne and Ryan, 2013). The learner may have feelings of isolation (Chow and Suen, 2001), as well as feelings of stress (Chiang, Birtch and Kwan, 2010). McGugan and Peacock (2005) feel that learning technologies are an effective tool to support and add value to a period of Work Placement learning, making available new and important tools that can be beneficial to both the learner and the lecturer.

Learning Technologies and Pedagogy

The European Commission Report on the Modernisation of Higher Level Education in Europe (2014) advocates that all staff in higher education institutes should have the skills and attributes to use new technologies. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 (Government of Ireland, 2016), has the following vision:

'Ireland will be a place where the effective use of technology will support talent and skills provision, grow enterprise and enhance the lives of all within society.'
(Government of Ireland, 2016).

It is anticipated that this will be realised by involving learners and educators, thereby systematically evaluating learner outcomes and the active participation of all. Similarly, The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Hunt, 2011) asserts that the Irish higher education learning environment should be equipped with state-of-the-art learning resources and e-Learning facilities.

Technology is an integral part of everyday life for today's generation of learners. Clarke and Enyon (2009), draw attention to this fact by acknowledging that today's body of learners 'came of age' using technology and online social media sites and, that for them, engaging in technology is a natural process, highlighting that a digital portfolio 'speaks their language'. The prevalence of technology in the learning environment enables high levels of connectivity between the learner and the lecturers, proving most beneficial for periods when the learner is on Work Placement in the hospitality industry. Advances in technology continue to enrich the education landscape, increasing the potential of a virtual learning environment to support learning and assessment.

Since technology provides such a potentially powerful infrastructure, emerging technologies are allowing educational institutions, often driven by academics and students, to provide education in a significantly different manner using Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). In many instances, business has also worked with technology in this way. This, in turn, often drives the e-learning agenda which is helping educational institutions to ensure the currency of their teaching material and to adapt to change, quickly and effectively (Barrett, 2012). Together, educational institutions and business partners are focused more on the learning process and its impact on competitiveness, organisational structure and efficiency, as well as being cognisant of employee welfare and development.

Pedagogy is fundamental to the development of any educational programme and, indeed, is considered to be a key determinant in the structure and elements of the programme of study as well as the methods employed to teach that programme. All elements of e-learning bring with them opportunities to engage with students in ways that may not have been possible before. It is imperative that these methods improve the quality of learning and justify the investment required in

the set-up of a virtual learning environment. In the past ten years, there has been a significant growth in research and resource development in support of e-Portfolio usage. In 2009, the Association of Authentic, Experiential, and Evidence-Based Learning (AAEEBL) was established, which hosts annual conferences in the US and Canada. Then, in 2011, the International Journal of e-Portfolio (IJeP) was founded, which provides a vehicle for the effective dissemination of work by researchers and practitioners. In Ireland, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning has two core tenets of its national project: 'Building Digital Capacity' and 'Partnership and Collaboration'. The continuing proliferation of vendors and products attests to the growing market for e-Portfolio platforms, making this research both timely and necessary.

Curriculum design and development will continue to be dependent on the historical context in which curricula are developed. As a result of changing economic factors, both for individuals and economies alike, many enterprises and educational institutions are now inclined to move away from a total reliance on traditional on-campus programme delivery, opting instead to integrate diverse elements of e-learning. One of the key drivers in this change is the demand from the hospitality industry for a well-educated, flexible and adaptable workforce, which has re-conceptualised the student experience of college education as a process of lifelong learning, with individuals balancing work with continued up-skilling, re-skilling or CPD.

Assessment Of / FOR / AS learning

At the pinnacle of modern curriculum design are learning outcomes: statements of what the learner should have achieved by the end of the programme. Monitoring and judging whether or not these learning outcomes are achieved, has traditionally been the function of the educator. The National Forum (2017) states,

'...the involvement of students as partners throughout the assessment process is a defining feature of authentic assessment.'

Assessment is considered to be an integral part of the student's learning process and, yet, there are many perspectives on the effective assessment of learners. According to Swaffield (2011), 'authentic assessment' is a form of assessment which involves students conducting 'real-world' tasks in meaningful contexts. Authentic Assessment is concerned with the relevancy of the assessment and relevancy is key to student engagement (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, 2017). Therefore, pedagogical innovations such as the move towards formative assessment are of significant importance here, specifically as these assessments monitor learning and provide the learner with feedback throughout the entire learning period, in order to support assessment as an effective means of engaging the learner. Consequently, learners are empowered in their learning and assessment.

Ozgun (2011), suggests that formative assessment is gaining importance as a means of correcting errors throughout the education process, and that e-Portfolios are a means of assessing the learning as a 'meaningful whole'. There is much consensus on the value of e-Portfolios for the purpose of formative assessment (Miller and Morgaine, 2009).

The formative approach to assessment is a technique involving engagement in a process of continuous improvement, which complements the current focus on quality in education. The on-going evaluation process and continuous improvement perspective, builds a professional learning environment putting in the centre the learner and the learning (Ellerani and Mendoza, 2013). Educational institutions are benchmarked in numerous ways. Completion rates and quality are two such measures. Enyon and Gambino (2014) suggest e-Portfolio initiatives could play key roles in both these areas.

In many countries, the recognition of work-based learning is benchmarked against the vocational and academic standards which underpin formal education and training in institutions offering vocational or higher education and training. As academic structures are created using the concept of credits earned, for example the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), so too does the formal process of recognising work-based learning work along the same structures. Usually, both work-based learning (WBL) and recognition of prior learning (RPL) are used to gain full or partial exemptions from a vocational or academic programme, so that employees gains a recognised academic qualification as benchmarked against a national framework of qualifications. In this process, 'credit' becomes the principal term for recognising learning supported by credit inputs, forms of credit and credit processes.

E-Portfolios in Assessing Work Placement / Internship

Enhancement of Work Placement / Internship as a learning experience has been investigated (Virolainen, Stenstrom and Kantola, 2011; Alias and Luanan, 2017). The supervision and assessment of a learner's Work Placement / Internship are two factors critical to the overall success of the process. Technology-enhanced assessment methods can play a critical role in addressing this issue.

'[An] e-Portfolio application is one of the applications used as an effective media and tool for the assessment of the education and teaching process, student success and student competence for a specific course or subject.'
(Ozgun, 2011).

Introducing an e-portfolio system as an assessment tool can offer advantages to the assessment process, as it is, as an authentic assessment system more functional, active and with faster participation (Baird, Gamble and Sidebotham, 2016; Ziya, 2011; Miller and Morgaine, 2009).

E-portfolios have gained increasing traction, recognition, and influence among educators worldwide as they have the potential to enhance and promote deeper learning (Khan, 2014; Miller and Morgaine, 2009). Indeed, Luchoomun, McLuckie and van Wesel (2010), believe that the growing importance and utilisation of e-Portfolios is directly linked to their potential to promote collaborative learning. Educators have found that using e-Portfolios was helpful in the development of critical thinking and knowledge construction (Blasche, 2014). Furthermore, e-Portfolios can complement learning activities and add value to the overall learning experience and assessment process, if incorporated in a holistic way. E-Portfolios have moved beyond a traditional purpose to one that more deeply facilitates and enhances student learning, capturing information to showcase employability skills, enabling continuous assessment and evidencing professional skills (Roberts, Maor and Herrington, 2016; Morgan and Dyer, 2015; Enyon and Gambino, 2014; Miller and Morgaine, 2009). The learner develops skills and capabilities whilst remaining at the centre of the process, making this approach a substantial contribution to the area of overall student assessment.

'The implementation of e-portfolios promotes efficacious pedagogical practices.' (Ng, Shroff and Lim, 2013).

The pedagogical approach of the application of technology to the area of learner assessment can be achieved by using e-Portfolios. A learning portfolio is an evidence-based tool that documents student work and engages the student in a process of continuous reflection and collaborative analysis of learning (Zubizarreta, 2004). E-Portfolios have been codified and classified in different ways, predominantly in terms of how they are designed and developed, implemented and evaluated. An e-Portfolio may be potentially used by students to store personal, educational, career, skills, work experience, certification and rewards information in an electronic format. These items of information held in an e-Portfolio are referred to as 'artefacts'. The main role of the e-Portfolio is to provide a tool for the evaluation of learners' skills and abilities through a process of authentic assessment, as well as to help them prepare for career development opportunities by the creation of a multimedia résumé and a virtual identity (Jenson and Treuer, 2014). While portfolios are used for a wide variety of purposes, the main objective is to provide a measure of what the learner has been able to achieve throughout the process, as well as providing an indication of their potential skills and abilities.

There have been many attempts to develop a typology of portfolios. Three main types have emerged from the literature: Process Portfolios, Showcase Portfolios and Assessment Portfolios (Abrami and Barrett, 2015; Greenburg, 2004; Barrett, 2012; Smith and Tillema, 2003; Voigt and Sanderson, 2010).

Traditionally, educational institutions seemed to focus on the showcase portfolio approach (Barrett, 2012), and in particular, disciplines where classical portfolios were

used to showcase work, such as Art and Design. As the use of portfolios expanded in education, the use of process portfolios increased, particularly in areas which are highly structured and in which students are required to undertake a series of pre-determined processes and procedures during their learning, such as science, medicine and nursing. The broader adoption of portfolios as a tool to support learning and assessment across a broad spectrum of disciplines has seen the emergence of a more learner-centred approach as well as the use of learning and assessment portfolios.

Schmidt and Gibbs (2009) acknowledge that a stable partnership between work organisations and the educational institute are critical to the success of WBL. For many industries, the recognition of skills and competencies developed in the workplace has become formalised, either through a process of WBL, RPL and / or Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL), as well as professional recognition, which is a key component in the process of CPD. In an era of increased regard for academic credentials and in a climate where employees regularly change jobs, employers and careers, the formalisation of skills and competencies act as critical processes for individuals, employees and professionals in gaining recognition for occupational and professional knowledge, skills and competencies, acquired through multiple-learning means and occupational contexts.

Each process requires the collection of evidence and has purposes related to the public recognition of learning, knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through a variety of means (formally, non-formally and informally) and across a range of contexts and spaces (Cameron, 2012). In practice, this means that the collation of such evidence is based on the individual's journey throughout a period or periods of employment, and may be used as a basis for gaining or changing employment, promotion or career enhancement.

The development of an effective method of assessment for a learner on placement is crucial, as the educator is not present to observe and evaluate the learner's performance. Weimer (2010) acknowledges that the challenge is to find assessment mechanisms that complement the assessment of work experience. Therefore, any technique which enables effective measurement of the learning outcomes would be invaluable to the learner and the lecturer. Guile and Griffiths (2001) state that learners need to be encouraged to conceptualise their experiences in different ways and that the role of the educator is to create 'pedagogic spaces' to facilitate this happening. In using e-Portfolios learners are empowered to provide evidence of the activities they are involved in and can reflect on their own experiences (Ziya, 2011). An e-Portfolio application is, therefore, ideal when the learner is in the work environment, or perhaps a considerable distance away from the educational institution. The virtual learning environment is also a platform for improved communication between the student, the lecturer and their peers, helping to counteract any potential feelings of isolation a learner may experience whilst on placement.

Green et al (2014) believe that e-Portfolios are an authentic form of assessment ideally suited to evaluating application of theory in practice. Similarly, Stefani et al (2007) also view e-Portfolios as a potential innovative method of evidencing professional development and practice. VanTartwijk and Driessen (2009) feel that e-Portfolios are ideal for documenting workplace-based learning and reflecting on the experience, enabling learners to demonstrate their competence. Miller and Morgaine (2009) state that,

'...e-Portfolios provide a rich resource for both students and faculty to learn about achievement of important outcomes over time, make connections among disparate parts of the curriculum, gain insights leading to improvement, and develop identities as learners or as facilitators of learning.' (Miller and Morgaine, 2009)

Similarly, Enyon and Gambino state that,

'...by supporting a richer view of learning, encouraging a learning-centred institutional conversation, and catalysing broad institutional change in structure and culture, e-Portfolios can help colleges become more integrated and adaptive learning organisations.' (Enyon and Gambino, 2014).

A study as far back as the year 2001, when learning technology was initially adopted in education, the overwhelming majority of staff were favourable to technology becoming a part of their teaching and learning strategy (Steel and Hudson, 2001).

Research Methodology

The purpose of the study was to address one of the main aims of the 2016 NFTL funding call, by undertaking,

'...an evidence-based exploration of how technology can be used effectively and efficiently for assessment of/for/as learning across the Irish higher education sector.' (NFTL, 2016).

This paper presents the results of one strand of a research study funded through the above programme. The research comprised a three-stage design process. The initial framework for the research was proposed by the researchers, who have been active in managing, co-ordinating and assessing Work Placements / Internships for a number of years at an Irish institute of technology. Following the initial proposal, a focus group was convened with participants from four other Irish institutes of technology to discuss and review this, along with the other strands of the overall research project. The views and insights of the focus group were used to inform the questionnaire design.

To achieve the objective of the study, hospitality lecturers in the institutes of technology were invited to respond to an on-line questionnaire. The on-line

questionnaire model was selected as it is a suitable method to test hypotheses about attitudes. The questionnaire contained both structured and open-ended questions. As the institutes are geographically dispersed, the online method was highly convenient and expeditious (Buchanan and Hvizsak, 2009). To access data from the ten Irish institutes of technology currently offering academic programmes in Hospitality, Tourism and Events and Culinary Arts, the questionnaire was distributed via the heads of department who, in turn, identified the academic staff in each institution who are directly engaged with the Placement / Internship process. Given the small sample size, the researchers' acknowledge that the present study does not presume a definitive representation of the findings. Instead, the purpose of the research is exploratory in nature, conducted in an effort to uncover divergent views, opportunities and gaps in adopting a standardised approach to e-Portfolios for productive learning, as well as to suggest some feasible strategies that may address the divergence of views and the gaps in implementation.

Across the participating institutes, it was estimated that approximately 50 individuals were directly involved in the Placement / Internship process. There were 27 responses to the questionnaire, with all respondents indicating involvement in the Placement / Internship process. Of the respondents, 61% have been in their current position for over 10 years, with only 13% *in situ* for less than two years. The breakdown between Hospitality / Event lecturers (36%), Culinary Arts lecturers (40%) and Tourism / Sports / Spa / Leisure (24%), closely reflects the numbers of students enrolled in each discipline. The people responsible for Placement / Internship were identified as a Placement Officer (67.7%) and a Lecturer (33.3%).

Data Collection

For data collection purposes, Placements were defined as 'Summer Work', usually of three months duration after Year 1 and/or Year 2 of academic study. Internships were defined as a structured training programme in lieu of a period of academic study, usually one semester, but in some cases over two semesters.

The stages at which Placements / Internships occur were identified as being: in First Year (52.4%), in Second Year (28.6%) and in Third Year (19%), which is reflective of the breakdown of student numbers by programme types to include sub-degree, two-year, National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 6 Certificates; first-cycle, three-year, NFQ Level 7 degrees and four-year, NFQ Level 8 honours degrees, with student numbers reducing in subsequent years of study.

It was found that the length of Placements / Internships under review varied in length from three months (73%) and six months (27%), again reflecting the concentration of students undertaking placements at lower levels of study. The credits awarded to students on Placements ranged from ≤ 5 (39%), ≤ 10 (33%) and ≥ 10 (28%), while credits awarded to Internships range from ≤ 5 (12.5%), ≤ 10 (25%), ≤ 20

(25%) and ≤ 30 (37.5%). Placements and Internships are graded Pass / Fail (33%) or as a percentage (67%).

Findings and Discussion

This study sought to explore hospitality lecturer perceptions to the use of e-Portfolios as an assessment method for students on Work Placement. It was found that lecturers view e-Portfolios positively and that e-Portfolios are a useful tool for assessing Work Placements and Internships. The research data illustrated a gap in the knowledge where there was a lack of consistency in principles, practices and procedures adopted across the institutes. A major factor affecting the paradigm shift in post-secondary education demographics, in particular, is the proliferation of learning technologies, where online learning communities have begun replacing the traditional student body to a greater or lesser extent.

