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Evidence-informed planning for tourism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to further advance the discussion regarding Local Authorities and approaches to facilitate sustainable planning for tourism. Building on previous research into tourism planning at local level in Ireland, this study employed qualitative semi-structured interviews with every senior planner in Ireland's 28 Local Authorities to identify the degree to which evidence-informed planning for tourism is encouraged. Findings point to a tendency from senior planners to rely on existing legislative procedures to measure tourism activity. Despite the legal responsibilities Local Authorities have to sustainably plan for tourism, together with substantial advancements in the development of procedures for facilitating evidence-informed planning for tourism. The absence of sufficient monitoring of several key tourism impacts at destination level by this study, questions the ability of senior planners in Ireland to plan sustainably for tourism and protect the tourism product going forward.

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Introduction

Planning together with the development of policy can have a significant influence on how tourism develops, and how its benefits and impacts are distributed (Dredge & Jamal, 2015; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hall & Jenkins, 1995; Liasidou, 2019; Ruhanen, 2010; Shao et al., 2020). It was Dwyer and Edwards (2010) who warned that poorly planned tourism can leave permanent footprints on the physical, social, cultural, and economic environments of destinations. Therefore, it is of little surprise that the UNWTO (2004) continues to promote the relationship between sustainability and tourism planning, which, according to Dredge and Jenkins (2011), continues to garner increased attention within academic circles. It is this assessment, and the several studies that continue to emphasise the importance of applying sustainability within the tourism planning process (Bramwell & Lane, 2010; Connell et al., 2009; Hall, 2008; Matiku et al., 2020). Yet few have provided insights into approaches practised by Local Authorities when embracing sustainable planning for tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2010; Maxim, 2013; McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2016, 2019). This paper addresses this gap in knowledge by building on

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previous research in Ireland to determine whether Local Authorities in Ireland are facilitating an evidence-informed approach to tourism planning at destination level.

Planning is about setting and meeting objectives, and in tourism planning is an essential activity to achieve its sustainable development. Ivars (2004), in his analysis on tourism planning in Spain, discussed four broad approaches of tourism planning. For example, the earlier approaches to tourism planning (i.e. boosterism) generally reflect an uncomplicated view of tourism, while strategic planning has moved from the business environment to regional and urban planning in the 1980s (Ivars, 2004). Hall (2008) considers that the focus and methods of tourism planning have not remained constant but have evolved to meet the new demands that have been placed on the tourism industry. This assertion is also reflected by Costa (2019) who emphasises that future planning at destination level should address issues around embodying not only management approaches, but also planning considerations and local economic concerns. McLoughlin et al. (2018, p. 87), in fact, suggests that evidence-informed planning for tourism is the way forward to help ensure the future sustainability of tourism. However, considering that the application of tourism indicator systems, as noted by McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019), suffers from a lack of enthusiasm among Local Authorities, despite their legal responsibility for managing and developing tourism at the destination level throughout Ireland. It is against this background, that this study will examine whether senior planners in each of Irelands Local Authorities are measuring and monitoring tourism activity through specific measures to facilitate an evidence-informed approach to tourism planning.

Literature review

Planning is an essential element of successful tourism development and management (Hall, 2005, 2007). According to Sharpley (2008), effective planning should ensure that

Tourism is developed according to broader economic and social development goals that it is developed sustainably, and that appropriate mechanisms and processes are in place to ensure that tourism development is managed, promoted and monitored. (2008, p. 15)

Studies continue to document the role of local government when it comes to tourism planning (Bramwell, 2011; Dredge, 2001; Gunn, 1988; McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2016; Nunkoo, 2015; Ruhanen, 2013) as it ‘impinges on many areas of Local Authorities responsibilities’ (Richards, 1992, p. 5). As modern planning is a complex task that tends to overlap with other policy areas such as economic development, transport, and education provision (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government [DEHLG], 2007), the challenge facing destination management is how to guide and control the consumption of the natural resources of the destination as wisely as possible, while encouraging sustainable practices. However, as observed by Maxim (2013) in London, Local Authorities have been known to be reactive rather than pro-active when it comes to tourism planning. Such criticism was also discussed by Dredge (2001) within the context of tourism planning policy making in Australia. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Ashworth and Page’s (2011) review of current paradoxes in tourism research does mention that a large percentage of tourism planning is likely to be re-active to address the negative impacts of tourism perceived by the local community.

