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## **Challenges Faced by World Tourism Cities – London’s Perspective**

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## **Challenges Faced by World Tourism Cities – London’s Perspective**

World tourism cities perform multiple functions and exhibit various characteristics that influence tourism development within their boundaries. They are the main gateway for tourists visiting a country and their success has a direct impact on the visitor economy of that destination. London, the focus of this research, has been one of the world’s top tourism cities for many years, and a key gateway for domestic and international visitors. But despite the important role tourism plays in the economy of the city, there is limited research on the development of this activity in the capital. Using London as an exploratory case study, this paper contributes to better understanding the challenges faced by policy makers when planning and managing tourism in world cities. The adopted research method offers the advantage of gathering insightful information using multiple data collection techniques. Examining this new evidence contributes to expanding the knowledge on the particularities of tourism development in one of the top world cities, which could help policy makers in their efforts to better prepare for potential challenges faced by these complex but important destinations.

**Keywords:** world tourism cities, challenges, urban tourism, tourism planning and management, London

### **Introduction**

Urban tourism is considered ‘one of the earliest forms of tourism’ (European Communities, 2000, p. 21) which re-emerged in the 1980s due to the tourists’ interest towards heritage and culture and as a means to regenerate historic city centres. Despite this, urban tourism is a relatively new area of research which has until recently been neglected by academics studying tourism (Ashworth, 1989; Law, 2002; Page & Hall, 2003). Over the past years however this phenomenon has attracted more attention from researchers and policy makers due to the rapid growth sustained by this form of tourism (Maitland, 2009) and the resulting policy issues associated with it (Pearce, 2001).

The lack of research on tourism in cities is attributed to the complex nature of the phenomenon of urban tourism and the ‘multifunctional nature of cities’ (Pearce, 2011, p. 59). Tourism is less visible in cities where it represents only one activity among many others embedded in the economy of the city (Edwards, Griffin, & Hayllar, 2008; Maitland & Newman, 2009). This makes the planning and management of tourism in urban destinations more challenging due to the need to consider a wide range of public and private entities linked directly or indirectly with the tourism industry (Edwards et al., 2008).

In the particular case of world cities, Ashworth and Page (2011) note that little has been written so far about tourism development in such destinations (with the notable exception of Maitland & Newman, 2009). These cities are the main gateway for tourists visiting a country and their success has a direct impact on the number of visitors it attracts. In a globalised world that affects tourism development in most cities, these environments face a number of challenges, including pressures from standardisation as they ‘need to negotiate the challenges of updating their appeal to visitors’ while trying to maintain their distinctiveness (Maitland, 2012, p. 1).

The present paper uses London as a case study to explore the complex realities faced by world tourism cities, and thus offers an insight into the challenges faced by policy makers when planning and managing this activity. It first discusses the phenomenon of tourism in cities and highlights the characteristics of world tourism cities. After offering an overview of the chosen case study and the particularities of the research methodology adopted, it discusses the findings and considers a number of implications.

## **Literature review**

### ***Cities and tourism***

As recognised by international organisations as well as governments, the number of people who live in urban areas worldwide is continuously increasing (Ashworth & Page, 2011). If in 1900 only 14% of the global population lived in towns and cities, currently over half (54%) of the population live in urban areas and this growing trend is expected to continue (United Nations, 2015).

Urbanization is a 'major force' that contributes to the development of towns and cities (Page & Connell, 2009, p. 471), which have been for many years one of the most significant tourist destinations (Edwards et al., 2008). The constantly increasing level of urbanization has influenced the phenomenon of urban tourism, and has contributed to the repositioning of the tourism industry within national economies (Ashworth & Page, 2011). Other factors that contributed to the growth of tourism in cities include airline deregulation, which allowed the development of low-cost carriers, as well as changes in working patterns and higher disposable incomes, aspects that encouraged people to take additional short city breaks (Maitland, 2009).

While the growth of tourism in cities is generally encouraged by policy makers as it brings economic and social benefits to an area (Pearce, 2001; Simpson, 2016), there are also a number of negative consequences which should not be overlooked. For example, already existing congestion could get worse due to increased numbers of tourists, certain areas may become overcrowded, and conflicts may arise between the needs of visitors and locals (Gutiérrez, García-Palomares, Romanillos, & Salas-Olmedo, 2017; Law, 2002). Other challenges include protection of the environment, conservation of the heritage and preservation of the local culture, while improving the quality of life of residents (Timur & Getz, 2008). Therefore, urban tourist destinations face significant

challenges in finding solutions that balance the positive contributions of tourism to the local economy with the inherent negative effects that accompany this activity (Sharpley, 2009).

Furthermore, in cities 'leisure tourism is now just one of many different mobilities that bring people' to these areas (Maitland, 2016, p. 14), with other less visible forms of tourism also present, such as the VFR market, educational and health tourists, or even internal tourists (visitors from the city itself). These various forms of mobilities present in cities make it difficult to distinguish between touristic and non-touristic behaviour, and thus to understand tourists' consumption demands. In addition, the sharing economy and peer-to-peer platforms such as Airbnb, put pressure on the traditional tourist accommodation model and can create property conflicts (Gutiérrez et al., 2017), adding to the challenges of managing tourism in cities.