A significant majority either agreed or strongly agreed (96%) that Placement / Internships are an integral part of third level programmes. Formal preparation was deemed essential by 93% of respondents, while 81% indicated that lecturers have a role the process. While 48% of academic staff agreed that students engage more in class after completing a Placement, 92% either agree or strongly agree that Placement / Internship is a valuable learning resource to complement the overall academic content of the programme.

Currently, 63% of students submit paper-based Placement / Internship portfolios, while 37% use e-Portfolios. Where students use e-Portfolios, lecturers uniformly agree that students receive adequate training on the use of e-Portfolios, while 91% of lecturers using e-Portfolios consider them to be an effective form of assessment, and 50% of lecturers felt that using e-Portfolios provided an opportunity for students to become more creative.

Some of the positive aspects of using e-Portfolios as identified by the lecturers as including the availability and portability of the 'artefacts' for students, as well as access to central systems from remote locations. Some of the negative feedback was concerned with technological issues, such as the lack of a widespread, consistent access to broadband Internet for some students, or difficulties encountered by students in using the system itself, while others identified a reliance on paper-based systems for reading and correction.

Where lecturers were using paper-based portfolios, responses indicate that 84% of respondents felt that paper-based portfolios were an effective form of assessment, while 65% of respondents to this section felt that paper-based portfolios allow students to be more creative. It was also found that 31% of lecturers using paper-based portfolios agreed that they would prefer moving to e-Portfolios, 26% disagreed, while 37% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Qualitative data also highlighted that, many of the issues raised in relation to the use of paper-based portfolios mentioned administrative challenges; working on paper-based sheets in the workplace can result in messy submissions; the amount of paper produced in a paper-based portfolio is wasteful; and, paper-based portfolios can result in lost pages or sections of work. An issue of relevance to programme design teams and Placement / Internship managers concerned the marking of the work and in the input of workplace supervisors. Benefits mentioned for the use of paper-based portfolios would also be applicable to e-Portfolios. It was found from some respondents' feedback that students can offer real insights into real life practice, and the portfolio can be reviewed periodically with the student.

Finally, academic staff were given the opportunity to suggest how improvements could be made to the Internship process. Many of the issues raised concerned support functions including: student preparation for Placement / Internship; lecturer involvement in recommending Placements / Internships to and for students; and the importance of ongoing support from a placement office throughout the Placement / Internship. In relation to the learning process, suggestions included: ensuring that the workplace supervisor had a thorough understanding of the Placement / Internship process; that a process of continuous formative and summative feedback be implemented throughout the Placement / Internship; and that a greater understanding of the nature and extent of the learning process during Placement / Internship should be articulated.

While the study provided some useful information for the ongoing discourse on e-Portfolios use in hospitality, tourism and culinary arts Work Placements and Internships, the data gathered has its limitations, due to the focus on Work Placements / Internships rather than on the whole of the learning experience. The data gathered may also be viewed as not representing broad practice, as no responses were forthcoming from a small number of institutions of technology who were invited to take part in this study.

Conclusion

The benefits of completing a Work Placements / Internships are numerous and varied. Not only does the learner gain meaningful experience in the work environment, but they also have the opportunity to critically evaluate their learning. Industry exposure and practical training adds immense value to a learners' third level experience. For many students, the Work Placement / Internship will be the first 'real' experience of working in the sector or profession for which the student is undertaking an academic programme of study. Therefore, this experience is also the first time that the student will be in a position to make sense of the learning, which has taken place to date as part of an academic programme in the context of the working environment.

Technology is a driving force in all sectors of society, with rapid changes occurring and impacting on how people work, learn and interact. The educational landscape is not immune and changes in educational technologies are taking place in the delivery of programmes, the content of the programmes as well as in the access to and assessment of academic learning programmes. Education providers around the globe are increasingly adopting online learning technologies to facilitate distance education and to complement face-to-face delivery. Coupled with this, industry partners are engaging pro-actively with educational institutions in order to upskill, retrain and validate employee-learning in the workplace.

A comprehensive implementation of e-Portfolios must become a priority for Irish higher education in response to the explicit overall needs of hospitality industry. The competence of e-Portfolios depends not only on the abundance of artefacts, but also on the efficacy of the use of e-Portfolios in the development of learners' self-reflection and critical thinking skills. The e-Portfolio has been well-developed to a point where it is considered to be an essential tool in an environment of pervasive learning resources.

The exploitation of online resources represents a significant change to the so-called 'traditional' learning experience and processes of information exchange between educational institutions, industry partners and individual learners. As universities and institutes of technology evolve, aiming to meet the challenges of supporting greater numbers of a diverse range of students, while minimising costs, online learning may continue to offer attractive alternative or additional options to traditional modes of course delivery.

To make the most effective use of the e-Portfolio, students must develop the skills to move from surface to deep learning, so as to engage in a process of critical reflection which involves making meaning of their learning. Meaningful reflection occurs when learners are able to make connections between academic or vocational coursework with their practices in the workplace and, also, to have an understanding of how their learning occurred. Only then, will learners be able to engage productively, as independent learners, in lifelong learning.

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CHAPTER 17

An Examination of Assessment Practices

Mr Patrick Brennan

Introduction

In Ireland, formal education in the hospitality sector is provided at various qualification levels via both Higher Education (HE) and Further Education and Training (FET). The standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, (ESG), also states that,

'...the assessment of learners is one of the most important elements of higher education.' (ESG, 2009, p.17)

Research Question

The research question which forms the foundation of this research is as follows:

'An examination of assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service in Irish Higher Education: what are the implications for authentic assessment in teaching and learning?'

Research Objectives

The following research objectives were designed to explore the research question in more detail:

1. What is the approach employed by lecturers to assessment practice in this discipline area? For example, might they include some or all of the following: Final assessment versus Continuous assessment; essay/written

assignment; research report; book review; case-study; poster; portfolio/reports; written/oral/multiple-choice questions exam; self-assessment/peer-assessment; group projects; presentation; practical demonstrations; approaches to feedback formative/summative?

2. How can we better understand the motivations of lecturers in relation to their decisions about and choices of assessment practices?
3. What factors influences change in approaches to assessment practices, and why? For example, could assessment approaches be influenced by changes in institutional practice, policy context or cuts in government funding?

Assessment – An Overview

Assessment has been defined by Brown, *et al.* (1997) as coming from the Latin *ad sedere*, which means: 'to sit down beside'. Therefore, Brown *et al* (1997) continue to state that assessment,

'...is primarily concerned with providing guidance and feedback to the learner.'
(Brown *et al.*, 1997)

Earl (2003) states that the purpose of assessment can be considered in the following three parts: assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning. Assessment *of* learning describes the summative experiences which provide effective, valid, reliable approaches to measure, evaluate, consider, record and report on a learner's level of success in being able to achieve the learning outcomes of the module (NFETL, 2015). Assessment *for* learning is formative and investigative. Formative experiences are designed as part of the teaching and learning processes, during which the lecturer encourages the students to assess, improve, develop and enhance their own performance in the module. Black and William (1998) suggest that formative feedback lectures provide learners with information on their achievement of the module and allows not only the learner to improve, but also allows teaching and learning activities to be tailored in response to the needs of the learner. This also highlights the importance of receiving feedback from learners in order to discover what worked well and where they may have found challenges in the module. Finally, assessment *as* learning uses both formative and summative assessment experiences and is designed for learners to learn and develop to the best of their ability, along with the support of reflective discussions with lecturers and peers in the classroom about what went well and where one can improve for the next class (NFETL, 2015).

Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment connects assessment to tasks the learner will meet when employed in the 'real world'. Struyven *et al.* (2002) assert that students value assessment activities which appear to have value beyond merely completing the activity for its own sake.

Whilst there is a lack of available research specifically on authentic assessment practices in Irish third level hospitality education, much has been written on what constitutes good practice in the area of assessment design. It is reasonable to assert that such principles should be evident in any research on assessment practices undertaken by HE lecturers in the field of hospitality education.

Assessment practices which promote formative feedback are known to promote deep learning, rather than surface learning. In this regard, Race (2005, p.13) suggests that,

'...deep learning is regarded as the best form of learning, and can be thought of as being fired by a strong want to make sense of what is being learned...to really understand.' (Race, 2005, p.13)

Traditionally, the skills and knowledge expected of the restaurant sector are usually gained through repetitive and craft-based training (Robinson *et al.* 2014). Hegarty (2011) suggests that, in order to raise the field to a more cognitively based discipline and to adopt the higher order thinking required in restaurant management, the curricula would need to promote reflective practise in learners. This, according to Hegarty (2011), would teach the learners how to learn and to assess their own as well as others' learning, through collaborative, peer and self-assessment processes.

The general aim of all assessment is to record achievement and to use that evidence to plan both for further practise and for future development. The aim is also for immediate formative feedback that will identify areas for the learner to improve on for future tasks. Providing rich feedback allows learners to understand their learning, rather than simply being grade-focused.

Practice-based Teaching and Learning

The National Forum Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL) has since 2014, developed links enabling the creation of an environment for the enhancement of teaching and learning in Ireland. Third level lecturers now have access to resources and support relating to discipline-based teaching and learning practices, also known as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). Lecturers are also now able to link up with other colleagues in their department or discipline, or through engaging in broader national and international disciplinary groups and professional associations (NFETL, 2015).

A 2015 report by the Expert Group in Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), suggests that, in order to successfully develop the skills requirements of the hospitality sector into the future, close collaboration between the industry itself and education and training providers is essential. This will benefit the learner/employee of the hospitality establishment who wants to strengthen their knowledge and skill set and will provide an opportunity for the hospitality employers to support their staff

in every means possible. This can be facilitated by third level institutions providing each learner with the opportunity to take on study, either in a full-time or part-time basis, as well as allowing them to study single modules spread over a time-frame, if necessary. This report also suggests that time-frame flexibility would be very beneficial in the completion of both major and minor awards, where the learner is undertaking industry work and needs to simultaneously accommodate the varying work patterns and seasonality of the industry.

Policy Context

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs was established in 1997, with the specific role of advising the Irish Government on current and future skills needs of the economy.

A 2015 report from Skills Ireland highlighted the vital importance of education and training in the hospitality and tourism sector. It found that, in order to retain staff in the sector, it is vitally important to invest in education and training. This report also found that the impact of higher education funding cuts is now exposing the lack of investment in practical-based skills training. In the last few years, there has been a shift towards academic modules in education, which has now challenged those students who are more talented and skilful in the practical elements of a given module.

Future Developments

Government bodies in this area need to address the funding issue as a key priority, as it underpins overall programme reform. There are also other key enablers of success at third level institutions. Examples of these include: the capacity to plan and act strategically, including the ability to identify clear goals and strengths; active participation by learners in various activities across Irish HE institutions; and the highlighting of suitable forms of best practice in the area of teaching methods and teaching practices. When third level academic members engage on a regular basis directly with the industry, they are better able to update course content and, in turn, provide students with up-to-date knowledge, skills and competencies, as discussed in the previous section on practice based teaching and learning EGFSN (2015).

A funding strategy report from the Department of Education and Skills (2016) discovered four critical channels through which HE supports were delivered. They are: support for an increasingly dynamic and open innovation system; a high quality student experience; nationally recognised qualifications and skills to meet the needs of organisations in the private, public and social sectors; as well as further widening of participation as a driver of social mobility.

Methodology

The research design and methodology used in this chapter is exploratory, in-depth and qualitative in nature. The research took the form of a multiple case-study and focused on lecturers from the discipline of restaurant service in Ireland. The author selected participants who would represent a geographical spread of HE across Ireland, identifying the different assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service.

Participants were invited to submit their module descriptors and their assessment strategies before taking part in a thirty minute, semi-structured interview. The interviews took place either face-to-face at an agreed location, time and date, or through a Skype/telephone interview, all of which were arranged in advance to facilitate the participants. The interviews were all recorded and, subsequently, transcribed and anonymised.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) state that case-study based research is an important source of research data, as a case-study is a detailed instance that can be designed to represent a more general principle. A case-study allows readers to recognise how ideas and abstract principles link together. Yin (2009) also points out that case studies have an advantage over historical studies, as they contain direct observation through semi-structured interviews with participants.

The research tools adopted in this research are documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. The documentary analysis is a form of qualitative research in which teaching/learning documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define document analysis as, *'a systematic procedure for reviewing both printed and electronic documents.'*

By reviewing the module descriptors received from all participants, the author was given an insight into how each lecturer assesses his or her students and, as such, was better able to prepare relevant questions for use in the semi-structured interview. Further document analysis was carried out after the semi-structured interviews were completed. The author recorded and transcribed these interviews before carrying out an analysis of each transcription. This analysis yielded rich data which aided the identification of authentic assessment methods in the discipline of practical restaurant service classes.

Through the semi-structured interview process, the author was able to become an integral part of the research, as he was able to respond immediately to answers received from participants, and was also able to ask more exacting follow-up questions during the interview itself (Guba and Lincoln, 1981).

The validity of the research was enhanced by the use of a triangulation approach. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) state that triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of an aspect of human behaviour.

One concern the author had in conducting this style of interview process was that the duration of the interview might extend beyond the allotted time-frame originally agreed, which was twenty to thirty minutes, as opposed to using other interviewing methods which might take less time to complete. Extra time was allocated for this stage of the research process, in anticipation that the interviews might take longer. Before holding the interviews, the author conducted a pilot-run with colleagues and found that the questions would take, on average, between eighteen and twenty-two minutes to answer. The final eight minutes were added to allow for sufficient time to complete the full process of the semi-structured interview. The author received permission in advance from all interviewees to record their interviews.

Results

This chapter presents an analysis of the data derived from the semi-structured interviews and the document analysis. The document analysis includes the module descriptors that were provided by the seven participants representing six institutions, which helped to support the existing literature in Chapter Two. The analysis begins with the consideration of each of the semi-structured research questions based around assessment:

1. What is your approach to assessment?
2. Why do you take this approach?
3. How do you assess their knowledge?
4. How has your approach to assessment changed over the years?
5. What has motivated these changes?
6. How do you know that your assessment approach is effective?
7. Would you have a balance of low-stakes and high-stakes assessment practice?
8. What is your approach to feedback?
9. How could we, as lecturers, improve our student-feedback?
10. How do you get your students to engage in class?
11. Is there something distinctive that works well in the restaurant practical environment?
12. Where is teaching and learning assessment going in the restaurant classroom for good future developments?

Results Related to RQ1: What is your approach to assessment?

All of the participants interviewed cited the use of continuous assessment as being vital in their approach to assessing their students. Formal exams were also cited by all participants as being an important indicator of how well each student has

progressed throughout the year. Several participants indicated that, while they felt that continuous assessments of a practical nature were the most important type of assessment utilised, they also felt that the final end-of-year semester exams were a very important indicator of how each student has individually progressed throughout the whole year.

Participant A stated that his assessment choice, '*...depends on the level of the student.*' To elaborate on this point, he went on to state the following:

'Level 6 is quite practical based, and Masters and undergraduate levels are group or individual [sic]. Also, the Restaurant Service module is individual and based on performance.'

Some of the participants noted that they prefer to use a more practical-based course with students researching at Level 6 before introducing a mix of practical and theory-based learning for undergraduate and masters-level students.

Results Related to RQ2: Why do you take this approach?

All participants stated that their use of continuous assessment, coupled with an emphasis on practical learning, was due to their belief that this type of learning best prepares their students for working in a real-world environment. Participant B stated that his job is, '*...to get people ready for work.*' It was his wish that every student who graduates will do so with a standard of knowledge that will allow them to be successful in the industry, and he believes that continuously assessing each student, while providing constructive feedback, is the best method to achieve that.

Results Related to RQ3: How do you assess their knowledge?

The author found that a variety of different assessment methods are being employed across the participating institutions. These include: in-class MCQs; in-class quizzes; individual and group presentations; the assignment of projects/portfolios; essays, and reading assignments.

All participants stated the conducting of end-of-term, or end-of-year exams as being a useful tool in assessing the knowledge their students have learned.

Results Related to RQ4: How has your approach to assessment changed over the years?

The most common change reported was the increase in the use of continuous assessment as a means for assessing students. Participants B and D cited the introduction of semesterisation as having a negative impact on their ability to teach their courses effectively.