Therefore, how can Local Authorities facilitate a pro-active, rather than a re-active approach when it comes to the tourism planning process.

For Page and Dowling (2002), the need for Local Authority involvement in tourism planning is partly driven by the necessity for the development of tourism policy. This view is similarly shared by Dredge and Jenkins (2007) who note how it is Local Authorities who control most of the development planning aspects associated with tourism. In the context of this study, under the Planning and Development Act (2015), Local Authorities in Ireland are legally required to develop County Development Plans (CDPs). As these plans are the main instrument for the regulation and control of local development, Local Authorities must include planning policies for the development of tourism (DEHLG, 2007). However, McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019) warn that without an evidence-informed approach to tourism planning, policymakers would be unable to anticipate future planning needs. Thus, they potentially damage the future long-term sustainability of the tourism product.

Evidence-informed planning for tourism

Head (2008) discussed how evidence has become central to the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. From a tourism perspective McCole and Joppe (2014) argue that gathering data on tourist activity is important for not only its future sustainability, but also how the destination is managed. Taking the connection between Local Authorities and tourism planning, recent studies have argued that the absence of data on tourism activity deprives Local Authorities of the opportunity to get ahead of challenges that tourism may present (Maguire & McLoughlin, 2019; McLoughlin et al., 2018). However, it was Torres-Delgado and Palomeque (2014) who highlight a potential problem here in that there is no universally accepted method for evaluating tourism sustainability. Therefore, by building upon previous research by McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019), this study will address the concerns raised by Torres-Delgado and Palomeque (2014) and examine what approaches Local Authorities in Ireland are utilising to help facilitate evidence informed planning for tourism. The authors will examine if senior planners are accumulating research on tourism activity, together with the ongoing measuring and monitoring of impacts as part of the tourism planning process.

Measuring impacts

When it comes to measuring the impacts of tourism, Modica et al. (2018) posed the question whether sustainability in tourism can actually be measured at local level. Issues around its complexity have also been noted by Torres-Delgado and Palomeque (2014) which can make it difficult to develop a sound method. Mowforth and Munt (2016) in their discussions on tourism and sustainability did identify tourism indicator systems as one of their tools of sustainability that can be used to measure the impacts of tourism in the planning process. As such, a number of different means have been developed to help facilitate such a transition. Jiricka et al. (2014), for example, discussed the role of the VV-TOMM (Tourism Optimisation Management Model) and its ability to balance visitor numbers and the welfare of the local environment and population. More recently, Torres-Delgado and Palomeque (2018) proposed the ISOST index as a

tool for studying sustainable tourism. Also, the European Commission (EC) has long committed itself to promoting the ongoing measurement of tourism impacts across Europe through its development of both Eurostat and the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS). While the above indicator systems and their on-going development accordingly can help promote more sustainable forms of tourism (Blancas et al., 2015), they can also help to stimulate the competitiveness of the sector (Font et al., 2021). But despite such advancements in these indicator systems and the on-going work and support of the United Nations (UNWTO) statistics division, McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019) found little support for such tools by policymakers in Ireland. Therefore, this study will determine if Local Authorities in Ireland are actively measuring impacts as part of the tourism planning process.

Strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) have been identified as a tool to help evaluate the impact of tourism within national parks in Canada (Noble, 2003). Furthermore, their use became more widespread following the introduction of the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC), where Kuo et al. (2005) discuss how they can facilitate early considerations of potential impacts in the strategic decision-making process. Across Europe, Lemos et al. (2012) point to the fact that SEAs have been extensively applied to spatial and land use plans which encompass tourism-related sections. Therefore, it could be argued that SEAs can help alleviate the potential negative impact tourism development may have on the natural environment, while providing policymakers with sound, evidenced, and environmentally sustainable planning policies. However, with the symbolic relationship between tourism arrivals and economic impacts (Mason, 2016) destinations have to tackle many social and cultural challenges (McLoughlin et al., 2020). Yet, SEAs are limited to measuring the impacts of developments on the environment. They fail to provide an accurate picture when it comes to the wider sustainability of tourism at destination level (McLoughlin, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary for this study to determine if senior planners are monitoring the economic and social cultural impacts from tourism in conjunction with SEA assessments at destination level.