Although not the focus of this paper, creative cities constitute an important body of literature that needs to be mentioned. This is considered a 'global phenomenon' (Evans, 2009, p. 1005) and a strategic method used by urban planners to make cities 'more liveable' and 'vibrant' (Landry, 2008, p. xi). The association of tourism in cities with culture and creative industries is recognised by researchers (Howie, 2003; Pappalepore, Maitland, & Smith, 2014) and promoted by a number of organisations (DCMS, 2009; GLA, 2010) as it contributes to a better experience for visitors and a better quality of life for residents.

### ***World tourism cities and their characteristics***

Cities have been classified by researchers into different typologies based on the particular characteristics they present (Maitland & Newman, 2009; Page & Hall, 2003). London, the case study for this research, belongs to two different typologies – a national capital city and a world tourism city – with this paper focusing on the latter. This study

adopts the definition promoted by Maitland and Newman (2009) for world tourism cities, which refers to tourism occurring in world cities rather than cities that are dependent on tourism for their global profile e.g. Venice or Bath (Ashworth, 2010).

Over the years the concept of world city has attracted the attention of researchers, in particular in the areas of urban geography and sociology, as these cities 'have become the point where knowledge is transformed into productive activities' (Ashworth & Page, 2011, p. 4). According to Sassen (2012), global cities of today exhibit three characteristics: important points in the world economy, key locations for the leading industries, and major sites of production and innovation. They are centres of corporate headquarters, business services, transnational institutions and control 'the flows of information, cultural products and finance that, collectively, sustain the economic and cultural globalization of the world' (Knox, 1996, p. 125). Despite their advantages, these cities are as vulnerable as other urban destinations to ecological, social and developmental problems (Ng & Hills, 2003).

A review of the work published on tourism development in top world cities reveals that only a small number of papers focus on European cities such as London or Paris, while recently more attention has been paid to Asian and Middle East cities such as Hong Kong, Singapore or Dubai. These studies focus on very diverse issues, from cultural dilemmas of tourism development in Dubai (Stephenson, 2014) or the role of the health care sector in the international tourism in Singapore (Lee, 2010), to forecasting city tourism demand in Paris (Gunter & Onder, 2015) or politics of tourism promotion in Hong Kong (Zhang, L'Espoir Decosta, & McKercher, 2015).

When looking at world tourism cities, it can be noted that not much has been written so far on this particular topic. Maitland and Newman (2009) are among the few authors who published on the subject, co-authoring an edited book that mainly

comprises a collection of papers focused on tourism development in a number of large cities. More recently, Maitland (2016) published a paper focusing on how tourists are experiencing world tourism cities, using evidence from London. Worth noting is also the work of Simpson (2016, p. 27) who discusses ‘tourist utopia’ in three ‘post-world cities’, i.e. Las Vegas, Dubai and Macao, destinations with the common characteristic of being enclaves within larger states.

World tourism cities perform multiple functions and exhibit various characteristics that influence tourism development in these destinations (Simpson, 2016). They accommodate world-class attractions (Law, 2002) and are centres of business and cultural excellence; they offer visitors a number of benefits such as easier accessibility through better connected airports, better scheduled tourism services, diverse accommodation facilities, and a variety of entertainment options (Edwards et al., 2008). For many such cities tourism has become an inextricable ‘part of the life of the city’ and is ‘no longer a separate activity, confined to particular areas or to particular times’ (Maitland, 2013, p. 14). Besides the complexities in terms of economic, social or political functions, these destinations have to deal with the diversity of the people experiencing such places either as residents, visitors or migrants (Stevenson & Inskip, 2009). Hence, it can be observed that world tourism cities display a number of characteristics which add to the challenges of planning and managing tourism in urban environments.

### **The London context**

‘What makes London the best city in the world to visit? Is it our world-class theatre, our free national museums, our eye-opening art galleries, historic royal palaces, vibrant markets, or the abundance of green spaces across the city? It’s all of these things and more.’ *Boris Johnson, former Mayor of London, in his welcome note to the Cultural Tourism Vision for London (GLA & CTC, 2015, p. 4)*

London, the focus on this research, has been one of the world's top destination cities for a number of years (Hedrick-Wong & Choong, 2015), and a key gateway for domestic and international tourists. The capital offers a large variety of attractions, including historic buildings, cityscapes, parks and promenade areas, cultural establishments, numerous restaurants, pubs and clubs, and hosts various cultural and sporting events (Stevenson & Inskip, 2009). The city accommodates a fifth of the total national stock of hotel bedrooms and it encompasses multiple functions such as a global financial centre, the home of important cultural institutions, and the seat of central government (Maitland & Newman, 2009).