An increase in the use of IT for assessment purposes was also reported. One participant also introduced peer group learning sessions and found them most beneficial in allowing students to critique and learn from each other.

Results Related to RQ5: What has motivated these changes?

A variety of different motivating factors for these changes was reported. The growth in the use of IT was due to two factors: the first was to improve time efficiency within the classroom through the use of online assessments and feedback, and the second was direct feedback from students requesting more IT based learning.

The responses to this question also highlighted a consensus that an hour-long, end-of-year exam was not enough to adequately test the knowledge of students. Instead, it was felt that an ongoing, continuous assessment style approach would be more effective. This approach not only ensures that students are marked and assessed regularly, but it also allows the lecturer to provide regular, insightful feedback to each student on an individual basis.

Results Related to RQ6: How do you know that your assessment approach is effective?

All participants reported that the best way to judge whether an assessment approach is effective or not is by reviewing the end of semester results. Every participant felt that the use of continuous assessments increased the performance of their students. Three participants stated their belief that the allocation of a certain percentage of the end of semester grades to class attendance was a major motivating factor for their students to attend classes as often as possible.

Results Related to RQ7: Do you have a balance of low-stakes + high-stakes assessment practice?

Some participants interviewed said that they never hold continuous assessment in the first few weeks of a semester, because students are generally unprepared and new to the subject matter. The consensus is that high-stakes assessments should only be carried out during a period sometime after six weeks from the start of the semester. It is believed by participants that this gives students enough time to develop a good understanding of the course material, as well as gaining practical skills which will allow them to perform well in these higher-stakes assessments.

Results Related to RQ8: What is your approach to feedback?

All participants responded with a strong belief in the importance of feedback in the development of their students. An emphasis was placed on the need for feedback

to occur frequently in order to best correct any mistakes a student may be making. All participants felt that this allows the student to improve the quality of their work, and gives them a better foundation on which to further increase their skillset in subsequent classes.

Results Related to RQ9: How could we, as lecturers, improve our student-feedback?

Participants responded with a variety of different suggestions to improve student-feedback. One such suggestion was the use of technology as a means of receiving and giving feedback to and from students. Participant G said he started to use the Blackboard online learning system six months ago and has found it to be an excellent tool for both giving and receiving feedback.

Another suggestion was the need to be wary of over-prescribing feedback to groups of students. There was an emphasis placed on the need for feedback to be one-to-one based, and tailored to each student's performance and needs. Participant E stated that, *'...more immediate individual feedback early in the module would be beneficial, if you have the time...'* However, he also noted that, *'...it is difficult to find time especially with a large class.'*

Results Related to RQ10: How do you get your students to engage in class?

It was found that a variety of different methods are used to achieve this. These include: giving highly detailed practical demonstrations; pairing strong students with weak students; and giving each student a different task to perform from week to week.

Participant G regularly assigns a new restaurant manager from his class on a daily basis. This is then followed by a menu briefing, after which students may be asked questions such as, 'What is the starter today?' The participant felt that his method encourages students to actively engage with the course content, as they feel that doing something practical is, by its very nature, more engaging than theoretical bookwork.

Results Related to RQ11: Is there something distinctive that works well in the restaurant practical environment?

All participants feel that the experience of a 'live' restaurant practical environment is invaluable in preparing students for 'real world' restaurant service. The inclusion of live service, where real customers from the public are brought into the restaurant, was cited by one participant as being extremely important in developing students' interpersonal skills. This belief was due to the fact that, when students are placed in such situations, they are exposed to challenges and learning opportunities that occur organically and, as such, they are obliged to learn how to handle these situations

quickly and effectively. Many situations that occur in the live restaurant environment are difficult to replicate inside the classroom. The live restaurant environment also gives students opportunities to learn how to handle complaints from customers, something else that is very difficult to recreate effectively in a classroom setting.

Results Related to RQ12: Where is teaching and learning assessment going in the restaurant classroom for good future developments?

The general consensus from the interviewees was that more and more emphasis is being put on the preparation of students for work in the industry. This is being achieved in a variety of ways, one of which is cross-modular integration. This involves students studying and working on multiple modules in the practical restaurant environment, simultaneously. The result of this process is that students get a broader overview of the hospitality industry. It gives them the opportunity to see how different sections of a hospitality team work together to provide a good customer service experience.

This shift in emphasis towards the requirements of the industry is coming about as a direct result of feedback received by HE institutions directly from hotels involved on the student placement programme.

The increased use of digital media in classes was highlighted as being a growth area in the field of hospitality education. The use of multiple cameras in practical restaurant class allows both the lecturer and students to review everybody's performance. Having performances recorded on video also affords the lecturer an opportunity to give feedback directly to the students by playing back recordings, showing them what they have done incorrectly, as well as informing them of how they can improve their performance for the next time.

Document Analysis

Each HE institute provides the lecturer and learners with a module descriptor. This assists lecturers in delivering new modules and is also useful when reviewing modules each term to see if any changes are required. The intended use of module descriptors is to allow heads of departments to manage curricula across the HE institutes and to provide a clear statement of lecturers' teaching schedules.

Module descriptors provided by the participants from six HE institutes have been summarised in the following chart:

Institution/ Participant	Module	Learning Outcomes	ECTs Credits	NFQ Level	Assessments	Assessment Mark %	Formative/ Summative	Hours: Theory/ Practical
A	XXXXXX	6	5	6	Report & presentation/ In-class test/ Continuous-assessment	30/40/30	Both	T= ___/P= ___ Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 14/13 weeks
A	XXXXXX	8	5	8	Report/ Final exam	40/60	Both	T= ___/P= ___ Weekly = 2 hrs 24 hrs over 14/13 weeks
B	XXXXXX	6	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ Final exam	40/60	Both	T= 4 /P= 4 Weekly = 8 hrs 104 hrs over 13 weeks
B	XXXXXX	5	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ assignment or in-class test/ Final practical exam	20/40/40	Both	T= 3 /P= 4 Weekly = 7 hrs 91 hrs over 13 weeks
C + F	XXXXXX	4	5	6	Continuous-assessment	100	Both	T= ___/P= ___ Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
C + F	XXXXXX	7	5	8	Continuous-assessment: Reflective journal- Assignment 3000 words/practical exam	100	Both	T= ___/P= ___ Weekly = 5 hrs 60 hrs over 12 weeks
C + F	XXXXXX	5	5		Continuous-assessment/ Project/Case study/ Reflective -Journal	100	Both	T= ___/P= ___ Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 12 weeks
D	XXXXXX	6	5	6	Continuous-assessment: Practical in Restaurant & IN Culinary, In class-test (short Q)	35/35/30	Both	T= 2 /P= 6 Weekly = 8 hrs 96 hrs over 12 weeks
D	XXXXXX	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment: Practical in Restaurant & IN Culinary, In class-test (short Q)	35/35/30	Both	T= 2 /P= 6 Weekly = 8 hrs 96 hrs over 12 weeks
E	XXXXXX	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment Practical exams	100	Both	T= /P= 4 Weekly = 4 hrs 48 hrs over 12 weeks
E	XXXXXX	5	10	6	Continuous-assessment/ Final exam	50/50	Both	T= 3 /P= 3 Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
E	XXXXXX	5	5	6	Continuous-assessment Practical	100	Both	T= 3 /P= 3 Weekly = 6 hrs 72 hrs over 12 weeks
G	XXXXXX		---	---	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	-----
G	XXXXXX		-----	-----	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	-----
G	XXXXXX		-----	-----	Continuous-assessment/ Practical exam	30/70	Both	-----

Each participant provided their own assessment information for the module which, in turn, clarified for the author the fact that all restaurant lecturers strongly favour the use of continuous assessment practices.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine the assessment practices in the training environment of restaurant service in Irish Higher Education and the implications for authentic assessment in teaching and learning. At the onset of this research, the author examined module descriptors provided by participants which allowed him to design appropriate research questions.

Objective 1: Approaches to Assessment Practice

Research into this objective was carried out through research questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10 and 11. These particular questions queried participants on their individual approaches to assessment practices. The document analysis process was instrumental in the creation of these questions, because it gave the author a detailed breakdown of each participant's modules, including data on percentage weights, accreditation level, credits, learning outcomes and assessment methods.

All participants articulated their firm belief that continuous assessment practices are important, not only because can they have a positive impact on the learning experience for the learners, but because they also better prepare the learners for entry into the workplace. Participants further expressed the view that continuous assessment lends itself well to authenticity. This is in accord with available academic literature. Struyven *et al.* (2002) assert that learners value assessment activities which appear to have value beyond merely completing the activity.

The use of a variety of different assessment methods was reported by participants. These included: MCQs; class discussions; quizzes; projects; portfolio development; both practical and theoretical exams; and continuous assessment. Participants stressed the usefulness of continuous assessment in better understanding the actual academic learning levels of their students at a given point in time. Entwistle (1997) defines surface learning as an approach that learners take when their intention is to cope with the requirements of the task, without real personal engagement or a deep understanding of the course material. It applies to the method of 'getting by' with minimum effort, with a focus on simply memorising material, the end goal of which is to pass an exam.

Objective 2: Motivations for Assessment Practices

The overwhelming response from participants to the questions regarding motivation for their choices of assessment practices was virtually unanimous: that this is based on direct communication with the hospitality industry.

Participants reported being influenced by both positive and negative feedback. Participants stated that feedback equips them with the knowledge necessary to

adjust their teaching and assessment practices, to maximise the skill levels of each learner and, thus, to better prepare them for work in the 'real world'.

Objective 3: Changes to Assessment Practices

This research discovered two main changes in assessment practices used by the participants. The first was a change regarding an increase in the value attributed to continuous assessment. This increased value was reflected by an escalation in time allocated to continuous assessment activities on a semesterisation basis.

The second change that has influenced the assessment practices of participants is the use of technology, in both assessing learners and in providing valuable feedback to them. Also of note is the increased use of technology in the process of engaging learners with course work. This is seen in the increase of use by participants of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs), such as Blackboard, Whiteboard and YouTube-based lectures/seminars.

The use of multimedia technology to assist in the delivery of classes was also raised by several participants. Participant C stated that video recordings of practical classes would assist in the reviewing of learners' performances, as class sizes were often too large to allow for proper invigilation of every learner's work individually.

Several participants stated their belief that budgetary constraints have been responsible for a shift in recent years from practical-based classes in favour of more academic theory classes. This was viewed as a negative shift, as participants D, E, F and G all stated their preference for an increase in practical module elements over an increase in academic work.

Participant D further stated that it costs more to run a two-to-four hour practical class than it does to run a theory class. The general consensus among participants was that the downturn in the global economy has negatively affected budgets available to Irish HE with which to conduct practical classes.

While many positive aspects were stated by participants regarding an increased use of technology in the classroom, concerns were also raised by some about the risk of replacing hands-on practical classes with interactive online exercises. This concern was entirely due to the consensus that, at its core, restaurant service is an interpersonal activity. This fact alone led participants interviewed to express concerns that their job is not only to teach learners practical skills, such as food and beverage service, but also to teach them how to interact and engage with customers in a friendly manner. To quote participant B: *'It's not the number of plates you can carry, it's whether you can make the customer happy [sic]'*.

Conclusions

This research highlights the importance of authentic assessment practices in assessing learners. The strength of this research is due, in large part, to the inclusion of data from fellow lecturers and heads of departments. Drawing on their experience has provided great insight, not only into assessment methods, but also into how assessment methods have evolved over recent decades.

This research applied a qualitative approach when considering how to formulate the research objectives for two reasons: the first reason was that, due to the relatively small sample size of participants, it was felt that semi-structured interviews would provide more in-depth data than other methods. The second reason for using a qualitative approach was the fact that it allows for a degree of flexibility in the research itself. This was important during the semi-structured interview process, as the author often had several follow-up questions which were based on participants' responses to the twelve original core questions.

This choice of approach resulted in the findings being based on more detailed and accurate data, as the author was able to explore and expand on participants' initial responses, in order to get a more complete picture of each participant's assessment practices.

This research uncovered eight key findings relating to current assessment practices in the discipline of restaurant service education at HE institutes. These findings are detailed below:

- There is a broad range of assessment practices currently used within restaurant service education. These include: continuous assessments; final exams; in-class tests; portfolios; self-reflective diaries; self-assessment; peer-assessment; quizzes; multiple-choice questions (MCQ); group projects; oral presentations; written exams; live, practical and online-assessment.
- This research found strong evidence in support of using continuous assessment practices in restaurant education. It was found to be the most popular method of assessment currently used by participants in this study.
- This research found strong support for the use of formative feedback. However, all participants stated their belief that semesterisation has resulted in fewer opportunities to conduct formative feedback sessions, mainly due to time constraints.
- It is apparent from this research that formative feedback is the preferred method of feedback among hospitality educators in Irish HE institutes.
- There is a general consensus among hospitality educators that, while the introduction of new technologies would be beneficial, it would probably not be feasible at the moment due to a nationwide lack of HE funding.

- There is a strong belief among hospitality educators that their role is not only to educate, but also to prepare learners for a working life in the industry.
- Data gathered supports the policy arguments put forward by bodies such as the EGFSN, who argue that there needs to be a strong direct link between industry and HE.
- This research also suggests that lecturers need to be mindful of the dangers of over-assessment, as it could lead to passive learning, low classroom attendance and low student retention rates.

The conclusion of this research has resulted in the formulation of several recommendations on how assessment could be improved upon in the future.

Recommendations

Little research has been conducted to date into the teaching methods and activities used by hospitality and tourism educators in the practical skills-based training classroom environment.

This research identified additional deficits in existing academic literature and identified a definite need for further research in this area. In particular, the need to examine other forms of assessment practices was identified, ones which lecturers could use in the future to help learners achieve their learning outcomes and to better prepare their learners for the industry.

On a personal level, the author has learned much and has had the opportunity to reflect on his own professional practice. Data gathered has allowed him to identify the following actions which he will undertake in the future:

- Investigate additional classroom assessment techniques and choose a suitable technique to assess learning outcomes.
- Implement new appropriate classroom assessment techniques to examine what the learners are learning and, specifically, how they are learning.
- Encourage more peer-assessment and self-assessment within the training classroom.
- Use more effective questioning in his future teaching practice as learners take part in assessment activities. This will also encourage and promote active student learning.

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PART 5: NICHE TOURISM

CHAPTER 18

It's Written in the Stars – Exploring the Potential for Dark Sky Tourism in South Kerry

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'I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream'

(Vincent Van Gogh)

Introduction

In 2014, the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) designated its first International Dark-Sky Place in Ireland, by awarding 'Gold Tier' status to the Kerry International Dark-Sky Reserve. Located in south Kerry on the Iveragh Peninsula, the reserve covers approximately 700 square kilometres. Recent discussions have focused on how local stakeholders can best capitalise on the designation by developing dark-sky tourism in the area in order to increase tourists 'dwell time', and to help off-set the issue of seasonality in the area. This chapter will explore the potential of the reserve to attract and cater for visitors who wish to stargaze and enjoy a night sky free from artificial light pollution. The discussion will be framed by drawing on current theories related to niche tourism and 'astrotourism' development, as well as by documenting best practice examples from abroad.

Literature Review

The International Dark-Sky Association

In 1988, an organisation called the International Dark-Sky Association (IDSA) was founded, with a mission dedicated '*to protecting the night skies for present and future generations*' (International Dark-Sky Association, 2016). In 2001, the activities of the association grew to include the development of a Dark-Sky Places award, designed to encourage communities around the world to preserve and protect dark skies through education and responsible lighting policies. Five different designations have since been created – Dark Sky Communities, International Dark Sky Parks, International Dark Sky Sanctuaries, Dark Sky Developments of Distinction and International Dark Sky Reserves. The International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) designation is specifically awarded to:

'...a public or private land of substantial size (of 700 km², or about 173,000 acres) possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment.' (International Dark-Sky Association, 2016)

The reserve is generally formed through partnerships between landowners and administrators, who mutually recognise the value of their natural skies through agreements, regulation and planning for the long term (Ibid). An IDSR has a core and buffer zone structure, similar in design and layout to the UNESCO Biosphere Reserves (Kerry International Dark-Sky Reserve, 2017). At present, the award is graduated to include gold, silver and bronze and is based on the evaluation of a number of indicators, including the extent of artificial light and sky glow, the range of observable sky phenomena, the quality of the nocturnal environment, and the extent of visual magnitude at night. This award designation is subject to review by the IADS at present (Barentine, 2017).