Monitoring impacts of tourism

To help guarantee tourism's long-term sustainability, there is a need for the continued monitoring of its impacts at destination level (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021; Rio & Nunes, 2012). As noted by both Cernat and Gourdon (2012) and Mason (2016), studies assessing tourism activities often deal with the relationship between tourism and foreign exchange earnings, generation of income, employment, and regional and local development (Pratt & Alizadeh, 2018). With Cooper et al. (2008) arguing that such a relationship is often assessed on the number of arrivals, receipt per tourist, and average length of stay. However, given the challenges, destinations are going to face as a result of COVID-19 pandemic with a report by the Norwegian tourism organization NHO Reiseliv (2020) warning that tourism will be hit particularly hard in comparison to other economic sectors. The UNWTO (2020) has projected a 20–30% decline in 2020 international arrivals, which could potentially translate into losses of tourism receipts in the region of US \$300–450 billion. Therefore, it is imperative that policymakers establish how significant tourism is to destination economies to determine its dependency and to develop policies and strategies for the future. Therefore, this study will aim to determine whether Ireland's Local Authorities are monitoring impacts such as expenditure of tourists, their overall

length of stay, together with occupancy rates in commercial accommodation and employment figures. As these data have been considered essential components of any sustainable planning approach to tourism (McLoughlin et al., 2020; McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2019; Twining-Ward & Butler, 2002; Volo, 2015), this on-going monitoring can, therefore, allow policymakers to track the contribution of tourism towards economic sustainability. But, help support local tourism enterprises thorough sharing data on visitor spending patterns.

Increasingly tourism destinations have to tackle many social and cultural challenges (Chettiparamb & Kokkranikal, 2012; Kakoudakis & McCabe, 2018; Luonila et al., 2020; McLoughlin et al., 2020). Scholars have pointed to overcrowding in tourist destinations and its relationship with environmental destruction (Mazanec et al., 2007; Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011). But as discussed by Gössling et al. (2020), within the space of a few months, the global tourism system moved from over-tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Seraphin et al., 2018) to non-tourism. In light of this changing nature of tourism, it is necessary to continually monitor how tourism is impacting local community. Tourism can be largely dependent on history and culture (Walton, 2013), and with three out of five (64%) overseas holidaymaker's pointing to Ireland's history and culture as a crucially important factor in their choice to visit (Fáilte Ireland, 2013). Kim et al. (2013, p. 538) argues, however, that tourism can be seen as a 'culture exploiter'. And when reflecting on the connection between tourism and heritage, Sasaki (2004) and Alberti and Giusti (2012) further discuss how regions are building their competitiveness by leveraging their cultural heritage. Regardless of whether tourism has helped accelerate the disruption of traditional cultural structures and behavioural patterns (e.g. Kousis, 1989) or has, in fact, contributed to the revitalisation of cultures (e.g. Wang et al., 2009), it is imperative that such impacts are the subject of on-going monitoring by policymakers.

Needham and Szuster (2011), in their study on tourism and recreation management strategies in Hawaii, discussed how tourism activity can often have a profound effect on the natural environment. This connection between tourism, its impacts and the environment has been at the centre of several theoretical discussions (e.g. Buckley, 2011; Davenport & Davenport, 2006; Geneletti & Dawa, 2009; Han, 2021; Holden, 2008; Li et al., 2014; Persson, 2015). Yet, evidence-informed planning for tourism should not be viewed as a panacea for poor development (McLoughlin & Maguire, 2022; Torres-Delgado & Palomeque, 2018). Concerns continue to be raised around the impact of transport, waste treatment and energy use (McLoughlin et al., 2020). In Ireland and similar destinations across Europe, Local Authorities have a statutory obligation to plan and maintain the natural environment which tourists can put a high value upon. Consequently, with the frequent monitoring of such issues as part of the tourism planning process, policymakers could be in a position to establish many of the root causes of negative environmental impacts from tourism and help protect the natural environment going forward.