As one of the largest cities in Europe, with a population of 8.53 million (Office for National Statistics, 2016), London is an important gateway for the UK, with 75% of the visitors to the country arriving through one of its airports (DCMS, 2016). The latest figures published by the GLA and CTC (2015) show that the capital attracts about 17 million overseas visitors each year, with almost 60% of these being repeat visitors. However, the total number of visitors to the capital is much higher as it also includes domestic tourists – estimated at 12 million per year; day visitors – estimated at 274 million day visits per year; as well as internal tourists – visitors from within the city itself but for which no data is currently available (London & Partners, 2015). As a result, tourism is the second most important sector for the economy of the city after financial services, contributing 12% to its GDP (Maitland & Newman, 2009).

However, despite the important role tourism plays in the economy of the city, and even though London has been a world tourist destination for decades (Knox, 1996), there has been limited research on the development of tourism in the capital (Maxim, 2015). The most recent works in this field include those of Maxim (2016) who discusses sustainable tourism implementation in London; Pappalepore et al. (2014) who focus



their work on creative industries in East London; Maitland (2013) who looks at tourists and the ‘real London’; Sedgley, Pritchard and Morgan (2012) who discuss tourism and poverty in affluent societies using cases from inner London; and Travis (2011) who dedicates a chapter to tourism planning in the capital before 2008. None of these works however take a broader overview and discuss the challenges faced by policy makers when planning and managing tourism in one of the top world cities.

In terms of the governance of tourism in London, the Greater London Authority (GLA), consisting of the Mayor of London and the London Assembly, is the strategic administrative body for Greater London. This is an elected body that covers all 32 London boroughs and the City of London (see Figure 1). The Mayor is responsible for publishing the London Plan, which is the spatial development strategy for London and sets ‘an integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of London’ over the next 25 years (GLA, 2017, p. 2). The Plan therefore provides the policy context for the local planning policies promoted by the London boroughs.

*\*INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE\**

At the local level, the Local Development Framework (LDF) is the current spatial planning strategy for the London boroughs, which was introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Details about the LDF are given in the Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning, which states that each local planning authority has to produce a Development Plan Documents for their area, with the Core Strategy being the principal development document (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2005).

## **Methodology**

For the present work, the case study approach was deemed the most appropriate

research method for analysing the complex phenomenon of urban tourism. According to Yin (2009), the case study is employed in many situations when little is known about a topic and when the scope of research is to contribute to the current knowledge, in this case on world tourism cities. Veal (2011) also underlines the merits of the case study methodology in tourism research as it helps in understanding complex phenomena by analysing individual examples. Therefore, by focusing on London, one of the world's tourism cities, the paper provides rich information on challenges faced by policy makers in planning and managing tourism in these environments.

As this study is exploratory in nature, it was deemed appropriate to adopt a qualitative approach which made possible the investigation of the research topic through the analysis of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). Initially, an extensive literature review of the relevant topics was performed in order to discuss the recent developments in the studied area, followed by a document analysis of the current policies and strategies promoted by the local authorities that guide tourism development in London. Additionally, a number of interviews were conducted with representatives of public and private organisations involved in tourism development in London.

To gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by policy makers in London, the first step was to collect and analyse a number of policy documents; these consisted of the latest London Plan and Tourism Strategy produced by the GLA, together with the main planning documents and tourism policy documents promoted by the 33 local authorities in London. The examination of these documents offered a useful overview of tourism development in the capital and helped identify a number of key challenges. The content analysis technique was employed for examining the documents (Bryman & Bell, 2011), and through repeated readings a number of themes were identified.

In addition, a comparative framework was used to understand how the main priorities in terms of tourism development in the capital changed over the past 15 years. This was possible by comparing the current main planning documents for the London boroughs (the Core Strategies - CSs) with those from year 2000 which at the time were called Unitary Development Plans (UDPs). The data about the current policy documents was collected by the author from the local authorities' websites, while that for 2000 was adopted from the work of Evans (2000). The CSs are large documents of over a hundred pages each, and even three to four hundred pages in some cases. The structure and topics covered in these documents vary, yet all CSs identify the vision and objectives for the borough and propose a spatial strategy, together with a set of policies related to aspects such as sustainable development, housing, transport infrastructure, town centres, local economy, protecting communities, managing built and natural environment, climate change, waste management, health and wellbeing, safety and security, with some documents also covering culture and leisure.

Based on a systematic analysis of the CSs, it was found that the information on tourism is often covered in different sections of the document, which is why only the relevant passages were extracted and summarized for this analysis. These selections were assembled through a search of the entire documents for relevant terms, i.e. *tourism, tourist, visitor, culture and creative industries*. The reason why the terms 'culture' and 'creative industries' were included is that tourism in cities is often associated with activities related to arts, culture and creative industries (Howie, 2003). This association has been promoted by a number of official documents issued over the years by different organisations, including the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2000) and the GLA (2010).

Furthermore, a number of 21 semi-structured interviews (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008) were conducted with key organisations that have a role to play in the development of tourism in the capital. This technique is one of the most important sources of data collection in case study research (Yin, 2009) and has been widely used in tourism studies (Pizam, 1994). Semi-structured interviews proved particularly useful in gaining rich data on challenges faced by policy makers in the current economic climate when it comes to planning and managing tourism in London.