The goals of Dark Sky Reserve creation include honouring those involved for exceptional commitment, promoting enjoyment of dark skies and their heritage for astronomy enthusiasts and the wider public, providing international recognition and encouraging other potential sites to become leaders in the area of dark skies. A further goal is to promote eco and astrotourism in the area (International Dark-Sky Association, 2016). The first reserve to be formally established was around the Mont-Mégantic Observatory in Québec, Canada in 2007 (Aubé and Roby, 2014). In 2011, Exmoor National Park in southern England became Europe's first International Dark Sky Reserve (Exmoor National Park, 2017). To date, eleven world-wide dark-sky reserves have been designated (Table 1).

Table 1: International Dark Sky Reserve Designations

Designated Reserves	Country	Tiers	Year of Designation
<i>Kerry</i>	Ireland	Gold	2014
<i>Aoraki MacKenzie</i>	New Zealand	Gold	2012
<i>NamibRand Nature Reserve</i>	Namibia	Gold	2012
<i>Snowdonia National Park</i>	Wales	Silver	2015
<i>Westhavelland</i>	Germany	Silver	2014
<i>Rhön</i>	Germany	Silver	2014
<i>Pic du Midi</i>	France	Silver	2013
<i>Brecon Beacons National Park</i>	Wales	Silver	2013
<i>Exmoor National Park</i>	England	Silver	2011
<i>Mont-Megantic</i>	Canada	Silver	2007
<i>Moore's Reserve (South Downs)</i>	England	Undesignated	2016

Kerry International Dark Sky Reserve

In 2014, the Kerry International Dark Sky Reserve (Kerry IDSR) became only of only three *gold tier* IDSR in the world, and the only one in the Northern Hemisphere (Kerry International Dark-Sky Reserve, 2017). The idea of applying for and winning IDSR status originated in the work of a local astronomy group (The Kerry Dark Sky Group), and the application was further assisted by Kerry County Council and Fáilte Ireland. The location of the Kerry IDSR on the Iveragh Peninsula includes areas such as Foilmore, Caherdaniel, Ballinskelligs, Dromid, The Glen, Waterville, Derrynane, Portmagee and Caherciveen. The reserve is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the Kerry mountains on the other. A unique feature of the Kerry IDSR is that it is the only such place located in a residential area, as within the core and buffer zones there are villages, a UNESCO World Heritage site (Skellig Michael), a listed house (Derrynane House and Gardens) and various hotels, bars and restaurants as well as other built attractions (Ibid). Since the award was bestowed on the area, local stakeholders and the wider tourism industry have been in discussion about how best to capitalise on the designation in order to increase both the number of visitors and the time they spend in the area. Sited as it is in an established tourism-intensive region, the reserve offers locals a unique opportunity to diversify their traditional product-offering with something new and innovative, designed to appeal to a wider segment of the domestic and international tourism market.

Tourism in Ireland

In 2016, Ireland welcomed over 8.8 million overseas visitors, contributing over €8bn to the Irish economy (Irish Tourist Industry Confederation, 2016). Outside of the Irish capital, Dublin, the south-west region of Ireland, which comprises the counties of Kerry and Cork, is the most popular tourism destination for overseas visitors. In 2015, County Kerry attracted just over one million overseas tourists, and a further 626,000 domestic holidaymakers, generating a combined spend of €420m (Kerry County Council Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, 2016). County Kerry is also home to a number of key tourism locations including Killarney, Dingle and the Ring of Kerry scenic tourism route. In order to target international visitors more effectively, Fáilte Ireland has segmented the global market for Ireland according to their values and motivations. This has resulted in the identification of three key market segments – ‘social energisers’ who are interested primarily in nightlife and urban tourism destinations, ‘culturally curious’ consumers who wish to experience the culture and heritage of Ireland and ‘great escapers’, visitors whose main motivation is to explore picturesque landscapes and revitalise by connecting with the destination through its natural elements (Fáilte Ireland, 2013). One product designed specifically with the ‘great escaper’ in mind is the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW), a 2,500 kilometre coastal driving route which encompasses the coastline and hinterland of nine coastal counties along the West of Ireland – Counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry and Cork. The County Kerry coastline, at almost 450 kilometres in length, makes up a significant portion of the route (Activeme, 2017). A recent Fáilte Ireland initiative involved segmenting the entire WAW into six distinct regions, with the south Kerry area being rebranded as the Southern Peninsulas zone (Wild Atlantic Way, 2017). Appealing as they do to those who wish to embrace nature and the outdoors, the WAW and tourism specifically focused on dark skies would appear to be a good fit, in that both offer consumers the possibility of new and innovative ways of engaging with the landscape around them. The challenge for the Kerry IDSR, therefore, is to translate the designation into a number of niche tourism offerings, allowing for greater tourism engagement with their region.

Niche Tourism Development

Defined by Beech and Chadwick (2005) as, ‘*a small, specialised sector of tourism which appeals to a correspondingly tightly-defined market segment*’, niche tourism refers to how a specific product can be tailored to meet the needs of a particular audience or market segment (Ali-Knight, 2011). In the seminal text, ‘Niche Tourism: Contemporary Issues, Trends and Cases’, Novelli (2005) argues that because niche tourism embraces such a diversity of products and experiences, it should be considered ‘as a continuum’ with macro niches on one side (large market share) through to smaller and more specific offerings on the other end, described as micro-niches. This led to the creation of a Niche Tourism Framework, demonstrating that many micro-niches may exist

within a macro, allowing the destination to differentiate itself from others and target a number of specialist groups. Further efforts to understand the concept include subdividing it into a number of approaches, focusing on geography or demographics, specific products or activities, or the motivations of the customers involved (Ibid.)

As the term has its origins in marketing, niche tourism development is often understood as segmentation of the overall tourism market. However, more contemporary analysis suggests the two concepts are distinct from each other (Roberts and Hall, 2004). Segmentation involves splitting the overall market into smaller parts, whereby niches are created by adopting a 'bottom up' approach, focusing specifically on the needs of a small number of individuals (Ibid. 257). According to John Griffin, Tourism Officer at Kerry County Council (2017),

'...dark-sky tourists to Kerry should be provided with purposely designed stargazing programmes and tours that are both entertaining and professionally delivered at specific dates and times...complemented by special events.'

The importance of the provision of bespoke programmes for the dark sky tourist is also identified by Collison and Poe (2013).

The Benefits of a Niche Approach

Niche tourism development,

'...offers tourism that is sustainable, less damaging and more capable of delivering high-spending tourists...while delivering a more meaningful set of experiences to tourists.' (Boekstein and Tevera, 2014).

It may also result in product differentiation and diversification allowing destinations to compete in an increasingly cluttered tourism environment (Sharpley and Telfer 2002; Marson, 2011). Niche products introduced at the later stages of the TALC (Butler, 1980) can also address issues of stagnation as a means to refresh the product offering (Buhalis, 2000). This is particularly relevant to the Kerry IDSR as a number of towns and villages inside the reserve are also part of the greater Ring of Kerry route, a well-worn scenic tourist trail which has a high familiarisation factor with overseas tourists visiting the county. Much of the business on the Ring of Kerry is coach tour business, so there is limited opportunity for tourists to increase their dwell-time on any of the official stops along the way. Product development, focusing specifically on those who wish to enjoy dark skies, could be a means to demonstrate a new and dynamic aspect of a familiar location. It may also be a product that is complementary to those already present in the region, including culture and heritage tourism (Griffin, 2017).

Other benefits of the niche approach include the fact that it can contribute to job creation, increase consumer choice, help disperse tourism away from established so-

called 'honey pots' and encourage entrepreneurship (Novelli 2005; Salga 2010 cited in Boekstein and Tevera, 2014). The lower tourist numbers involved may also mean that less infrastructure is required (Benur and Bramwell, 2015). In the case of a mature tourist destination such as Ireland, niche tourism development is also a response to the challenges posed by globalisation, fragmentation and the ever-decreasing product life cycles of the Irish tourism offering (Fáilte Ireland, 2009).

Rural Tourism Product Development

In rural areas, tourism activity is, in many cases, one of the only economic levers available. Therefore, it makes a critical contribution to the viability of many rural communities, building upon key assets such as landscape and culture (Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas, 2014). In Ireland, rural tourism product development is often initiated by communities and voluntary groups (Ibid.) as is the case with the dark-sky development in south Kerry. The initial impetus for the application came from a local astronomy group who believed that the quality of the dark skies in their area was comparable to similar light pollution-free areas elsewhere in the world, and that a significant opportunity existed to share this resource with others. Rural areas are also ideally placed to take advantage of current trends in tourism, appealing to tourists seeking to escape the urban environment by providing recreation and tranquillity, interweaving nature with local elements of culture and community. Rural tourism experiences, therefore, suit independent-minded consumers searching for a more authentic, personalised travel experience, with a focus on the 'why' before the 'where' (Irish Tourist Industry Confederation 2015). As Ryan and Deegan (2010) state,

'...tourists increasingly search for products first and then a location'

Contemporary discussions on tourism product development also identify the importance of understanding the connections tourists form with tourism spaces. 'Place attachment' studies which relate to the psychological hold that tourism spaces have on consumers through the enjoyment or admiration of landscapes and the ambience they create, form part of the modern literature (Seabra et al 2011). In the case of south Kerry, dark-sky development has the potential to take visitors beyond the usual rural landscapes, encouraging them to connect to the wider skyscape as well as the land-based areas around them. In essence, they are now looking up, as well as looking around.

Astronomy and Stargazing

As Thomas Kiernan, President of the US National Parks and Conservation Organisation once observed,

'...stargazing is a connection to humanity's earliest curiosity about our place in the universe (1999:24).

In the past, communities relied on the sky for telling time, storytelling, measuring the seasons and determining the time for planting and harvesting (Collison and Poe, 2013). Astronomy also has a significant history in Ireland, as it is home to Newgrange, the oldest solar observatory in the world and the 'Leviathan of Parsonstown,' which at one stage was the largest telescope in the world (Astronomical Science Group of Ireland, 2016).

Today, stargazing reconnects 'stressed out city dwellers' to nature, according to John Barentine of the International Dark Sky Organisation (2016). A recent study from the University of California, Irvine, connected gazing at awe-inspiring sites, such as star-filled skies and brilliant sunsets, to an awakening a deep appreciation of the world, to promoting increased benevolence and even to more ethical decision-making on the part of the viewer (Piff, 2015). Viewers reported feelings of increased connectedness to, '*something larger and more powerful than themselves*,' reducing their own feelings of self-importance (Ibid.). Stargazing as a tourism activity is increasing in popularity, perhaps as an antidote to increased urbanisation and air pollution which, literally, clouds the view of celestial objects in cities and large towns around the world (Julien, 2017). As the tourism industry and providers like Virgin Galactic promise us 'space tourism,' astrotourism experiences on *terra firma* may be the first and more affordable step in that journey for many enthusiasts.

Astrotourism

Astrotourism, also known as 'astronomical tourism,' is a contemporary term used to describe leisure activities where the sky is the central resource, although the practice goes back many centuries. The term is a blend of science and leisure and may encompass a plethora of experiences including low earth orbit (LEO) and orbital space tourism, travel to planetariums and space centres such as the Kennedy Space Centre, Florida, and tourist visits to space laboratories including CERN, Switzerland and other destinations popular for astronomy and stargazing (Collison and Poe, 2013). Much of the available literature, however, applies the term to the narrow, micro-niche activity of stargazing, where visitors use the natural resources of well-kept nightscapes for astronomy-related leisure and increased topic-specific knowledge (Fayos-Sola et al, 2014). Astronomical views including sunsets, sunrises, stars, galaxies, planets and phenomenon such as solar and lunar eclipses, have the potential to attract tourists from around the world to optimum viewing sites (Soleimani Najafabadi, 2012). The Kerry IDSR is well placed to provide such optimum viewing as, unusually, the reserve offers high quality dark skies in both the core *and* the buffer zone (Kerry International Dark-Sky Reserve, 2017).

Astrotourism, according to Callanan (2015), provides communities with a unique means of using basic knowledge of the night sky for their economic benefit. Astrotourism experiences range from those exclusively focused on stargazing to

those which offer more conventional tourism packages, which may include other activities such as dog-sledding, glacier walks and hikes and spa and wellness products (Collison and Poe, 2013). Popular astrotourism destinations around the world include New Zealand, where there is considerable interest from Chinese and Japanese visitors in particular, Chile, Northumberland (UK) and The Canary Islands, as well as a number of National Parks in the United States. Rural areas, in particular, such as those found in south Kerry, are ideally placed to develop astrotourism offerings as big, open skies are a defining feature of the countryside (National Trust, 2016).

Light Pollution and Dark Skies

Central to optimum viewing of the night sky is darkness which, due to the proliferation of artificial light sources, is increasingly difficult to achieve as sky brightness increases (Lighting Research Centre, 2007). Increasing urbanisation and poor planning processes mean that man-made light pollution has become a significant global environmental issue (Bennie et al, 2014), as the phenomenon of artificial light at night (ALAN) in built-up areas outside daytime hours has progressed unhindered (Aubé and Roby, 2014). In the USA, for example, only small isolated areas in the southwest and west are likely to remain without significant ALAN pollution in the years ahead, according to Collison and Poe (2013). Increasing light pollution has been linked to the loss of engagement of people with their natural environment, described by Davies et al (2013) as, *'the extinction of experience'*.

Light pollution, *'the inadvertent illumination of an area other than that which it was intended to cover'*, (Christou and Bailey, 2007), is generally divided into four key components: sky glow, light trespass, glare and clutter (Dark Skies Awareness, 2012). 'Sky glow' is the term used where artificial light sources illuminate the atmosphere, thereby limiting the view of the cosmos. As the brightness of the sky increases, celestial objects are more difficult to distinguish as the light reduces visible contrast. The phenomenon has already been blamed for the apparent disappearance of the Milky Way from the night sky, as well as for jeopardising wildlife and disrupting circadian rhythms, which contribute to humans maintaining physical and emotional well-being (Chepesiuk 2009).

Unlike other natural resources, that once destroyed are lost forever, the night sky represents a resource that can be recovered (Collison and Poe, 2013). In recent times, efforts have been made to mitigate the effects of light pollution around the world through lobbying and creating awareness amongst communities of the benefits of good lighting practice (Christou and Bailey, 2007). The year 2017 saw the establishment of the first academic centre dedicated to the wide-ranging issues regarding dark skies. Based within the College of Architecture and Planning at The University of Utah, the Consortium for Dark Sky Studies (CDSS) is dedicated to,

'...discovering, developing, communicating and applying knowledge pertaining to the quality of the night skies' (International Dark-Sky Association, 2017).

Kerry County Council has also embarked on a programme, albeit on a phased basis, to replace existing sodium and neon public lighting within the reserve with dark-sky compliant light emitting diodes (LEDs), and other low-energy light fittings to address issues of sky glow and light pollution (Kerry County Council Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, 2016).

Methodology

This chapter involved primary research in the form of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the area of dark-sky tourism in Ireland. As part of the interview process, the authors offered anonymity to all interviewees, given their various relationships to dark-sky tourism in Ireland and the Kerry IDSR project. A number of respondents waived anonymity and are referenced in the chapter. The comments from respondents who did not wish to be identified are listed as Interviewee A, B, C and so on. Secondary desk research, in the form of a comprehensive literature review, was also compiled.

Developing Astrotourism in Kerry International Dark Sky Reserve

One of the stated aims of Kerry County Council in their recently published document, *'Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016–2022'*, is to extend the tourism season in the county, in particular in specific areas where the season is presently short. This would include many of the areas within the Kerry IDSR. The strategy makes specific reference to astrotourism development and outlines a number of short and medium term actions designed to increase the visitor numbers to the region and provide a product suited to their specific requirements. As mentioned at the outset of the chapter, astrotourism and dark-sky tourism are very much micro-niche tourism activities. Much mainstream discourse on tourism still focusses on visitor numbers and revenue, at the expense of specific tourism activities which can appeal to particular niche groups.