Materials and methods

The aim of this study is to access the degree to which Local Authorities are adopting an evidence-informed approach when it comes to tourism planning. This research was conducted in the Republic of Ireland where local government functions in Ireland are exercised by Local Authorities (see [Figure 1](#)).

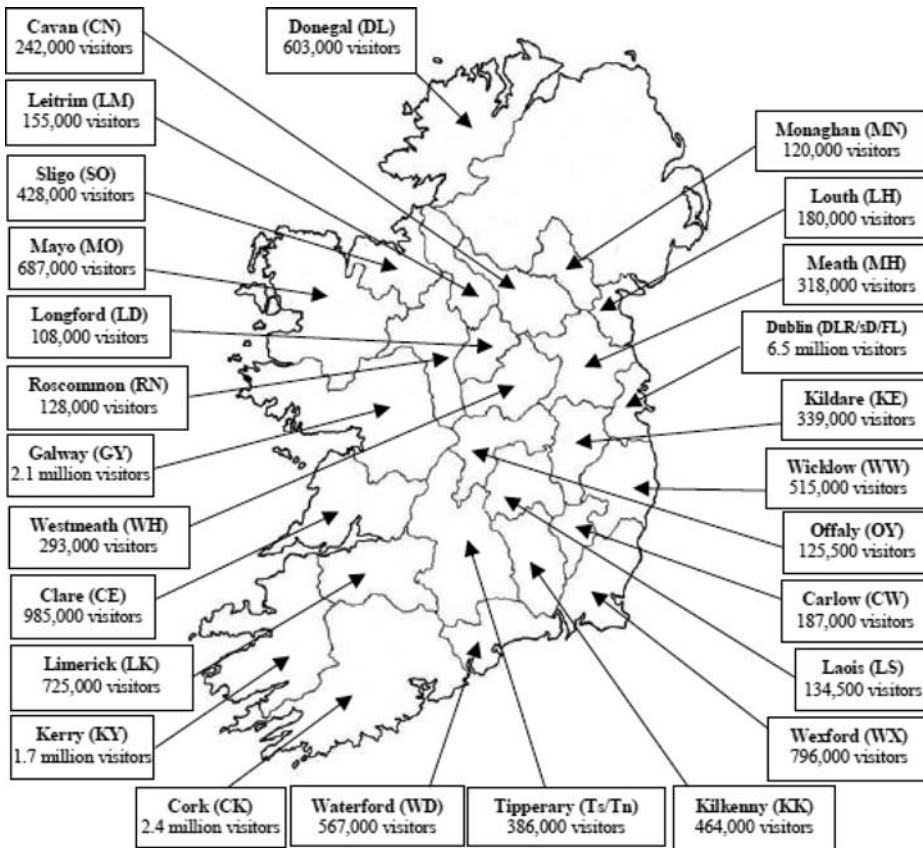


Figure 1. Map of Ireland's local authorities. Source: Fáilte Ireland (2016). Key: Local authorities are abbreviated by the first and last letter DL = Donegal Number of visitors comprises domestic and international arrivals to the specific County for the year 2016.

Local Authorities were selected for this study as they have the legal power to reject or grant planning permission for all tourism development projects and their associated infrastructure. Local Authorities are also legally obliged to make CDPs which contain the tourism policies for the destination. Table 2 highlights how the twenty-eight Local Authorities varied on monitoring the different categories. For example, the first and last letter of County Mayo is abbreviated by 'MO'.