Given the changing landscape of tourism governance in London, an aspect discussed in detail by Maxim (2016), identifying the appropriate interview subjects for the study was not a simple task. Therefore, the snowball technique was considered to be the most suitable sampling tool for the selection of relevant organisations to be included in the research (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008). The initial group of organisations contacted for interviews included a number of bodies that were responsible with different aspects of tourism development in London, such as the Greater London Authority, London & Partners (previously named Visit London), the London Partnership organisations, and Transport for London (TfL). During the interviews conducted with the representatives of these organisations (except for the GLA that declined to take part in the study), the respondents were asked to recommend any other organisations or persons they considered relevant and these new subjects were added to the list. As a result, a number of London boroughs, business improvement districts<sup>1</sup> (BIDs) and large tourism organisations were added to the initial list. Finally, a total of

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<sup>1</sup> As stated on the GLA website, 'A Business Improvement District is a geographical area within which the businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements to improve their trading environment. [...] such as extra safety, cleaning and environmental measures.'

five London Partnerships, five London boroughs, five BIDs, four tourism organisations and two public organisations agreed to take part in this study. To record the answers as accurately as possible, the interviews were recorded (with the free and informed consent of the interviewees) and the responses were then transcribed and analysed.

One of the limitations of this study is inherent to case study research, this method being often criticised because it provides little basis for generalisation – ‘scientific generalisation’. Although the findings from case studies cannot be generalised when compared with those obtained from random sample surveys for example, a number of inferences can be made and these may apply to other contexts. Indeed, Yin (2009) argues that in case study research another type of generalisation applies – ‘analytical generalisation’ – which is oriented towards theoretical propositions rather than enumerating frequencies. Another limitation relates to the representativeness of the organisations that took part in the interviews. Even though not every stakeholder was covered in this study, efforts were made to include different types of organisations (from public bodies and local authorities, to BIDs and tourism organisations) to gain a better understanding of the challenge they face when it comes to tourism development in London.

### **Research findings**

Looking at London, it can be seen that tourism is a non-statutory function for local authorities and therefore the resources allocated and the policy measures adopted for the development of this activity differ from one borough to another. Moreover, there is limited information available on the current tourism policies promoted by the local authorities in the capital (Maxim, 2016). Tourism is a complex phenomenon that overlaps with other policy areas, and therefore the strategies and plans which influence its development are very rarely dedicated exclusively to this activity (Page & Hall,

2003). This view is enforced by Pearce (2011), who argues that in most cases tourism is part of broader urban policies and does not have a separate strategy. This proved to be the case for London as well, and this paper therefore examines not only the tourism policy documents, but also the main planning documents issued by the GLA and the 33 local authorities in London.

### ***Overview of tourism development in London – comparative analysis of the main planning documents***

The first document analysed is the latest London Plan, which is the spatial development strategy for London. Tourism is one of the indicators the plan takes into account when emphasising the status of London as a ‘world city’, an aspect which underlines the importance of tourism for the economy of the city. The Plan also mentions the Mayor’s vision for tourism, which sets out a number of key objectives: to develop the quality of accommodation; to enhance visitor perception of value for money; and to improve the inclusivity and accessibility of the visitor experience. (GLA, 2017).

Further on, the next policy documents considered in this study are the tourism / visitor / arts / culture / events strategies produced by the London boroughs, the Core Strategies as available for year 2016, and the Unitary Development Plans for the year 2000. The specific aspects considered relevant for this study are compiled into the main column headings of Table 1, which presents a summary of the data analysis, and the rationale is given below:

- The first column specifies the *name of the borough*, while the second column identifies whether that borough has a *tourism policy document* currently in place;

- *Tourism 'Strategic'*: indicates whether strategic consideration was given to tourism by each borough in their main planning documents. If any mention of *tourism and/or visitor* is found within the strategic part of the documents (Spatial Vision & Strategic Objectives for CSs; and Part I for the UDPs) this is recorded in the table using 'Y';
- *Tourism 'Context'*: presents the policy or chapter of the CSs / UDPs relevant to tourism, which shows the importance given by local authorities to this activity;
- *Hotel Development*: reflects the attitude of local authorities towards the development of hotels and other accommodation facilities;
- *New Visitor Attractions*: shows the position of local authorities towards promoting new attractions, and thus bringing more visitors to their area.

\*INSERT TABLE 1 HERE\*

From Table 1, it can be observed that only 4 out of 33 local authorities in London currently have in place a dedicated tourism or visitor strategy or policy. In comparing the current data against that from the 90s, when almost 60% of the boroughs had a specific tourism policy (Evans, 2000), a considerable reduction can be seen in the number of local authorities that currently produced a specific tourism document. Most London boroughs mention tourism within their cultural, arts or events strategies, confirming the close relationship between tourism activities in urban areas and culture (Howie, 2003), an aspect discussed earlier. It is worth noting that the latest tourism policy document for the capital is entitled *A Cultural Tourism Vision for London 2015-2017* (GLA & CTC, 2015), and states that four out of five visitor to the capital mention culture and heritage as their main reason to visit the city.