Some early efforts at encouraging tourism development inside the reserve have already been made. In November 2015, Kerry County Council, in association with Destination Kerry and Fáilte Ireland, hosted an event described as *'a stepping stone'* to helping Kerry IDSR develop to its full potential (Kerry County Council, 2015). *'Star Power'* was a series of presentations and workshops covering topics including astronomy, archaeology and folklore. The gathering also included the presence Ian Foster and Ruth Coulthard, who discussed how the Brecon Beacons IDSR in Wales has created a series of events as well as an annual festival (Hay on Wye Dark

Skies) centred around their dark skies designation. Based upon these insights and discussions with key stakeholders, the following factors would appear to be critical for successful dark-sky tourism product development.

Critical Success Factors for Astrotourism Development in Kerry IDSR

Availability of Resources

Despite the considerable work involved to achieve *gold tier* international dark-sky designation, and the international prestige attached to achieving the designation, this is, in essence, just the starting point for the development of a tourism product around the area of dark skies. Budgets for governmental organisations such as tourism bodies and municipal authorities in Ireland who would ordinarily be best placed to fund tourism projects, have been cut significantly since the recent global economic recession. There has, perhaps understandably, been a focus on mainstream activities, at the expense of more niche projects and initiatives. The Kerry County Council Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016–2022 includes plans for the development of astrotourism among its strategic priorities, with plans for the development of a planetarium in Cahirciveen, a mobile observatory and an Environment Centre at an appropriate location, as well as the rolling out of dark-skies programmes for visitors, in conjunction with tour operators and local communities. Some of these priorities remain very much aspirational at present. However, there is a commitment to address them among tourism stakeholders (Griffin, 2017).

Community Support

According to MacMillan (2017), '*community support is key to the development of successful dark-sky locations*.' It is imperative that communities within the dark-sky area are aware of and are educated about the precious nature of the resource around them and the potential for increased tourism activity it could bring. Given the fragmented and peripheral nature of the regions themselves, local activity must also be supported by more formal structures. Fáilte Ireland is currently in the process of developing a dark-skies tourism strategy, with the terms of reference expected within a number of months following publication of this chapter.

Joined up Thinking

A project such as Kerry IDSR by its nature has a large number of stakeholders, many of whom have differing priorities in terms of what they are seeking to achieve from association with the project. Astronomy and dark-sky enthusiasts may be concerned primarily with conservation matters and protection of the dark skies, while tourism and local authority bodies may be interested in growing tourism numbers and increasing economic activity and job creation. Local people living in the community

are likely to have differing priorities depending on their occupation, concern for the environment, sense of ownership of their community and other associated factors. Joined-up thinking has long been problematic in terms of Irish tourism and heritage development (McGreevy, 2014), given the variety of public, private and community stakeholders involved in tourism projects. The challenge, therefore, is to unite the various stakeholders behind a singular vision for the reserve that will meet the goals and aspirations of all involved.

A Diverse Product

Cloudy skies are a common feature of Ireland's weather pattern and there may only be a small number of days per month where stargazing is possible under clear skies. It is imperative, therefore, that astrotourism product-development includes opportunities for a broad range of associated activities including astrophotography, indoor events and festivals, planetariums, heritage and nature tours and nocturnal wildlife walks (MacMillan, 2017). This is in keeping with best practice at other international reserves.

A Network of IDS Designations

South Kerry has the only IDSR designation in Ireland, but there is an International Dark Sky Park (IDSP) located in County Mayo at Ballycroy National Park and Wild Nephin Wilderness, now jointly known as Mayo IDSP, and which was granted *gold-tier* IDSP status in May 2016. A number of other areas in Ireland are also pursuing IDA designation, including Lough Gur in County Limerick and Cloughjordan County Tipperary (MacMillan, 2017). The possibility exists, therefore, to create a network of dark-sky sites around the country which could be similar to WAW discovery points; sites of particular interest for enthusiasts. This developing critical mass of dark-sky designations in Ireland may allow tourism bodies and relevant dark-sky places to market Ireland thematically, as a dark-sky destination. This would also address the challenges of being 'a stand-alone', micro-niche tourist experience.

Barriers to Astrotourism Development in Kerry IDSR

According to MacMillan (2017), a key barrier to astrotourism development in Ireland is the time involved, both to get local buy-in as well as to unite the community behind the concept. Since the awarding of the gold status designation to Kerry IDSR in 2014, there has been some progress. However, some local stakeholders have also expressed deep frustration with the perceived stagnation of the project and the lack of available resources to proceed (Interviewee A). This frustration may be due to a number of factors, including, but not limited to, poor understanding about the time and levels of research required for successful tourism product development. The impact, however, has been the complete disengagement by some people from the

overall process, leaving a tangible sense of bitterness among some locals who were involved with the original application (Ibid).

Other barriers include the lack of trained stargazing guides and physical infrastructure, such as telescopes and observatories. Kerry County Council has plans in place to address the deficits outlined above in the short and medium term, for example: an 'Introduction to Astronomy' course designed to provide potential stargazing guides with a working knowledge of the night sky will take place on Valentia Island in the coming months (Griffin, 2017). This is the second such programme and is part of a planned series in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland.

A further barrier is the general unpredictability of demand for tourism in many peripheral regions. Price (2010), in researching constraints on the development of rural tourism enterprise in the western regions of Ireland, highlights how high uncertainty and risk in the tourism sector has discouraged private investment in new tourism projects. As identified earlier in the chapter, astrotourism is very much a micro-niche tourism activity. With this in mind, expectations among various stakeholders in relation to visitor numbers to the Kerry IDSR should remain realistic. As an example, visitors for the long established dark-sky programme at Bryce Canyon National Park (USA) totalled just 1.12% of total visitors to the park in 2010 (Collison and Poe, 2013).

Best Practice in Astrotourism Product Development

Astrotourism and related areas are relatively new topics of study and, therefore, there is a lack of critical mass in terms of research on this topic at present. However, an analysis of the limited available research, as well as various other dark-sky projects currently in development, offer some examples of possible best practice approaches for the Kerry IDSR, to complement the critical success factors outlined earlier in the chapter.

Bryce Canyon National Park (BCNP), located in Utah in the USA, has a long-standing astronomy and dark-sky programme at the park (Collison and Poe, 2013). There are four key aspects to the programme;

- Solar observing events (afternoon)
- 60-minute multi-media presentations (evening)
- Stargazing (night-time)
- Full moon hikes in the BCNP amphitheatre (around full moon)

Astronomy and a dark-sky programme is prominently displayed on the BCNP website, and the park also engages in outreach programmes with schools and colleges. BCNP reaches out to amateur astronomy organisations offering a tailored package, and an annual Bryce Canyon Astronomy Festival is also held (Ibid). The

principal attraction of BCNP are 'hoodoos' (rock formations), along with abundant flora and fauna, but the astronomy and dark-sky programme has been a major success for the park.

In closer proximity to Kerry, the Brecon Beacons National Park in south Wales is a *silver level* IDSR (see Table 1). The park runs an extensive dark-sky programme including dark-sky festivals, and local astronomical societies organise stargazing events (Dixon, 2014). They have also developed a successful training and accreditation scheme for local 'dark-sky ambassadors' (Brecon Beacons National Park, 2017).

Conclusion

The awarding in 2014 of gold status IDSR to the Kerry IDSR in south Kerry was fantastic recognition for the region. The challenge now is in determining how to develop and build on this designation from a tourism perspective. Relevant stakeholders, such as Kerry County Council and Fáilte Ireland, have recognised the significance of this status and the potential it has to develop a new niche tourism product for the area, and are currently working on policy to make this happen. However, there has been a feeling among some local stakeholders that the pace of progress has been slow and, as with many niche-tourism products, the question of resources is a significant challenge. There is growing interest in astrotourism and the night sky, however, as visitors become aware of the rewarding and enriching experience that stargazing can offer. The future for Kerry IDSR looks bright.



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CHAPTER 19

Market-oriented Design and Strategic Marketing of New Pelagic Fish Products in Irish SMEs

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Introduction

In order to remain competitive, successful SMEs must adopt an innovative approach to business, on a par with larger businesses. The ability to innovate and launch new products and services is vital to the survival and success of all organisations both large and small (McAdam *et al.*, 2014; Tidd and Bessant, 2013; Jansen *et al.*, 2006). Much of the existing research relating to best practice for NPD focuses on larger firms (Filiari, 2013; Laforet, 2008). However, available research also states that SMEs are significantly different to larger organisations in a variety of ways (McAdam *et al.*, 2014; Filiari, 2013; Massey, 2002; Boag and Rinholm, 1989). While SMEs often may have resource constraints, they are considered to be more informal, innovative, responsive and creative than larger organisations. Large organisations often strive to achieve those attributes through specialist team projects (Tomlinson, 2013; Massey, 2002).

Knowledge management and new product development

Knowledge transfer plays a key role in any successful NPD process. Cooper (2006) suggests that the concept of knowledge transfer is strongly associated with knowledge diffusion, that is: idea and innovation sharing over time throughout a social system, individuals or departments. This process allows for the experiences of one to affect another and instigates changes in the knowledge or performance of that unit (Frank *et al.*, 2015; Frank and Echeveste, 2012; Argote and Ingram, 2000). It is necessary to control the management of knowledge between not only the consumer and organisation, but also within the many functions of an organisation involved in the NPD process. Problems such as consumer acceptance and design issues can occur during the NPD process if knowledge is not managed correctly at all stages of the NPD process (Lawson and Potter, 2012; Bogue and Sorenson 2006).

Available research has shown that knowledge management is a key factor which contributes to efficient and successful NPD (Marra, *et al.*, 2012; Hirunyawipada, *et al.*, 2010; Shankar *et al.*, 2009; Cooper *et al.*, 2004). The development, management and exploitation of knowledge within an organisation are all fundamental to innovation which, in turn, allows an organisation to survive, compete, and grow (Shankar *et al.*, 2009; Collinson, 2003; Kogut and Zander, 1992). An organisation that possesses competitive advantage maintains rigorous knowledge related activities and maintains efficient NPD processes (Hirunyawipada, *et al.*, 2010; Shankar *et al.*, 2009; Clark and Fujimoto, 1991). By way of example, Brown and Eisenhardt, (1995) organise the empirical literature into three perspectives: product development as rational planning; communication webs; and disciplined problem solving. Rational planning intends to meet the goals and objectives laid out in the NPD strategic plan (Richtnér and Åhlström, 2010). This includes processes which are well structured, proactive and systematic, with the aim of addressing the goals of the project (Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000). While rational planning should work in harmony with problem solving, the latter also deals with issues of uncertainty, or the serendipitous nature of NPD. Problem-solving related to NPD activities often focus on short-term solutions (Hirunyawipada, *et al.*, 2010; Richtnér and Åhlström 2010). The communication web focuses on the human and social aspects of NPD and includes factors such as: group and individual goal oriented behaviours; formal communication lines; relationships; and activities relating to social networking (Hirunyawipada, *et al.*, 2010).

The similarities of most models, such as Krishnan and Gupta, (2001) and Lewis *et al.*, (2002), is that the knowledge which is acquired is not centralised, but rather it is distributed and tacitly stored in the minds of specialised employees (Alavi and Tiwana, 2002; Kreiner, 2002). Therefore, methods, practices and processes of managing knowledge can affect how an organisation generates, stores and mobilises their business knowledge about NPD. Processes which are knowledge-enabling in relation to NPD should not be too formally managed, or based on standardised best practices, if optimal performance is the goal (Barczak *et al.*, 2009). This can pose a

problem for management, as formality and standardisation can ground NPD, which, by its nature, is unpredictable and requires patience, dedication and creativity. This may lead to the need for contrasting opinions to coexist in an environment of unease (Cooper *et al.*, 2004).

Innovation in the food industry, in the form of product development, is necessary for any organisation to be competitive on a national or international level (Stewart-Knox and Mitchell, 2003). The rate of failure of new products throughout the world, specifically in the area of food, are reportedly high (Bogue and Sorenson, 2006). This high failure rate is not a new phenomenon, as many authors concur that as many as 90% of new food related products fail in the first year (Moskowitz *et al.*, 2012). However, if the term 'new' only applies to food products that are 'new to the consumer', then the number of food products that fail is significantly lower, as only 7% to 25% of new food products are truly innovative (Moskowitz *et al.*, 2008). Taking into consideration the low innovation rate, coupled with the high failure rates of new food products once they reach the market place, it is clear that the process and methods for food related NPD need to be managed (Grunert and Traill, 2012). Stewart-Knox and Mitchell (2003 p.58), state that the process should be, '...focused, quantitative, rapid and knowledge based'. Bogue and Sorenson, (2006 p.11) further state that,

'...new food product development is a multi-disciplinary knowledge-intensive process, which necessitates the generation, dissemination and management of knowledge across all functions involved in the development of new foods and beverages.'

Bogue and Sorenson's (2006) research highlights the importance of the early stages of the NPD process for controlled knowledge management, within the context of both managing the organisations capabilities internally as well as relevant external factors, particularly the needs of the customer. This research states that there are inherent risks associated with food-related NPD, along with the suggestion that the competitive market place requires the need for effective knowledge management within the NPD process itself. In the initial stages of food-related NPD, there is a need for a high level of customer involvement and integration, all of which enhances knowledge management. This argument is consistent with previous studies from Stewart-Knox *et al.*, (2003); Hoban, (1998); Kristensen *et al.*, (1998). Furthermore, recent research from Al-zu'bi and Tsinopoulos (2012) and Mahr *et al.*, (2014) states conclusively that, knowledge gathered from consumers, retailers and the food market in general, are linked to overall product success.

Market orientation and organisational performance

The product design of tangible goods and services is an area of competitive advantage for companies (Luchs and Swan, 2011; Srivastava *et al.*, 1999; Yamamoto

and Lambert, 1994). The debate about market-oriented design versus market-led design is widely acknowledged (Lindhahl and Nordin, 2010; Jang *et al.*, 2009; Biemans, 1995). However, most of the available research concurs that the business model, the product itself, as well as the business management strategies of a firm, can all predict the outcome in choosing a marketing concept. Slater and Narver (1998) state that, both market-oriented design and market-led design consist of different business activities, but that market-led designs tend to be short-term and focus more heavily on consumer needs and desires. However, this method results in a lack of innovation and competitive advantage. A successful market-oriented business strives to understand and meet the needs of consumers, acquire and evaluate market information in an anticipatory manner, and coordinates across departments to share knowledge in a focused manner (Pascual-Fernández *et al.*, 2016; Boso *et al.*, 2013; Narver and Slater, 1995).

A market orientated culture is dependent upon the creation and distribution of intelligence gathered from the market, in order to gain competitive advantage and to increase organisational performance (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2011; Gebauer *et al.*, 2011; Cheng and Krumwiede, 2011; Ren *et al.*, 2010). There are two methods of viewing market orientation: from a cultural perspective, or an operative perspective (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). Within the culture of a successful food business organisation, market orientation encourages organisation-wide, cross-departmental and cross-functional cooperation, both horizontally and vertically. This coordination creates high value for consumers, out-performs other competitors, and increases profits for an organisation (Li *et al.*, 2010; Baker and Sinkula, 2007; Narver and Slater, 1990). Kohli and Jaworski, (1990) suggest that market orientation is a constantly evolving process, which entails activities including generation of intelligence, reaction to intelligence gathered, and an internal diffusion of that intelligence. Overall market orientation involves using organisation-wide cooperation in order to identify consumer needs and then, to meet those needs by gaining specific knowledge that contributes to greater value for the customer (Li *et al.*, 2010; Carson and Carson, 2003; Kahn, 2001; Kotler *et al.*, 1999; Narver and Slater, 1990).

Developing consumer-oriented products is essential to new product success (Ren *et al.*, 2010; Voss and Voss, 2000). The perception of a product by the target customer is an essential element of new product success (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2011; Ren *et al.*, 2010; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). The marketing department must be in tune with what the consumers' needs and wants are, and it is incumbent on them to pass that information onto the Research and Development (R&D) department, so that it can be channelled into the product features (Bilgihan *et al.*, 2011; Ren *et al.*, 2010; Cohen *et al.*, 1996; Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Market orientation allows organisations to listen to the needs of the customer and to respond to those needs, thereby maximising profits (Atuahene-Gima and Evangelista, 2000). Gebauer *et al.*, (2011) and Achrol and

Kotler, (1999) argue that understanding what the customer wants and needs is not sufficient to be considered a market-oriented organisation, and that competitors can also initiate market change by the introduction of new products. Therefore, it is not enough to merely understand, in isolation, the needs of the consumer; it is necessary to also know what competitors are doing to meet those needs (Cheng and Krumwiede, 2011; Bowman and Gatignon, 1995).