The principle qualitative fieldwork within this study was attained by conducting semi-structured interviews with all senior planners in Ireland's twenty-eight Local Authorities as qualitative research is suited to situations where there is little known about the topic (Jennings, 2010). Moreover, according to Wilson and Hollinshead (2015) qualitative inquiry approaches continue to make significant contributions to tourism studies as they contribute considerable depth to tourism research (Botterill, 2001). This was, of course, beneficial for this study as research into evidence-informed planning in Ireland is limited (McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2019). A questionnaire, which comprised open-ended and probing questions, was developed as part of a wider study on tourism planning in Ireland. These questions (Table 1) were based on the theoretical framework

Table 1. Towards evidence-informed planning for tourism.

Tourism research:

Does the Local Authority conduct specific tourism research?

Measurement of tourism impacts:

Does the Local Authority measure the impacts of tourism in their county?

Monitoring of tourism impacts:

Does the Local Authority monitor the impacts of tourism within their county?

- Tourism Economic Impact
- Tourists night per Month
- Daily spend by Tourists
- Average length of Stay
- Occupancy Rate
- Tourism Jobs
- Tourism Multiplier Effect
- Health and Safety
- Community/Social Impacts
- Gender Equality
- Equality/Accessibility
- Cultural/Heritage Protection
- Climate Change
- Solid Waste Management
- Sewage Treatment
- Water Management
- Energy Usage
- Landscape/Biodiversity Protection
- Light/Noise Management
- Bathing Water Quality

Source: Adapted from the EC (2016) and McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019)

established by McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019) with the monitoring criteria reflecting the key indicators of the European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destination Management (see Appendix 1).

The authors determined that senior planners would be in the best position to provide the relevant information on the subject of evidence-informed planning for tourism as they are responsible for developing their respective CDPs. The questionnaire was piloted on one particular senior planner and their tourism development officer. This was done to maintain credibility as advised by Berg (2007). Interviews took place over three months in 2016. All Local Authorities responded to the questionnaires (yielding a response rate of 100%).

Data were analysed by means of audio recordings (with the free and informed consent of the interviewees) and transcribed after each session with the researcher documenting the key issues. A coding scheme was developed in a formal and systematic manner where quotes with similar themes were identified, otherwise known as data transformation (Devine & Devine, 2011; Saunders et al., 2000). Acknowledging Durbarry's (2017) ethical principles, all references to a particular Local Authority were removed from planner responses to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondent. The authors then employed a thematic analysis with the help of the NVivo 10 software package to identify themes and ideas evident from the discussions with senior planners.

Results and discussion

Building on Costa's (2019) key considerations for future tourism planning, McLoughlin et al. (2020) argue that future planning requires significant levels of information to

preserve the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability of the destination. From the discussions with Ireland's Local Authorities, it was found that a majority of senior planners conducted rather basic levels of tourism research. Such findings are at odds with what Mangion (2011) suggests as the need for high-quality research when it comes to evidence-based policymaking

Yes, we would conduct a limited amount of tourism research. This would all depend on different things like the scope of the study and so forth. (Planner 20)

Yes, we do. The usual stuff, surveys etc. (Planner 23)

Yes, this research consisted of surveys, questionnaires and case studies. (Planner 10)

In Turkey, conducting research is one of a range of activities carried out by Local Authorities when it comes to the tourism planning process (Can et al., 2014). It is evident from this study that a number of Local Authorities in Ireland are using straightforward approaches to gathering research on tourism activity, which as noted by Kim et al. (2007) and later Jennings (2010) can help establish visitation patterns. Yet, despite Local Authorities controlling most of the development and planning aspects with tourism (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007), the rudimentary nature of this research by a number of Ireland's Local Authorities does not go far enough to address what Uysal et al. (2016) argue as the link between tourism activities and their consequences in helping to facilitate a functioning tourism system. For example, despite the importance of research when it comes to tourism planning, a few senior planners revealed that this is longitudinal nature. Thus, ignoring McLoughlin et al. (2018; 2020)'s warnings that such an approach remains impractical, as trends cannot be tracked over time.