Moving on to the next heading (*Tourism 'Strategic'*), although a number of changes can be seen, most boroughs make reference to visitors/tourism in the strategic

part of their development plans both in 2000 and 2016. This finding stresses the importance of tourism in London and its significant contribution to the local economy (Maitland & Newman, 2009).

Another indication of how much importance is given to tourism by each borough is whether their respective main planning documents include a dedicated chapter/core policy on tourism, or whether this is combined with other activities (see the *Tourism 'Context'* column of Table 1). Even though the majority of local authorities in London mention tourism in the strategic part of their CSs, only 15% of them include a dedicated core policy for visitors and tourism, while three other boroughs combine tourism/visitors with activities such as arts and culture. For the remaining boroughs, references to tourism are made within other core policies such as Town Centres, Culture, Employment, Economic or Community.

When comparing the boroughs' UDPs and CSs, a major shift can be seen – if in 2000 over half of all London boroughs had a dedicated or combined chapter on tourism/visitors, in 2016 fewer than a quarter had such a core policy in their CSs. A possible explanation for the large number of boroughs that dedicated a chapter to tourism in 2000 is that the *PPG 12: Development Plans*, which guided the planning policies at the time, included tourism among the strategic topics to be considered by local authorities when designing their UDPs (Evans, 2000). This requirement was not maintained in the new *PPS 12: Local Spatial Planning* that replaced the PPG 12 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008). Another possible reason for the absence of a dedicated core policy on tourism in the majority of CSs could be that the current London Plan, which influences the local development plans, does not include a dedicated policy on tourism development (GLA, 2017).



Another set of data included in Table 1 refers to the attitude of local authorities towards hotel development (see the *Hotel Development* column). These policies are important for the development of a region as they facilitate the accommodation of more visitors, and have environmental and social implications for local people (Travis, 2011). The situation has not changed significantly since 2000 as the vast majority of boroughs support hotel development subject to a number of restrictions. These are usually related to sustainability issues, such as environmental considerations, public transport links and car parking spaces. The policy in favour of hotel development adopted by the majority of boroughs is in line with the strategic priorities identified in the latest London Plan, which sets a target of 40,000 net additional hotel bedrooms by 2036 (GLA, 2017).

At a closer look however, it can be observed that about 65% of the accommodation capacity in London is concentrated in only four boroughs – Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Camden and Hillingdon, with Westminster accounting for nearly a third of the total number of rooms available (Maxim, 2013). The first three inner London boroughs listed earlier are also those that attract the largest number of visitors, hosting 12 out of the top 20 most visited London attractions, seven of which are in Westminster alone (London & Partners, 2015). To respond to this challenge, the GLA (2017) and the London Development Agency (LDA, 2009) promoted policies that encourage the spreading of accommodation facilities across the rest of the city, in particular in outer London. This would help spread the benefits of tourism across the capital and reduce the pressure placed by visitors on central London.

Another challenge identified in the literature review is the growing popularity of the sharing economy and online peer-to-peer platforms such as Airbnb, which threatens the traditional accommodations sector (Guttentag, 2015). For example, research conducted by Zervas, Proserpio and Byers (2016, p. 3) in Texas found that a ‘10%

increase in the size of the Airbnb market resulted in a 0.39% decrease in hotel room revenue'. Some of the cities around the world have already taken planning actions to try to address this issue (e.g. New York, Barcelona, Berlin). In London, a 90 day rule was introduced in 2015 which stipulates that a property cannot be rented out on Airbnb for more than three months without having a planning permission (Hickey & Cookney, 2016). However, a report issued by the Residential Landlords Association highlighted that 61% of the Airbnb listings in London are available for more than 90 nights per year (Simcock & Smith, 2016), with the Mayor of London expressing concern and admitting that legislation may be needed to regulate this sector (Sky News, 2016).

Over three quarters of all local authorities in London encourage the creation of new visitor attractions in their CSs (see *New visitor attractions* column in Table 1), with most oriented towards new or enhanced arts and culture facilities. This is again in line with the recommendations of the latest London Plan which promotes and supports the development of new arts, culture and entertainment facilities (GLA, 2017).

### ***Tourism challenges highlighted in the policy documents***

When looking at the challenges identified by policy makers in the current planning documents (CSs and tourism strategies), these can be grouped around 11 different themes as highlighted in Figure 2. Most of the boroughs (70%) mention the protection and conservation of the natural and built heritage as one of their concerns, a challenge recognised in the latest London Plan (GLA, 2017) and previously linked by researchers to the growth of tourism in cities (Timur & Getz, 2008). A slightly lower number of boroughs, about half of them, are looking at developing and promoting tourism in their area (including opening new visitor attractions and cultural facilities), while seven boroughs would like to improve the image of their destination. These two challenges focus on attracting more visitors to London in order to stay competitive on the global

market.