Market orientation is effective particularly with 'new to market' products along with 'new to organisation' products (Gebauer *et al.*, 2011; Sandvik and Sandvik, 2003). Cooper (1994) states that new to organisation products, introduced by the organisation for the first time, must be alert to their business competitors, as there may be rivals in the market offering a similar product which may be an imitation of a competitor's successful product. 'New to market' products are the very first type on the market and developed by the organisation (Al-alak and Tarabieh, 2011). However, market orientation can hinder creativity and innovation and, ultimately, the development of new products, particularly those which are new to the market, leaving organisations to focus on the products, which may only be new to the organisation (Ulwick, 2002). This validates the argument that customers cannot always foresee or articulate their future needs (Al-alak and Tarabieh, 2011; Ulwick, 2002). Therefore, according to O'Connor and Van Egeren (1998), market orientation, with the consumer as the main source of ideas, is likely to result in the production of additional products, which are 'new to the market'. However, a culture of market orientation may allow for innovations which are matched to the wants of the consumer, and that market orientation will allow the organisation to be innovative and attain new product success (Sandvik and Sandvik, 2003; Lukas and Ferrell, 2000).

The expectation and perception of a potential customer is that a new food product will have an increased value and higher quality level, by comparison to other food products currently available. Food organisations, therefore, will develop and expand a range of new products which are of superior quality and value, which the consumer will embrace (Dijksterhuis, 2016). Any organisation which is incapable of creating and marketing food which the consumer needs and accepts is likely to fail (Jaeger and MacFie, 2010). The food and beverage industry is particularly slow-moving in relation to innovation and NPD (Bruhn, 2008). The food and beverage industry is also better known for cost reductions and ingredient substitutions than for innovation and, even when innovation does occur, it is focused on areas such as new packaging or new processes, rather than new product (Costa *et al.*, 2016). Likewise, the food and beverage trade is categorised as an industry, with which the consumer lacks interest and involvement when products are being developed (Hjelmar, 2011; Verbeke and Vackier, 2004). The level of customer interest and involvement can vary enormously from individual to individual, and can have a huge influence on the overall impact on food preferences and food choice (Bell and Marshall, 2003). Jaeger and MacFie (2010) further state that, in order to achieve consistent involvement in the development

process of food, from the point of view of potential consumers, there must be an enjoyable buying/eating experience, but that primarily, the product must first capture the interest of the consumer. This interest in food products will lead to engagement by the consumer in the developmental process, and will minimise the perceived risk they may have of making a wrong choice at the point of purchase (Hjelmar, 2011). When the consumer has a pleasant experience, the expectation of further positive experiences in the future is reinforced, which in turn leads to repeat purchasing and brand loyalty (Bell and Marshall, 2003).

Value addition and NPD within seafood SMEs

The overall economic contribution by the fisheries and agri-food sector to the Irish gross domestic product (GDP), is worth annually approximately €24 billion, and creates employment for more than 150,000 people (Teagasc, 2016). The seafood industry in Ireland consists of primary, secondary and value addition processing. The industry is focused on primary processing, which amounts to 75% of all processing, and is mainly whole fish exports. Secondary processing accounts for 24% and this can involve as little as filleting or head and gut removal. The remaining 1% of fish landed in Irish waters is for value-added processing (Marine Institute, 2013). The Irish Department of Agriculture (DAFM) recently published an implementation plan for a 10-year vision for the Irish agri-food industry: Food Wise 2025, in which it states that the DAFM aims to increase the primary outputs by 33%. Food Wise 2025 also states that, it will not only increase the value added sector by 40%, but also the value of those exports by 42% (DAFM, 2015a). This is why the agri-food and fisheries industry is so fundamental to the overall plan for economic growth within Ireland (Fareilly, 2014).

Adding value to food products following primary processing can encompass a variety of activities from infant formula to prepared consumer foods (Bleiel, 2010). The sustainability of the Irish agri-food sector is dependent on the continuous development of value-added foods for the marketplace (DAFM, 2015b). Developing value-added products can provide many benefits to an organisation, including: the development of diverse product ranges, allowing for higher sales; the creation of off-season income; an increase in the profitability of seafood-related products; a knock-on effect for other sectors to create income for seafood products; the development of business creativity, and an assurance of the use of excess product (BIM, 2014). The sales of such value-added products will benefit the economy through job creation (Hu *et al.*, 2012).

Numerous large organisations within Ireland show growth in the food export focused sector. However, the biggest potential for growth in Irish food exports lies with SMEs. These small and medium businesses have the potential to upscale and become drivers within the sector (Shokria, *et al.*, 2010). Accelerating the growth of SMEs, with a greater focus on value addition in the food sector, will lead to significant growth in

regional development and the creation of employment (DAFM, 2015b). In order to be successful and to capitalise on consumer trends, the value-added sector needs to focus on market research, innovation and NPD. DAFM, (2015a) outlines in Food Wise 2025, various components that are needed if the DAFM is to be successful in meeting their 2025 target of increasing value-added food and beverage output by 40%. These targets include: increased competitiveness, innovation, and market development.

Although value creation is a widely used term, an established definition does not exist, but there are specific themes which are consistently apparent in discussions on the topic (Sahay and Sahay, 2017). One view of value creation is that it is the process of improving the qualitative content of a product or service, thereby improving the product's overall worthiness (Bleiel, 2010). Other theories are that adding value lies in the actual costs of the finished product, and what the cost of creating that finished product entailed (Powers, 2012). The latter states that value addition is linked to value creation activities, such as those discussed in Porters value chain model. As value addition can be applied to almost any sector (Chetty *et al.*, 2012), there must be specific criteria applied to each situation or sector, as there is no single set of criteria which will cover value creation on the whole, or which can be applied to any and every situation (Sharma *et al.*, 2010).

Within the fishing industry to date, there has been a shortage in the supply of established and conventional species of fish, for example: salmon (DAMF, 2015c). This shortage of supply has required that the seafood processing industry in Ireland has had to adapt and explore the possibility of using less well-established species of fish, such as boarfish, in the creation of value added products (DAMF, 2015c; Farelly, 2014; Fagan, 2006). The development of new markets also calls for these organisations to not only use underutilised species, but also to become innovative and to diversify their new product ranges (Farelly, 2014; Aquafind, 2012). For new to market products to achieve success, technical expertise and new technologies are also essential in the overall process of creating value-added food products, particularly for functional foods, as an understanding of ingredients is vital (Bleiel, 2010). For example, if an organisation decides to include algae, or other marine materials, in the development of a new value-added food product, research into that product's viability at market level is essential to its overall future success. Such research would require an investment in technologies, which will allow the NPD process to be scaled-up and for the commercialisation of value-added products to occur (DAFM, 2015b).

Burke (2010), states that there is an advantage for SMEs in relation to value-added products as, due to their size, they can relate to and understand their customers' wants and needs much more clearly than larger companies. The competitive advantage that SMEs acquire, if leveraged correctly, can help in sustaining new products in the market place and allows organisations to expand their client base (Dora, *et al.*, 2013). Value-added products allow businesses to increase sales through product diversity which, in turn, increases and stabilizes gross profits (The

Independent, 2012). Product diversity can be realised by altering the product, often in some seemingly small way. However, the physical product need not always change; rather, the packaging or the advertising may be the sole change (Dora, *et al.*, 2013). The target of product diversity is to reach new potential customers and to allow them to view the organisation's product as being different and superior to that which competitors offer (Trott, 2008). Once a manufacturer has a secondary product available, and after primary processing is complete, then adding value to that product may help to stabilise income for that business (Martel, 2012). In the case of seafood, the organisation has control over a variety of important issues such as pricing, and the outlets in which the product is sold. This is due to the fact that the product is unique and incomparable with the products of competitors (Bradbear, 2009).

Value-added products contribute significantly to the Irish economy (Teagasc, 2016), and contribute to Ireland as a food tourism destination (Fáilte Ireland, 2017). Marketing has now turned to destinations and their distinctive cuisines, as a means of individualising the tourism experience (Lin *et al.*, 2011; Boyne *et al.*, 2002). This is evident in the demand from the consumer to connect with food (Hunt, 2011). In 2016, Northern Ireland was marketed by the Tourism Northern Ireland as: 'Destination Delicious'. This marketing strategy focuses on selling Northern Ireland as a clean environment where consumers can experience local food and distinctive cuisines.

'Here, out of a landscape of lush green fields, fresh pure lakes and crystal clean Atlantic and Irish Sea waters, a distinct food culture has developed, with a focus on the very best local ingredients.' (Tourism Northern Ireland 2015).

A similar marketing strategy has been launched in other countries, such as 'A Taste of Wales' and 'Taste of Ireland, both of which play on the consumers desire to connect with their destination through local and artisan food and regional specialisms (Everett, 2016). Such target-specific marketing campaigns can promote the cost-effective development of rural economies and attract tourists to areas that they otherwise may have never been familiar with (Everett, 2016; Mac Con Iomaire and Maher, 2014; Green & Dougherty, 2008). A key example of this can be seen with the launch by Fáilte Ireland of the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW), a sign-posted coastal route along Ireland's western seaboard. Many food trails have subsequently been established as a direct result. 'Taste the Atlantic – a Seafood Journey' is a food trail ranging from north County Mayo to south County Galway, which is promoted by BMI and Fáilte Ireland along the WAW and which includes multiple seafood SMEs producing abalone, mussels, oysters and salmon (BIM, 2017). These seafood products are produced almost exclusively by SMEs, some of which include: the Connemara Smokehouse, Croagh Patrick Seafoods, Marty's Mussels and Kelly's Oysters. It is the NPD activities of these SMEs, and their consistent innovation, that keeps such food trails attractive for food tourism in Ireland Everett (2016).

Methodology

Exploratory interviews

The first part of this research was exploratory in order to assess extant NPD activities and processes currently taking place in seafood related SMEs in Ireland. Then, this was compared with those practices evident from available literature. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-four small and medium sized Irish fish processors. The in-depth interviews covered four main themes: new product development activities within the organisation; types of new product development processes employed; inclusion of the consumer in the new product development process; and the organisation's general attitude towards new product development. Qualitative research generally uses non-probability sampling. This is due to the nature of the research being concerned with a specific context and tends to collect in-depth data from a small representation of the overall population (Botherton, 2015). For these interviews in this research paper, participants were selected through non-probability sampling and through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to identify what characteristics the participants must have, and then approach potential participants to establish whether or not they meet the criteria (Milman, 2011).

Research participants were selected based on the fact that they were registered as a fresh fishery products plant, and also approved under Regulation (EC) No 853 / 2004, Ireland in 2016. They were also required to meet the criteria of an SME in Ireland, that is: organisations that,

'...employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding €50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million.' (European Union, 2003).

There is a population total of 187 seafood companies registered under Regulation (EC) No 853 / 2004; Ireland in 2016. Accordingly, twenty-four in-depth interviews were undertaken, which equates to a sample of 12.5% of the overall available population.

The general findings from these interviews are that seafood related SMEs are actively engaging in adding value to their products. However, the definition of 'value-added' varied with each organisation; some organisations suggest that, if they process a fish, then they have added value. This is demonstrated by the following response from one organisation when asked, 'What do you consider to be a value added product?'

'We would consider nearly all of it to be value-added because every product that comes in we actually are processing it and adding value to it. (Research respondent; SME representative)

Other respondents suggested that they must alter a current food product, or create a new one, in order to add value to a product. When asked what they you considered

to be a value-added product, one organisation stated the following:

'It's something that a bit of work has gone into it and it has changed from whatever it looked to start with, that's what physically it has changed [sic].'

While another respondent gave the following response to the same question:

'[It is]... something that the customer hasn't seen before, something that the customer wants and needs, and something that we think is going to sell.'

Of the twenty-four interviewees, the majority did not use a structured step-by-step new product development process. Respondents who said that they didn't use a step-by-step process suggested instead that they were just too small of a business enterprise to require such a process. When asked if they could describe the NPD process which is employed by their organisation, one respondent stated:

'You want to do that one [so] you ask the chef if it's possible or worthwhile to do it, or produce a product like that, then you would start testing it to see how much of a shelf life you have to do it [sic]. All this [new product development], it has to be done with the help of the Health Board, so you are talking to them. More or less you have to follow whatever they say before you can do it, so that's basically really what it is.'

While another respondent from an SME organisation suggested:

'It's really just myself and 'S', banging heads together, saying, okay, let's do... there's nothing like that out there [in terms of a new product] like this. 'S' does a lot of research of the kind of beauty products [that] are out there and on my end, it's the food, so I see there is a niche there for something that we could actually fill with the stuff [sic]. Whatever we grow on the farm we want to actually have a value added product for [sic].'

However, there were three SMEs who stated that they do use a structured system. One summarised their plan as follows:

'So we had our 'create session' and then we had our plan. Our idea generator was when we had our create session. Then we did our market analysis: what are the best selling products [and what] target market we are going to aim for? Then we put a critical control path in place. Then we went through product development. Well, we have to go through these all yet, you understand. Product development and the design stage of packaging and, if you are going for a sleeve label or whatever, feasibility, product testing for your shelf life analysis, nutritional value, first production run, product launch and then post launch evaluation.'

This evidence is consistent with available literature, which suggests an established definition does not exist, but that there are specific themes, which are consistently apparent in discussions on the topic (Sahay and Sahay, 2017). Bleiels' (2010)

suggestion that value creation is the process of improving the qualitative content of a product is reflective in many of the responses gathered throughout the interviews for this research paper. There were also consistencies with other research in available literature, such as that of Powers (2012), which suggests adding value lies in the cost of the finished product.

In relation to market orientation, and the stage at which consumers are involved in the NPD process, none of the respondents to this research from SME organisations could see any value in consulting with the consumer prior to beginning NPD. Many organisations did not involve the consumer at any stage in the process and, those who did, often only did so at the sensory stage:

'I think I know what the customer wants. We get a good response from the way we are doing it. Obviously, look, we are trying to sell the stuff, we are not trying to say that we know it all [sic]. If people say it's too salty or creamy, or too this or that, of course we will listen.'

The importance of market-led designs and looking at ongoing consumer needs and desires were cited by numerous respondents of SME organisations, rather than a market oriented approach:

'With the shop there, we actually get a lot of customer feedback, because we have a great guy in the shop, and he is very good at talking to the customer, and any ideas they might say, like: I really like this or I really like that, he will take it back [sic]. So that has helped us a little bit as well, but we haven't probably utilised it enough.'

Focus group interviews for conjoint analysis

The concept of conjoint analysis is a 'bottom-up' process, one which empowers the development of concepts by combining multiple components in order to create multiple combinations and variations of a product in the early stages of the new product development process (SPSS, 2016; Bogue *et al.*, 2009; 2007; Gustaffson *et al.*, 2001 and Green and Srinivasan, 1980). During this process, the factors which influence consumers' buying decisions are considered. Products consist of a certain bundle of attributes such as: price; ingredients; packaging; size; brand, and colour. The average consumer is not actually able to avail of the optimum of all these attributes, for example: the lowest price, but the best ingredients. Therefore, the customer is obliged to make a trade-off decision when choosing a product from a representative set of attribute combinations.

A key aspect of the initial stage in the development of the conjoint analysis study is to determine a specific range of product attributes that might influence purchase, and the corresponding attribute levels. For food products, which are considered 'low involvement products', Lee *et al.*, (2000) state that the use of interviews or

focus groups are most appropriate in the identification of the attributes' driving preferences. The food firm, or the consumer, can then usually identify the attribute levels. For the purpose of this research, interviews were conducted with five focus groups, with eight participants in each group. Respondents were asked to determine the attributes they would most likely consider when purchasing a convenient fish product, as well as the characteristics of that attribute, for example: a fish product, which contains a fish with which they are familiar, compared with one that comprises a type of fish which is new to them. This allows for a true representation of attributes of a product, which a consumer would realistically be likely to encounter in the 'real' marketplace. In determining specific attributes and attribute levels in this way, the development of a consumer-driven concept can be achieved.