The EC (2016) points to the importance of collecting data on a broad range of issues relevant to tourism that could help policymakers build an accurate picture of what is going on. Despite a legal requirement under the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, findings from this study seem to corroborate the views previously discussed by Noble (2003) that SEAs remain an extensive tool in the tourism planning process:

Yes, we are legally required to measure environmental impacts through the SEA Directive and the economic and social impacts of tourism were taken into consideration in the LECP development process. (Planner 7)

We would have measured the economic and social impact of tourism when developing our LECP. (Planner 26)

While the SEA directive is considered an important legislative tool designed to ensure the environmental sustainability of Local Authority development plans (DHPLG, 2017), the tourism sector is known to be disjointed in nature and as acknowledged by a number of authors, subjected to a diversity of planning and institutional frameworks (Charlton & Essex, 1996; Dredge, 2006; Hall, 2008). Therefore, it could be argued that senior planners should not rely exclusively on SEA as an effective tool in facilitating an evidence-informed planning approach for tourism. For example, Lemos et al. (2012), in their study on the extent of the application of SEAs in tourism planning, warn that the fragmented nature of tourism is likely to undermine its effectiveness. Therefore, it would appear that when it comes to measuring the impacts of tourism, findings from this

study do not acknowledge what Torres-Delgado and Palomeque (2014) note as the combined social, environmental, and economic principles of sustainability in tourism.

Research by Inskip (1994) discusses the various categories of data that are required by policymakers when formulating a tourism plan. However, from discussions with senior planners, findings in Table 2 tend to support McLoughlin and Hanrahan's (2019) observation that Local Authorities in Ireland tend to rely on limited data when it comes to monitoring tourism in their destination. Furthermore, this study has found a number of senior planners were openly dismissive of such an undertaking as part of the tourism planning process:

No, we don't monitor specific impacts of tourism. (Planner 14)

We wouldn't specially monitor the impacts of tourism. (Planner 3)

It could, therefore, be argued that similar to Maxim's (2013) assessments in London, Local Authorities in Ireland tend also to be re-active when it comes to tourism planning. This supports Ashworth and Page's (2011) reviews around the paradoxes in tourism. While McLoughlin and Hanrahan's (2019) longitudinal study on tourism planning in Ireland found a slight shift towards Local Authorities embracing greater levels of sustainability, the scarcity of on-going research and the measuring and monitoring of a range of tourism impacts by Ireland's Local Authorities not only appears to refute what Head (2008) identifies as the essence of the design and implementation of programmes but also against the recommendations of the European Commission [EC] (2016) which continue to emphasise the importance of collecting data on a broad range of issues relevant to tourism to help build an accurate picture of tourist activity at local level. Therefore, it would be necessary to discuss the reasons behind this lack of evidence-informed planning for tourism in Ireland.

Despite what has been considered previously by McCole and Joppe (2014), it is clear from this study is that the vast majority of Local Authorities in Ireland do not benefit from or gathering quality data on tourism activity. The absence of sufficient data has been raised previously by Scott and Becken (2010) when they discussed how the lack of information on climate change, carbon footprint and waste management can impede upon the progress towards greater sustainability in tourism. The authors here suggest that Local Authorities in Ireland could follow the recommendation by Mariani et al. (2018) who approves the usefulness of data sources generated towards business insights and the role such data can play when it comes to tourism planning. Therefore, there is no reason to suggest that policymakers and destination managers could embrace the various sources of big data to help move towards evidence-informed planning for tourism. Such an approach, according to Pan and Yang (2017), has provided a significant amount of real-time data on tourism activity. For example, Xiang (2010) examined online search queries, De Montjoye et al. (2015) discussed the relationship between credit card transaction data, Huertas and Marine-Roig (2016) studied social media information with Hardy et al. (2017) exploring cell phone roaming records.