*\*INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE\**

Another challenge faced by cities worldwide is to maintain their distinctiveness in the face of pressure from globalisation and standardisation (Maitland, 2012) and thus avoid serial reproduction. It appears that about half of the boroughs recognise this challenge and aim to protect the distinctive characteristics of their area and enhance the sense of place. Almost the same number of boroughs note the importance of working in partnership with other public and private organisations, as it contributes to achieving their objectives and maximising resources. Partnership and cooperation with other organisations is promoted and advocated by researchers and organisations (DCMS, 2016; Devine & Devine, 2011) as it contributes to a more effective management of tourism in a destination and it helps in attracting funds. This leads to another challenge identified by almost a fifth of the London boroughs in their policy documents, namely attracting external funds, which can be linked to the budget cuts suffered by local authorities in the UK as a result of the 2008 financial crisis (Maxim, 2016).

Public transport improvements, including developing more sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling, is mentioned by about 40% of the London boroughs as one of their concerns in their efforts to cope with the growing number of visitors. Law (2002) is one of the researchers who emphasise the importance of good transport infrastructure, especially when it comes to large cities that attract millions of visitors. The need for good public transport links is also recognised in the latest *Tourism Action Plan* published by the DCMS (2016).

Safety and security is another challenge identified by a third of the local authorities in their policy documents, two aspects which are among the critical success

factors that contribute to destination competitiveness (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). According to the most recent statistics published by the Metropolitan Police (2017), Westminster and Camden – two of the most visited boroughs in London, are among those with the highest levels of crime in the capital. Both boroughs recognise this as a key challenge in their planning documents, linking it to the high number of visitors and the thriving night time economy.

Slightly fewer boroughs mention the development of a diverse evening economy and nightlife offer among their priorities in order to help boost the local economy. The nightlife is an important feature of large cities (Edwards et al., 2008) and a significant part of the London's economy. However, as highlighted in the London Plan (GLA, 2017), specific attention should be paid by local authorities to the way this activity is managed in order to avoid an increase in the level of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Lastly, sustainable tourism and climate change are identified as a challenge by less than a quarter of the London boroughs. Sustainability is recognised by policy makers and research as a challenge for the development of tourism in destinations, however this concept received little attention so far in the context of large cities (Maxim, 2016). The challenges posed by climate change are also emphasised in the latest London Plan (GLA, 2017), with the Mayor encouraging the expansion of the 'green' business sector.

### ***Challenges identified by the interview respondents***

The challenges for tourism development in London identified by policy makers that took part in the interviews were grouped into 16 themes, seven of which are among those identified and discussed in the previous section. Therefore, the challenges which are present in both the policy documents analysed and the interviews conducted are: protect local features and distinctiveness; promote well-known tourism attractions; lack

of resources and budget cuts; safety and security; public transport improvements; sustainable tourism; and the lack of stakeholder cooperation and effective partnerships.

In addition, the interviewees identified nine related challenges for tourism development in London. To start with, the lack of strategies and policies at local and regional level was mentioned by a number of respondents. As seen in the previous section, only four boroughs currently have in place a tourism strategy, while the other local authorities mentioned tourism in their arts or culture policy documents. Most of the interviewees would attribute this to the lack of resources allocated to planning and managing tourism in London. One respondent took another view and argued that local authorities should not have a primary role to play in the management of tourism in their area:

‘We don’t have any tourism strategy or plan for tourists. We like them because they spend lots of money [...]. So, tourism is a vital sector of the economy, we do our bit to support hotels, but we don’t get involved in any additional tourism activities because that’s actually not really our job’. (IR no. 21)

This is a rather simplistic view that focuses only on the economic benefits of tourism without recognising the other associated negative effects which accompany this activity. In the absence of proper planning and management, local communities may become hostile towards tourism development in cities, and the built and natural environment may suffer, which may lead to the deterioration of a destination over the years (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000).

Some other respondents believe that the changes which took place over the past years and that affected the main bodies responsible with the planning and management of tourism in the capital (e.g. LDA, Visit London; see Maxim, 2016) contributed to a lack of leadership in terms of tourism development in London. This is reflected in the views expressed by one respondent, who notes:

‘[...] obviously the tourism industry is changing quite dramatically at the moment. And there is a lack of a coordinated approach across the boroughs, across the whole of the country, there is nobody sort of striving to say that’s the way you should be doing things.’ (IR no. 10)

This is further emphasised by another respondent who takes a step further and points out that it looks like policy makers in London don’t consider tourism a high priority on their agendas:

‘I think the feeling we would have, and when I say we I mean my colleagues in the boroughs, they wouldn’t see tourism as a high enough priority to really want special investment and collective working.’ (IR no. 14)

Another challenge identified by interviewees refers to getting visitors outside of central London and thus spreading the benefits of tourism across all London boroughs, and in particular towards Outer London. This aspect links to another challenge identified by respondents, overcrowding in certain areas, especially in central London boroughs such as Westminster or Camden. As one respondent remarks:

‘I think sometimes if it’s too crowded, you could be a victim of your own success’  
(IR no. 2)

These two challenges are also recognised by the GLA (2017), which promotes policies aimed at distributing the economic benefits of tourism across London (e.g. encouraging accommodation facilities and new attractions in Outer London boroughs).

Three other sustainability related challenges refer to congestion in certain areas that leads to poor air quality, controlling the number of visitors, and managing conflicts between visitors and locals in some of the most crowded parts of the city. These challenges relate to environmental and social negative impacts that accompany tourism development in destinations and which require the full attention of policy makers.