Focus group participants were selected from three Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) clubs throughout Ireland. The GAA is Ireland's largest sporting organisation. The ethos of the GAA is based on a parish system and is a community-based organisation with over 2,200 clubs in Ireland and 1.5 members (GAA, 2016). The Central Statistics Office (CSO) census of 2016, states that the Irish population is 4,757,976 (CSO, 2016). Therefore, GAA members are considered to be a representative sample of the entire population of Ireland, presenting at census as 31.5% of the population.

Most participants from these focus groups suggested that brand would not be a factor when purchasing seafood products, that they were not brand-loyal. However, when it came to a new product that they were completely unfamiliar with, then brand was a reassuring factor:

'Well, if you have the same product from two different companies on the shop shelf, you will pick up the one, if you were buying it for the first time, you would pick up the name you recognise rather than the name you didn't recognise [sic].'

Information about the product was of high importance to most participants in the focus group. Product information appears in many forms. Some respondents suggested that knowing the nutritional benefits of the product was of great importance to them, and that this would be a significant factor as to whether or not they would purchase the product. Other respondents noted that they would not know how to cook fish, or what to serve with fish, and that having suggestions on the packaging would encourage them to buy a new product. Other information that was noted as being important to respondents, who are themselves consumers in this process, was the question of where the fish had come from, or what its place of origin was:

'I think to understand, just through education on nutrition, like, since I found out the kind of health benefits of, like, fish oils and all these kind of things, I'd be a lot more inclined to eat it [sic].'

'Like, basically with a new product, you want to know how to cook it and what goes with it [sic].'

'If you're buying from a company that has a theme or a brand that was local, they'd [perhaps be] a strong local [company], even if it wasn't local to Mayo, maybe that it was like the 'The Happy Pear,' they have a theme that is a strong brand of being local [sic].'

Further research

Data gathered from the focus groups will be used in further development of a conjoint-based study. It is to be distributed using a hard copy questionnaire after a pilot test is conducted. This conjoint-based study intends to investigate respondents' preferences, or otherwise, for pelagic-based fish products. It is intended that respondents will be presented with twenty-two hypothetical pelagic-based fish products to rate on a nine-point Likert scale, corresponding to their purchase preference. In order to ensure validity and reliability, while also striving to avoid respondent fatigue, only the most relevant product attributes, all derived from the focus group responses, will be selected for the study. In the pelagic-based fish product survey, four hundred conjoint-based questionnaires will be distributed to consumers in the Irish counties of Donegal, Mayo, Dublin and Limerick, and all within a two-month period. Respondents will be recruited through non-probability sampling, using both intercept and purposive sampling.

Following the conjoint analysis, sensory analysis will be conducted. Stone and Sidel (2012) describe sensory analysis as a scientific discipline. Essentially, it is the measurement and interpretation of reactions of the five senses: sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. Preference and acceptability testing is more concerned with the consumer's ability to differentiate between competing products and whether or not they perceive improvements, and/or their own acceptability of a product. The target participants for this would ideally be members of the target population who do not necessarily need to understand the in-depth characteristics of the product or the concept of sensory analysis.

For the purpose of this research, a prototype product will be developed using boarfish as a key ingredient. This research will be developed as a direct result of responses from the focus groups and conjoint analysis. The prototype will be produced through Letterkenny Institute of Technology, at its Killybegs campus. It is anticipated that sensory testing will be conducted with the assistance of fifty research participants. The type of sensory testing used will include acceptability tests, in order to establish acceptability by a new consumer of an added-value fish product on the Irish market, using a new species of fish, in this case: boarfish.

Conclusion

Many food firms do not habitually engage in market-oriented NPD where the consumer is integrated into the NPD process at the early design stages. This research paper confirms that Irish seafood SMEs do not include the consumer in the product development process, at least not until the latter stages of production and that, when inclusion occurs, it is mainly in the area of sensory analysis. This research further explores the NPD process employed by Irish seafood SMEs, specifically: whether or not examining and obtaining customer knowledge at the early stages of the NPD process, as well as applying that knowledge, can be of benefit in the development of new products. Based on available literature regarding market-oriented NPD and primary research conducted in the form of focus groups, it is clear that consumers do have many expectations and requirements when making decisions on purchasing food products. Through conducting a conjoint analysis and sensory analysis, it has been shown that the inclusion of the consumer at the early stages of the product development process does increase consumer acceptability of new seafood products, including those which contain unfamiliar ingredients, such as a species of fish that is relatively new or previously unknown to the consumer.

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CHAPTER 20

'SHLIGO SHTYLE' Opportunities to Develop Ethnomusicology Tourism along the Wild Atlantic Way

Joanna Sweeney

Introduction

This chapter analyses the ethnically-traditional Irish music scene in the North West region of Ireland and focuses particularly on Sligo, which is a county with a long-standing reputation for traditional Irish music. In ethnomusicology, the term 'Sligo Style' has been coined to refer to the unique traditional playing, repertoire, compositions and musicianship of musicians in and from the Sligo region. Primary research was conducted using purposive sampling to access interviewees and, subsequently, five in-depth interviews were conducted with experts of traditional Irish music, specialising in the Sligo Style. Data-gathering involved asking seven open-ended questions, all of which focused on Sligo Style music, trends and opportunities, as seen by the interviewees who are, on a daily basis, at the music forefront: all of the interviewees work in the cultural economy and are also Sligo Style musicians, or 'musos'. It has been established that there is currently an emerging development of a creative economy and that this research is timely for the ethno-music tourism industry. Various opportunities are proposed and the chapter will include a glimpse into the potential future direction for music tourism.

Ethnographic Musicology in an Irish Context

Within the field of ethnomusicology, music can be divided into three distinct categories:

- 1) Ethnic music, which comprises the music in cultures without a written tradition
- 2) Non-western classical music, such as the religious and court music of cultures which do have a written musical heritage like, for example, China, India and the Middle East
- 3) Folk music, which is music from cultures with a written musical culture that belongs to the classical tradition (Cornelis et al 2010: 1010).

Music tourism benefits many international cities to the tune of billions of dollars each year. Tourism assets include a city's year-round live music scene, music festivals and historical landmarks. Some cities have developed comprehensive music tourism strategies that involve music-based branding, promotional campaigns, way-finding Apps and other social media strategies. Many have also ring-fenced investment in music infrastructure and signage and programming. Accurate measurement of music tourism is a common gap, since it is normally grouped with cultural tourism (Report: The mastering of a music city, Canada, 2017:15). Relevant strands to this theory include artists and musicians, as well as music scene opportunities for education and the promotion of inclusive tourism marketing for all. Music can provide a powerful role in building a city's brand. For a select group of cities with strong music scenes, or deep musical heritages, music is a big part of 'who they are'. To this end, consider the connection between Liverpool and the Beatles; Memphis and Elvis; Johnny Cash and Nashville, which is an already well-established Music City (Report: The mastering of a music city, Canada, 2017:25). Furthermore, Austin, Melbourne, South Australia and, more recently, Toronto are also witnesses to this phenomenon. In all of these places, music stakeholders have gained a seat at government departments which are focused on industry or economic developments, as well as cultural affairs. This gives music a metaphorically louder 'voice' with an arm of government that has greater policymaking and funding clout (Report: The mastering of a music city, Canada, 2017:30).

In recent years, music tourism has become something which canny European music festival promoters talk about at strategic industry gatherings. These promoters know that being able to attract music fans from outside the festivals' hinterland, is a good thing from their 'bottom line' perspective. In addition, this can also help promoters to access funding from local and national tourism bodies. In 2013, the online tourism promotion websites, Visit Britain and UK Music both estimated that tourists going to concerts and festivals are worth £2.2 billion a year to the UK economy (Irish Times, 18/10/13). Here in Ireland, The Gathering Ireland initiative of 2013, harnessed enormous tourist potential and significantly advanced this angle to tourism

development into the Irish mindset. Quoting from an article in the Irish Times in 2013,

'It's clear that the music tourism contribution to the tourism sector and overall economy is significant. Something for all involved, to think about when it comes to marketing and promoting future events.'

While compiling this research, it became evident to the author that music is embedded in Irish culture, with one respondent stating the obvious:

'The Harp is the national symbol of Ireland. The music is our identity.'
(Respondent, Sligo Festival Board Member).

These unique cultural aspects of Irish-ness are often overlooked, to the detriment of the type of music tourism branding proposed here.

Travelling to the Sound of World Music

Music tourism is the act of visiting a city or town, specifically in order to see a music festival or to attend other music performances. This type of tourism is particularly important to towns such as Glastonbury in England, for example, where the name 'Glastonbury Festival' has become synonymous with this region in global terms. Johnson (2002:9) suggests that music transcends a national, regional or cultural boundary and, furthermore, that it highlights the contradictions of observing people making music who may imagine its origins, but who play it outside its original context. The various ways in which musicians conceptualise, respond and connect with music, offers a referential geographic location. Music often references a cultural 'home', but so-called music makers are not always located in the same place as that which the music references. An inherent aspect of any global flow of music is the meeting of cultures.

'It is difficult to make that connect by chatting to someone. It is a way of connecting with people, other musicians and audience and listeners.'
(Respondent, Music educator).

Tourism, travel and the world music industry, that is to say, globally diverse and often western or non-western folk music, which is specifically marketed for music lovers and transcends national and cultural borders, are all very much connected with the idea of globalisation. The promotion of cultural soundscapes as part of an overall musical experience, other than merely within the tourist industry, raises questions about the manner in which music is exploited globally. This includes, for example, music performed for tourists, where it has found an important place in cultural representation, and musical performances by musicians outside that music's perceived home. The popular phenomenon of African drumming in Australia is a case in point.

Tourists are collaborators in, and at times the instigators of, cultural change and development (Johnson, 2002:12).

'Learning an instrument is like a life lesson, [it] teaches one the art of patience. There is no end to it; there is always a new tune to find.' (Respondent, Irish pipe instrument maker).

Performances of gamelan music in Bali are regularly broadcast on Indonesian radio and television, and gamelan is ubiquitous in everyday media culture, from advertising to fashion shows. It also plays a key role in attracting foreign visitors to the country (Johnson 2002: 13).

There is, however, a theory of anti-tourism regarding the authenticity and the introduction of non-traditional instruments, such as electronic drum kits, guitars and synthesisers, which is believed by some to dilute the overall integrity of the music. This opinion came across repeatedly during the in-depth interviews conducted for this research. It transpires that 'musos' are very cautious about the way the art of music is represented and marketed. The international hit show, Riverdance was used as an example of non-authentic musical representation, and is an illustration of staged authenticity in action.

'The music [sic] is Ireland's primary natural resource. It should be unique, packaged in an authentic way and start and end with the music.' (Respondent, Sligo Festival Board member).

Both the tourism industry and performing arts sector are interdependent. Touristic culture is very much a part of Irish authenticity.

Sonic tourism is an interesting concept using natural surroundings to inspire the composer to make music. Examples of this currently in the Irish traditional music genre include Daithi and Claudia Schwab, who use sounds from nature and landscape, incorporating them into their tunes (<http://www.breakingtunes.com/daithimusic>). The world music industry is very much connected with globalisation. Indeed, world music has had an immense impact on the music industry (Johnson 2002: 22). Global superstar, Ed Sheeran's new album, 'Divide', features a host of Irish musicians, while Ed himself boasts on his website about the influence that Irish folk music has had on his career to date (<http://www.edsheeran.com>). Increasing global flow has meant that international corporate organisations tend to dominate markets all over the world, significantly cashing-in on the popularisation of music in general. Music is also used as therapy, allegedly transforming parts of the human body and being in a positive manner both emotionally and psychologically. Some practitioners claim that music therapy is linked to identity, ethnicity and the healing of mind, body and soul. Access to music as a therapy through a digital context creates an immediate global market.

'Music has a hugely positive effect on people's lives and health.' (Respondent, Sligo Festival Board Member).

As music is available to all age groups and genders, there are many indications that music can also assist with the work of healing in the following areas: psychiatry, cancer care, patients with traumatic brain injury, patients with chronic illness, and in curative education, as well as in Waldorf schools (Putz, 2008; Reinhold, 1996: cited in Intveen, 2010:370).

One no longer has to go to Bali to study Balinese music and the local/global dynamics of place are indeed brought to the foreground (Johnson 2002:26).

'Video recordings on-line, smart phones, [these are] professional tools to [with which to] share and promote music. There is a trend away from conventional recording, CD production and uploading music straight onto i-Tunes and/or SoundCloud, although vinyl is allowing people to rediscover an older sound.' (Respondent, music educator).

Global trends are having an influence on how tourists interact with music. Musicians are now using technology to be creative in terms of making and exposing their music to audiences, and many global artists want to get 'in on the action', in other words, to exploit this by claiming their Irish roots.

The timely Irish traditional revival

The newly launched Culture Day, *Cruinniú na Cásca*, which is planned to become an annual Irish event, aims to celebrate Irish culture and creativity in contemporary Irish society through a variety of live music and dance, coding, theatre, art and music workshops, talks and tastings, readings and screenings, special events and more (<https://www.rte.ie/culture/2016/1208/837429-annual-culture-day/>).

Enda Kenny, Taoiseach of Ireland, speaking at the recently launched Creative Ireland Strategy (2017–2022), endorsed this by saying,

'...it involves placing culture at the centre of our lives, for the betterment of our people and for the strengthening of our society. Together we can do extraordinary things: we can make Ireland the first country in the world to guarantee access for every child to tuition and participation in art, music, drama and coding. We can make every local authority a dynamic hub of cultural creativity. We can unlock the huge potential of our people in the creative industries. And we can make an important statement to ourselves and to the world about interdependency of culture, identity and citizenship.' (Culture Ireland, 8/12/16).

Built on a number of action plans, Pillar 5 from the Culture Ireland Strategy promises to develop shared strategic goals in order to maximise the impact and visibility of collective efforts. Furthermore, it aspires to create a communications programme based on an authentic representation of Irish culture and creativity, representing Ireland as a great place in which to live, in which to invest, to visit and in which to study.

Ireland now has a designated national website, www.ireland.ie, which offers a multi-sectorial gateway to Ireland, with supporting digital and social media programmes. This initiative will be particularly important with regard to future tourist projections for Ireland in the context of Brexit. This pillar will involve many government departments and agencies, including the Culture Ireland division of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, who operate at an international level (<http://creative.ireland.ie/11/04/2017>).

"STOP marketing and start marketing in an authentic way. Talk to the musicians and practitioners who know about the industry and put these people in jobs [sic]." (Respondent, Sligo Festival Board Member).

A number of agencies and groups already exist, such as Music Network and Music Generation. The latter was initiated by Music Network and was co-founded by the following: the Irish band, U2; the funding organisation, Ireland Funds; the Department of Education and Skills; as well as local music education partnerships (Irish Times 22/11/16). Music Network acts as an advisor and marketer of Irish musical events, while Music Generation offers funding to schools in support of music-related initiatives and music education. The following is a quote from an article about careers geared towards secondary students applying for college:

'There's a cliché that drama and music graduates have been trained for a career as a waiter. But it's as tired as it is old: these graduates have been trained to think creatively. Off-stage, many graduates move on to work in arts administration and management, teaching, marketing, production, writing or session music work.' (Irish Times, 16/6/15).

Ethnic music forms part of an oral culture that has only a limited link with commercial and industrial activities. Live ethnic music still does not have direct access to the digital world (Cornelis et al, 2010: 1009). Traditional Irish music prioritises collective performances through a common repertoire. It has an individual approach to interpretative commendations, stylistic regional conventions and an aural approach to learning. It emphasises a social context for music learning within a community of practice that initiates music learners into the protocols and nuances of the tradition. It also values knowledge of the origins and cultural contexts of skilled performers and tunes played. While largely a collective tradition, it also has comprehensive and individual elements (Music Generation 2016: 39). As this research paper goes to print,

Creative Ireland is hosting regional meetings to discuss the rolling-out of this creative strategy for people all over Ireland. It seems we are on the edge of a cultural and creative economic revival. The traditional Irish music scene is just one strand of Irish culture which is in need of a reawakening in terms of linking trends and technology, while keeping the authentic product intact.