Rio and Nunes (2012), in their study on monitoring and evaluation tools for tourism destinations, note how many of these monitoring tools are often excessively complex to apply. Similarly, McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019) also found issues, such as training and resources available as hindrances, when it comes to the application for such tools. Yet,

aside from the previously mentioned ETIS, Rio and Nunes (2012) developed and tested a tool in the Ukraine to monitor and evaluate tourism destinations which, according to the authors, was well suited when limited technical and economic resources are available, while several studies have applied the ETIS at destination level and have generated significant data on tourism related activity such as visitation patterns and tourist profiles (Dincă et al., 2017), average daily spend of domestic and overseas visitors (McLoughlin et al., 2020), local resident satisfaction (Foroni et al., 2019) and carbon footprint of travellers (McLoughlin et al., 2018). Previous research has found that the use of indicator systems among Local Authorities in Ireland continues to be overlooked (McLoughlin & Hanrahan, 2019). Such a lack of adoption is not only depriving policymaker's quality data on tourism activity, and as previously noted by Blancas et al. (2015) but also helping to stimulate the competitiveness of the sector. But this, together with the limited measuring and monitoring of tourism impacts illustrated by this study, is hindering the move towards evidence-informed planning for tourism at destination level.

Conclusion and recommendations

Tourism as an industry continues to respond to many of the global events that tend to occur outside of its control (Burnett & Johnson, 2020). This highlights the need for destinations to move towards an evidence-informed approach to tourism planning. However, despite their responsibilities (Aronsson, 2000) and their role in the planning process (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007), the low adoption of research by Local Authorities in Ireland on visitation patterns or the on-going measuring and monitoring of tourism impacts has raised questions of their ability to maintain the tourism product. Findings from this research suggest the need for the development of a checklist to help policymakers at local level to monitor tourism's impact over time. Future research could address the need for such a checklist that could allow for clear accountability and transparency in the data collection process at destination level.

While there is a drive towards the sustainable management of tourism destinations, this study bridges a gap in knowledge by providing baseline findings on the degree to which Local Authorities are incorporating evidence into the tourism planning process. However, this research was conducted at a time when Local Authorities in Ireland are struggling to provide public services due to serious lack of resources. It was, therefore, not surprising to find a lack of enthusiasm among senior planners towards collecting data on tourism activity. In terms of future avenues for research, it would be noteworthy to examine the degree of knowledge among policymakers in Local Authorities on the array of recognised tourism indicators. Such findings could help give a clear indication if evidence-informed planning has become a fundamental characteristic of destination management.

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Appendix 1

Theoretical framework to examine Local Authority tourism planning and the use of tourism indicator systems

Process of Local Authority tourism planning

Funding

- Is there a specific budget in place for tourism planning?
- Tourism officer employed to manage tourism
- Tourism manager employed to manage tourism
- Current number of staff employed to manage tourism

Governance

- Support for tourism planning within Local Authority
- Support for tourism planning from higher level organisations

Consultation

- Did county councillors influence the alteration of the draft tourism plan?
- Did national and regional tourism agencies influence the alteration of the draft tourism plan?
- Did local community development organisations influence the alteration of the draft tourism plan?
- Did county tourism committees or forums influence the alteration of the draft tourism plan?

Accountability

- Do county councillors have enough knowledge on sustainable planning for tourism?
- Do county councillors understand the basic concepts of tourism planning and development?
- Are county councillors capable of making complex decisions on tourism land use zoning?
- Do county councillors have sufficient training for the planning decisions they make?
- Do county councillors display self-interest in planning decisions?
- Do county councillors understand the consequences of planning decisions they make?

Destination Management Organisation (DMO)

- Are senior planners aware of who the DMO is for their specific county?

Local Authority tourism planning

Tourism Research

- Does the Local Authority conduct specific tourism research?

Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)

- Is the tourism plan compliant with SEA legislation 2004?

Measurement of tourism impacts

- Does the Local Authority measure the impacts of tourism in their county?

Monitoring of tourism impacts

- Does the Local Authority monitor the impacts of tourism within their county?

Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP)

- Is sustainable planning for tourism evident with the LECP?

Tourism indicator systems for evidence-based planning

Tourism indicator systems

- Is tourism indicator systems utilised in tourism planning?

Resource allocations

- What resources are required to utilise tourism indicator system in tourism planning?

European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)

- Is the ETIS utilised in tourism planning?

Implementation approaches

- What is the most appropriate method to implement the ETIS?
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Source: McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2019).