Westminster is one of the boroughs that express in its main development plan the intention to control tourism in order to minimize its adverse impacts on the environment and local community (City of Westminster, 2011). With regard to the air quality, in January 2017, the Mayor of London issued a 'Very High' air pollution alert for the capital, with three of the most visited boroughs being named among the top most polluted area, i.e. Camden, City of London, and Westminster (Davis, 2017). Within days of this event, the Mayor also announced plans to introduce a 'bed tax' for hotels in the capital to counterbalance the costs imposed by the tourism industry on the public transport, street cleaning or policing. This initiative was received with anger by the hoteliers who argue that such a tax would discourage visitors to stay overnight (Calder, 2017). This measure would also be somewhat in contradiction with the priorities set in the latest London Plan (GLA, 2017), which encourage more accommodation facilities.

Another challenge identified by respondents relates to better knowledge and understanding of the tourism industry, both from the side of policy makers and of the tourism industry. This challenge was previously recognised by researchers, who note the lack of an understanding of the urban tourism phenomenon (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Pearce, 2001), in particular in such complex environments as world cities. The last challenge discussed here is concerned with the difficulty in getting qualified skilled staff (*'making sure that we have the right skills for people in place'*; IR no. 1) and the associated issue of high staff turnover in the travel and tourism sector. The industry has been often criticised for being a low-wage, low-skill labour force sector (Law, 2002), an aspect also recognised by the DCMS (2016) in its latest tourism policy document.

Finally, although this was not covered by the research, the challenges posed by Brexit cannot be overlooked. In June 2016 the British people voted to leave the EU and the UK Government is at the moment preparing to start this process by triggering the

Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. Two important organisations, Tourism Alliances and ABTA – the UK’s largest travel association, already highlighted a number of challenges that the travel and tourism industry would face when the UK leaves the EU. These challenges are a result of the strong links between the EU and the UK, with 44% of the UK travel and tourism spending currently coming from EU nationals (ABTA & Deloitte, 2016). If the free movement of people, goods and services between the UK and the EU are not maintained, this could have implications for the capacity of the industry to employ EU nationals, and could affect the flow of trade and travel until new regulations are in place.

## **Conclusion**

The present study highlighted the lack of research on an important topic, world tourism cities, and looked at the challenges faced by policy makers in London when planning and managing tourism in one of the top world cities. Reviewing the current policy documents guiding tourism in the capital, it was found that London wants to keep its status as a one of ‘the best cities in the world to visit’ (GLA & CTC, 2015, p. 4) and encourages new visitor attractions and accommodation facilities, while also protecting the local distinctiveness and the built and natural heritage. Yet, although tourism is an important contributor for the economy of the city (GLA Economics, 2012) and plays a key role in ‘maintaining London’s global city competitiveness’ (Church & Frost, 2004, p. 211), there are limited planning provisions to guide local authorities in adopting policies for tourism development.

Furthermore, the study revealed that although most boroughs consider tourism among their strategic priorities, only a small number have dedicated core policies or tourism strategies to guide the development of this activity. As highlighted in the research findings, different London boroughs face different challenges in terms of



tourism development (some inner London boroughs for example suffer from overcrowding and high levels of crime, while outer London boroughs may struggle to attract visitors and increase the accommodation capacity). Therefore, in the case of world tourism cities, policy makers at local (borough) level need to propose measures that address the particular challenges identified.

The lack of policies and strategies for tourism development in London was also recognised by the policy makers interviewed, who further emphasised the challenges posed by the lack of resources allocated for this activity, and the lack of political will to make tourism a priority. This could impact on the competitiveness of London as a top world tourism destination, with researchers arguing that local authorities should play a stronger role in integrating 'tourism management into overall urban strategic development and planning' (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007, p. 111).

Sustainable development of tourism, with its various social and environmental implications (e.g. public transport improvements, traffic congestion, conflicts between hosts and visitors), was also recognised as a challenge in the policy documents and by the policy makers interviewed. Sustainability, together with planning and managing tourism, and working in partnership are however among the key drivers of success identified by researchers if an urban destination is to succeed in the long term (Maxim, 2015; Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). Therefore, in order to stay competitive on the global market, policy makers in world tourism cities need to better understand the complex environments in which they operate and to take a leading role in bringing together the key stakeholders involved in tourism development in order to address the challenges faced by the sector.

To conclude, this paper sheds some light on challenges faced by policy makers responsible for tourism development in London, one of the top world tourism cities.

More systematic research is needed to better understand whether those challenges would apply to other world cities, or if they are specific to London. Further research is also needed to grasp the long term implications of Brexit for the tourism industry in London, and whether this event would affect its status as a top world tourism city. While the UK Government believe that leaving the EU would create opportunities for growth by forging partnerships in new markets (DCMS, 2016), there are however voices who fear that the tourism industry would suffer as a result of this decision (ABTA & Deloitte, 2016) due to the strong links that currently exist between the UK and the EU economy.