Sligo Regional Perspective

Sligo Town is the administrative capital and largest town in Connacht. The county itself offers a unique tourist destination with the dramatic backdrop of Ireland's only so-called 'table top' mountain, Benbulbin; glimmering beaches; rolling green hills, as well as magical woodlands. With unsurpassed leisure activities and state-of-the-art business facilities, few places can compete with Sligo as a destination for leisure or business (<http://www.sligotourism.ie>). Cultural resources and capacities, however, are seldom acknowledged, for example: community music is often invisible and tends to be overlooked. In rural locations, music may struggle to be a commercially viable industry, but it takes different forms in diverse community music enterprises, including: non-profit clubs; orchestras; music ensembles; choirs and festivals. Such enterprises sustain engaged music participation, despite challenges of isolation and lack of critical mass, and enables people to adjust to change and develop social networks (Gibson and Gordon 2016:1) through grassroots creativity.

The Coleman Traditional Irish Music Centre and The Morrison Teach Cheoil are two examples in the Sligo region of purpose-built infrastructure celebrating Irish music, culture and heritage, as expressed in the south Sligo Style. These community-based enterprises are dedicated to ensuring that the tradition of Irish music remains a living one, expressed in Irish as '*an traidisiún beo*,' and that it continues to be enjoyed by all ages and nationalities (<http://www.colemanirishmusic.com>).

Music is a powerful, visceral force; it can foster feelings of community and belonging while establishing a sense of self identity and place (DeNora, 2000; Duffy, 2000 cited in Gibson and Gordon, 2016:1). Creativity is increasingly viewed as a facilitator of regional development via discrete cultural activities such as music, film, literature and visual arts, where value is created not in physical production, but in creative content and its semiotic meaning (Scott, 2000 cited in Gibson and Gordon, 2016:2). Community music is a term used in ethnomusicology and studies of the sociology of music to describe non-industrial, non-capitalist forms of active musical participation, such as singing, playing musical instruments, performing *in situ*, all of which, in their original forms, are not produced for the means of intellectual property generation, commercial distribution or consumption. Nevertheless, the zeitgeist in community music remains firmly centred on unpaid musical participation fueled by people who simply enjoy music and celebrate this within a social context. Inevitable dilemmas of playing music in a small town include overexposure and saturation. However,

Sligo has a strong and vibrant music scene, with many pubs, clubs and other venues offering a range of music genres nightly. These can be accessed via a website, updated daily, entitled www.sligomusicians.com, which boasts that Sligo offers between eighty and a hundred music gigs per week.

Ireland is unique in comparison to other destinations with pubs hosting traditionally housed, lively, informal, acoustic, community music sessions regularly (Morton, 2005 cited in Gibson and Gordon, 2016:5). Incoming musicians can re-write a small town's musical identity quite quickly, and improve availability of certain cultural and arts programmes (Gibson and Gordon, 2016:9). Sligo seems to have all these resources in place: supportive venues; talented musicians willing to play; purpose-built heritage and cultural infrastructure; as well as a pre-existing history of the Sligo Style of playing traditional Irish music.

Legacy of the Sligo Style

Identifying stylistic features in the music of a number of solo musicians, O'Riada (<http://www.seanoriada.ie>), focuses on the regions of Donegal, Sligo, Clare and North Kerry/West Limerick, as well as paying particular attention to the Gaeltacht regions, when discussing Irish song traditions. The region variously referred to as Sligo, South Sligo and North Connacht, is one of the most prominent regional identities in traditional Irish music, and provides examples of many essential factors that are beyond mere location. The central figures in the history of this unique traditional musical style of Sligo are often considered to be the fiddle and flute players: Coleman, Morrison and Killoran. Turlough O'Carolan (1670–1738), the famous blind Irish harpist, also features prominently when discussing the Sligo Style. Another example is Michael Coleman (1891–1946), who emigrated to America where he subsequently became a professional musician at the forefront of the recording industry, from the 1920s to the 1940s. His was a confident, highly embellished musical style with a long, *legato* bowing technique, and whose repertoire was dominated by reels. Much has been written about Coleman and a number of his contemporaries, many of whom came from a small geographical area in north Connacht, but whose fame only developed through their location in America (Kearney, 2012. 2013). The musical style referred to by Kearney is not necessarily a specific 'Sligo Style,' but rather a 'Sligo-American' style which exists beyond location. This means that these musicians were, in fact, the first Irish people ever to be recorded playing traditional Irish music. Their music then filtered into the houses of Irish American emigrants through the so-called wireless or radio, which was fast becoming a popular medium at this time.

'There wouldn't be U2 or Riverdance without Michael Coleman. He was the first recorded artist. Because of this, he influenced Irish music in the homes in line with society, pub life, country music, how we express ourselves. A cultural

oasis that stands above the rest [sic].’ (Respondent, Sligo Festival Board Member).

From a geographical perspective, these musicians also heralded a new sphere of influence in traditional Irish music, as the musical style of this region came to dominate the soundscape of traditional Irish music in the first half of the twentieth century. Their choices regarding repertoire, along with the musical styles in which they performed, set trends amongst traditional Irish musicians of their generation. Through processes of time-space compression and distance, these musical trends were transported back across the Atlantic to Ireland. The influence of Coleman and his contemporaries in America, on traditional Irish musicians outside of north Connacht, is seen as the death knell for many of the regional styles that existed in traditional Irish music prior to the early twentieth century. Amongst the most distinctive of regional styles in traditional Irish music to survive the development of a Sligo-influenced pan-Irish style, is the *Sliabh Luachra* style from the south west of Ireland (Kearney, 2012, 2013).

‘Every region has its own accent, musical style, form of expression. Sligo or the northwest region has a bouncy liveliness, rhythm and diversity of ornamentation and approaches.’ (Respondent, Music educator).

Geographical regions, religion, political and civil war, mass emigration are all aspects which influence this tradition, while all of these factors also lend themselves, in sometimes subtle and not so subtle ways, to the trend that is the Sligo Style. These include tune titles, songs and ballads that were used in the rebellion and which contributed in the political drive of Irish republicanism. Other aspects to the Sligo style include a strong link to landscape, identity and religion (Ramsey, 2011:1). The resulting legacy of the Sligo Style is that most traditional Irish musicians can play a local tune. The names of such tunes include: the famous Ballymote Reel, the Killavil Jig and the Kesh Jig. All of these are named after local townlands around Sligo. Musicians worldwide used these first recordings to learn Irish fiddle and flute music. Musicians the world over who play traditional Irish music today, generally have a link to Sligo, even though this may be an unconscious connection, as not all musicians actually figure out the origin of the tunes they play.

Music Tourism in Sligo

Culturally curious tourists, who form a targeted subgroup identified by Fáilte Ireland, are often seeking a non-planned experience of the authentic type, mixing with the indigenous people of Ireland, and having a one-of-a-kind experience while holidaying here (<http://www.failteireland.ie>). On a weekly basis, Sligo hosts: between eighty and a hundred gigs; music education for a range of instruments; workshops; events and festivals, all of which are happening around the county. The product is there, living daily in the culture, and yet it is hard for the visiting tourist to access or

even realise the importance of traditional Irish music to the region.

'Irish music needs to be performed and presented more openly to include other people, other musicians, listeners from Ireland or abroad. Open and inclusive as possible, playing music in an accessible way, slowing the tunes, drawing interest from tourists [sic].' (Respondent, music educator).

As previously mentioned, Sligo hosted the Fleadh Cheoil in 2014, and again in 2015. Events like this put Sligo on the map in terms of musical tourism. The legacy of this success is that the nine local Comhaltas branches, who foster Irish music heritage and run competitions and events, have showcased precisely how well Sligo can cope in every way with an international festival of the caliber of the Fleadh Cheoil. Education, workshops, courses, events and weekends celebrating musicians are scheduled during all the holiday periods from April through to October annually, and these events attract inspiring musicians, both domestically and from abroad. Examples include the Junior Davey Bodhran School, taking place in July 2017, and the South Sligo Summer School in June 2017 (<http://www.sssschoool.org>). There is also the Morrison Weekend, which takes place in August and which celebrates the musical style of the traditional Irish musician, James Morrison. While there are many activities happening under the veil of music, there currently is no coordinated or dedicated marketing initiative in place that would bring all of these together, with every musical attraction having individual websites. Furthermore, very few Sligo musical events have a social media profile with which to market what they are offering.

Opportunities along the Wild Atlantic Way

From studying a comprehensive analysis of Sligo Style traditional Irish music, it is apparent that a number of tourism opportunities exist. This study has been timely for Sligo, given that the product is there, but some holistic approaches are needed to bring music tourism to fruition for the tourism industry in general. Below are a number of areas that this study has addressed:

The Authentic Irish experience

While global superstars will frequently drop their Irish genealogical profile into conversation, and personally claim the musical influences this country's creativity has had on their art, there is a real need to protect cultural heritage in an authentic way. Regarding the Sligo Style of traditional Irish music, real authentic experiences where visitors from other countries interact with Irish people, is what the culturally-curious tourist craves. Music tourism offers a perfect vehicle to fill this niche, and to give tourists what they wish for with regard to experiencing such an authentic approach when coming to Ireland. Liaising with the music industry, in terms of putting

together appropriate marketing messages, is essential to preserving the authenticity of the traditional Irish musical product. There is an immense collective pride in our musical heritage, and this was very evident in the primary research.

Music Trails

Many niche tourism products are often hard to locate when a tourist actually comes to a rural place in Ireland. Offering a pre-designed trail gives tourists a chance to instantly access the musical happenings in a given region. The website, www.dublincity.ie recently launched a music trail. This demonstrates that information about events can be easily copied to other social media platforms and Apps, offering the cyber-savvy tourist valuable information regarding music events, festivals, icons, education and workshops. Each region along the Wild Atlantic Way could, potentially, have music trail stops and, theoretically, all regional music styles along the route could be incorporated.

Ceol FM

Many countries embrace their ethnomusicology on a daily basis through public performances and regular music programmes broadcast on television and radio, supporting their indigenous music art forms. In Ireland, however, this is currently not so prevalent. In order to give both host communities and potential tourists access to an authentic Irish music cultural experience, it is very important not only to harness collective creativity at local levels, but also to make this readily available and easily accessible anywhere in the world. Furthermore, in order to maximise global promotion of Irish regional identities, it simply makes sense to use local artists and musicians when considering online content, creating soundtracks and developing tourism advertising.

Partnership Marketing

It has been noted already that Sligo has many festivals, schools, workshops and events in which traditional Irish music is the primary focus. Currently, there is a genuine tourism need for compiling a comprehensive listing of all traditional Irish musical events nationwide in a one-stop-shop, preferably online and, thus, accessible worldwide. Such a listing could be in the form of a website and/or an App, which would need to be updated regularly. This last point suggests a strong argument for a formal, working link to be made between, for example, regional coordinators of Comhaltas and dedicated Fáilte Ireland staff. Many regional events market in isolation and lack professional expertise in the area of tourist promotion. Therefore, the notion of unifying the promotion of all local music events happening in Ireland, as proposed here, would not only address overlap of interest, but would also present a more user-friendly and competitive strategy in terms of accessing the tourism market.

Recognising the Worth of the Sligo Style

The Sligo region boasts some of the most important pioneers of the traditional Irish music industry. While we must not always be looking over our shoulders, it is prudent to acknowledge the icons of ethnically traditional Irish styles of music. The collective worth of these musical forefathers is immense in terms of accessing and maximising tourism potential today. Part of that legacy can be seen in traditional Irish music today, where there are discourses and vocabularies that are privileged above others. They are usually associated with issues of authenticity, locality and the sole performance (Keegan, 2011: 40). Furthermore, there are currently many musicians pushing the boundaries of traditional Irish music. Acknowledging the living musical talent that currently exists all over Ireland is an essential aspect to promoting the country, and specifically the Sligo region, as a tourist destination in music terms. This would further stimulate the creative economy, allowing musicians to pursue their art-form for a living. Support for these musicians' creativity is key to the rolling-out of the Creative Ireland Strategy (2017–2022). This author proposes that a designated traditional Irish music awards ceremony would make a positive contribution to the support suggested above by the Creative Ireland Strategy.

Research and Education

The teaching of traditional Irish music in Ireland is, generally speaking, an aural activity and is not considered to be necessarily always an 'academic' practice. Nonetheless, in Limerick there is a World Academy of Irish Music. Indeed, all along the Wild Atlantic Way, Irish students, as well as students from abroad, are undertaking music courses, workshops and visiting musical experts in order to perfect their own personal music skills sets. This author considers that there is a definite need for a more streamlined path for those wishing to pursue a career in music, by offering students a selection of educational opportunities ranging from Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses to PhD level doctorates. PLC courses already exist, but no Irish Institute of Technology is currently offering a dedicated traditional Irish music programme anywhere along the Wild Atlantic Way. This author is of the opinion that now is the time for some 'joined-up thinking' in terms of designing, offering and delivering academic, educational opportunities to students, potentially from all over the world, to study traditional Irish music in Ireland.

The Healing Power of Music

Anecdotally, music is reportedly a driving force to assisting with healing the human mind, body and soul. Music is, furthermore and generally speaking, a social activity which allows people to communicate nonverbally. For example, creative music therapy improvisation is based on the client's own expressions, moods and feelings at a given moment and these factors comprise the core of the musical interaction,

in a therapeutic sense. This author believes this offers yet another niche area of tourism that could be exploited in the northwest region of Ireland: to promote music package holidays, combining the uniquely stunning physical landscapes of the Wild Atlantic Way, while the suggestion that traditional Irish music's 'powers' to heal, create wellness and develop a general sense of well-being could also be intrinsically included in all associated advertising.

Using Technology

Technological advances have not escaped the world of traditional Irish music, with artists now using various types of digital recording devices, the Internet, telephone Apps and social media platforms to make and promote their music. The cultural economy in Ireland could, effectively, use tourism proposals outlined in this paper, to lend support to music entrepreneurship, whereby traditional Irish musicians could effectively work from home and use technology to market their product.

Sligo Music City

Globally, many cities are well known primarily because of 'their' music. As stated earlier, these include Glastonbury and Liverpool in the UK, and Nashville in the USA. In a recent survey conducted by Fáilte Ireland (The Visitor Attitudes Port Survey, 2015), research results indicate that destination issues which are important to overseas holidaymakers include, 'meeting friendly, hospitable people,' and, furthermore, that the average visitor to Ireland rates 'interesting history' and 'culture' at 98% and 95% respectively.

Tourism trends and insights (Failte Ireland, 2016) identify that the culturally curious, who want to get under the skin of the destination and travel like a local, crave authenticity (Quarter 2, 2016: 3). Sligo is already a traditional Irish music hotspot, with indigenous local talent offering a host of nightly musical entertainment. This, coupled with the pre-existing infrastructure, means that Sligo could easily become a traditional Irish music hotspot in its own right, a 'music city' in Ireland with its own unique Sligo Style and identity.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that traditional Irish music tourism is currently an under-utilised niche tourism product. It has been highlighted that, although music tourism has been successful in a number of destinations, it is an under-researched and a relatively new product for overseas tourists visiting Ireland. Research has provided an insight into the music industry, both nationally and internationally, highlighting the typology of potential music tourists. The potential has been discussed for the development of Sligo Style traditional Irish music tourism as an attractive, multi-faceted and major tourist attraction in the future, and especially along the Wild Atlantic Way. It has been proposed that a coordinated approach to music tourism needs to be undertaken between the public and private sector, in order to successfully achieve a quality music tourism product for future visitors to Ireland.

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This book contains an edited collection of papers from the 13th Annual Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland Conference (THRIC) "Entrepreneurs driving tourism and hospitality". It deals with a broad range of issues which are all pertinent to Irish Tourism and hospitality academics, policy makers and industry practitioners at a time when our EU borders are set to change. The target audience for this book includes researchers of tourism and hospitality in Ireland and internationally, policy makers, entrepreneurs and undergraduate and postgraduate students. This book was funded by the Mobilities Research Group, ITSligo.