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Table 1 Comparative analysis of the London boroughs policy documents

Borough	Tourism/ Visitor/ Culture/ Events/ Arts strategies 2016	Tourism 'Strategic'		Tourism 'Context'		Hotel develop		New visitor attractions	
		CS Vision & objective	UDP Part I Strategy	CS (2016) Core Policy	UDP (2000) Part II - Chapter	CS 2016	UDP 2000	CS 2016	UDP 2000
Barking & Dagenham	Arts Strategy 2013-16	-	-	Culture & Tourism	Arts & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Barnet	-	-	-	Town Centres / Community	Leisure & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bexley	Arts Strategy 2008-13	Y	Y	Jobs/ Town Centres	Tourism & Leisure	Y	Y	Y	Y
Brent	Cultural Strategy 2016-21	Y	Y	Town Centres	Tourism & Hotels	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bromley	Cultural Strategy 2007-12	-	Y	-	Recreation, Leisure & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	-
Camden	-	Y	-	Town Centres / Economic	Economic	Y	-	Y	Y
City of London	Visitor Strategy 2013-17	Y	Y	Visitor,Arts,Culture/ Town Centres	Visitors	Y	Y	Y	-
Croydon	Community Strategy 2016-21	-	Y	Employment / Town Centres	Hotels & Tourism	Y	Y	-	Y
Ealing	Arts & Cultural Strategy 2013-17	-	Y	Town Centres	Employment	Y	Y	Y	Y
Enfield	Leisure & Culture Strategy 2015-20	Y	Y	Visitor & Tourism	Arts, Recreation & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Greenwich	Visit Greenwich Business Plan 2016-19	Y	Y	Tourism/Economic/ Town Centres	Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hackney	Cultural Policy 2010	Y	Y	Town Centres	Arts, Culture & Entertainment	Y	Y	Y	-
Hammersmith & Fulham	Arts Strategy - draft 2016	Y	-	Employment / Community	Employment	Y	Y	Y	Y
Haringey	Cultural Strategy 2013-16	Y	Y	Culture & Leisure	Leisure & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Harrow	Tourism Strategy 2009-12	Y	Y	Town Centres	Recreation, Leisure & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Havering	Arts Strategy 2013-15	Y	-	Culture	Employment	Y	-	Y	-
Hillingdon	-	-	Y	Employment / Culture / Visitor	Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hounslow	Leisure & Culture Strategy 2016-20	-	Y	Town Centres / Hotels	-	Y	Y	Y	-
Islington	Cultural Strategy 2010-15	Y	Y	Town Centres/Hotel	Visitors	Y	Y	Y	Y
Kensington & Chelsea	Visitor Policy 2009-20	Y	Y	Town Centres / Arts & Culture / Hotels	Hotels / Leisure & Recreation	Y	Y	Y	-
Kingston	Arts & Cultural Strategy 2011-15	Y	Y	Economic / Town Centres	Recreation & Leisure	Y	Y	Y	-
Lambeth	Events Strategy 2015 - 20	Y	Y	Economic	Arts & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lewisham	Cultural Strategy 2009-12/ Arts Strategy 2009-15	Y	Y	Conservation	Leisure	Y	Y	-	Y
Merton	Heritage Strategy 2015-20	Y	Y	Town Centres	Leisure, Recreation & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	-
Newham	Community Strategy 2010-30	Y	Y	Town Centres / Jobs	Leisure & Recreation	Y	Y	Y	Y
Redbridge	Arts & Events Strategy 2008-12	Y	Y	Culture & Recreation	Recreation, Leisure & Tourism	-	Y	Y	-
Richmond	Arts Strategy 2012-17; Cultural Strategy 2015-19	Y	Y	Visitor & Tourism /Town Centres	Culture, Entertain & Tourism	Y	Y	-	-
Southwark	Cultural Strategy 2013-18	Y	Y	Jobs & Business	Community / Transport	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sutton	Arts Strategy 2007-10	-	Y	Town Centres	Community & Leisure	-	Y	Y	-
Tower Hamlets	Update to the Cultural Strategy 2007	Y	Y	Town Centres	Arts, Entertainment & Tourism	Y	Y	Y	-
Waltham Forest	Culture Strategy 2010-30	Y	-	Tourism & Visitor / Town Centres	Industry	Y	Y	Y	Y
Wandsworth	Cultural Strategy 2009-14	-	Y	Town Centres	Leisure & Recreation	Y	Y	-	Y
Westminster	Arts & Culture Strategy 2008-2013	Y	Y	Tourism, Arts & Culture / Hotels	Tourism, Hotels & Entertainment	Y	-	Y	Y
<b>Total</b>	<b>Tourism &amp; Visitor - 4 Arts &amp; Culture - 23 Heritage, Community - 3</b>	<b>24 - Y</b>	<b>27 - Y</b>	<b>Tourism &amp; Visitor - 8</b>	<b>Tourism &amp; Visitor - 19</b>	<b>31 - Y</b>	<b>30 - Y</b>	<b>29 - Y</b>	<b>21 - Y</b>

Figure 1. Map of London - Inner and Outer London boroughs

Figure 2. Challenges for tourism development in London