Developing the competitiveness of a rural tourism destination: A Case Study of Monmouthshire

How has Monmouthshire, being a rural area successfully developed a competitive destination and how can it lead as an example to destinations of a similar scope?

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April 2018
Signed Statement

Declaration

I declare that this Dissertation has not already been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree. It is the result of my own independent research except where 'otherwise stated.

Name: Courtney Phillips.

Date: April 2018

Signature ..........................
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyse how rural destinations can create a competitive destination, despite their lack of stand-out appeal. With the use of Monmouthshire as a case study. With the county having developed a successful tourism industry, despite its rural location and lack of unique selling point. Understanding how this could lead to a model of practice.

The projected consisted of five chapters, an introduction which provided the necessary background information and existing literature surrounding rural tourism, rural destinations, destination branding and destination competitiveness. With key themes arising, including the decrease in traditional rural activities and the rise in alternatives; such as food and drink. As well as the barriers rural destinations face in creating a strong destination brand.

The methodology chapter outlines and justifies the chosen research methods for the study and justified why quantitative, qualitative and case study approaches were used.

The next chapter presents the results of the chosen research methods, analysing and discussing the results of both questionnaires and interviews. The results demonstrated the key motivations for tourists to visit a rural tourist destination, giving insight of what components can contribute to creating a competitive destination. As well as participants thoughts on destination branding, the marketing of Monmouthshire and the impacts of tourism.

Finally, the last chapter of the study concludes the project by reviewing the overall findings, how the researcher met the aims and objectives and making recommendations to rural destinations that have been identified through this project.
Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank my dissertation supervisor Vicky Richards for her constant support and guidance throughout this project. I am extremely grateful for your support and quickly responded emails.

To my amazing Fiancé, Jack. You have no idea how much your constant support and understanding has helped me throughout this difficult year. Without your daily support and motivation, I do not feel I would have been able to complete this project. From the proof reading of every chapter, help with synonyms after my mind has turned into mush and telling me I am capable when I felt I was not. I could not be more grateful or love you more.

I would also like to thank my family, my mother, sister, Sharon and Martin for your constant support and the belief you all have in me when all mine has gone. For the number of meals, dinners and meetups I have had to turn down, thank you for always understanding. Thank you for being on the end of the phone, for me to cry over a bad mark, presentation fears and any other silly worries that I have faced over the past three years. Thank you to my little Yorkshire Terrier, Minty, for being a pleasant distraction and the most amazing company whilst writing this project.

Finally, thank you to my wonderful closest friends, Kayleigh and Rhian. Thank you for your advice and your ability to make me escape when needed, for a gossip and stress relief. I promise I will be a better friend now that is over.
Contents

Signed Statement .................................................................................................................................................. 2
Abstract ............................................................................................................................................................... 3
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................................................... 4
Contents ............................................................................................................................................................. 5
List of Tables ....................................................................................................................................................... 8
List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................................... 9
CHAPTER ONE: .................................................................................................................................................. 11
INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................................................... 11
1.0 Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 12
1.1 Purpose of the Study .................................................................................................................................. 13
1.2 Introduction to Monmouthshire .................................................................................................................. 14
1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research Project ............................................................................................ 15
CHAPTER TWO: .................................................................................................................................................. 17
THE LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................................................................. 17
2.0 Literature Review ........................................................................................................................................ 18
  2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................................ 18
2.2 Rural Tourism ............................................................................................................................................... 18
  2.2.1 Types of Rural Tourism ..................................................................................................................... 22
2.3 Rural Destinations ....................................................................................................................................... 23
2.4 Destination Branding ................................................................................................................................. 25
2.5 Destination Competitiveness .................................................................................................................... 27
2.6 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................................. 29
  ........................................................................................................................................................................ 29
2.7 Chapter Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 30
CHAPTER THREE: .............................................................................................................................................. 31
METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................................................................. 31
3.0 Methodology ................................................................................................................................................. 32
  3.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................................................ 32
3.2 Case Study Approach ............................................................................................................................... 32
3.3 Primary and Secondary Research .......................................................................................................... 33
3.4 Quantitative and Qualitative Data .......................................................................................................... 33
3.5 Research Design ...................................................................................................................................... 34
  3.5.1 Questionnaires .................................................................................................................................... 35
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1</td>
<td>Rural tourism requirements OCED, (1994)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2</td>
<td>Types of Rural Tourism</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.3</td>
<td>Rural Characteristics Moseley, (1980)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.4</td>
<td>Characteristics of Rural and Urban Societies (Frankenberg, 1966)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>Page:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1 Performance of Enterprises in Tourism Related Industries</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1 - Demand for Undertaking Specific Types of Activities in Rural Areas</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2 – Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3 – Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1 – Age of Respondents</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2 - Respondents Household Income</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3 - Respondents Highest Qualification</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4 – Respondents Opinions of the Rurality of their Area</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.5 – Word Cloud</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.6 – What Respondents feel Monmouthshire has that Attracts Tourists</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.7 – Purpose of Respondent’s Trip</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.8 – Respondents that would Holiday in Monmouthshire in the Future</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.9 – Word Cloud</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.10 – Residents that have Holidayed in Monmouthshire based on Income</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.11 – Residents that have Holidayed in Monmouthshire based on Age</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.12 – What would Persuade Respondents to Visit</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.13 – Have Respondents Seen any Promotional Material Distributed by Monmouthshire to Attract Tourists?</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.14 – Word Cloud</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.15 – Impacts of Tourism in Monmouthshire</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.16 – Age of Non-Resident Respondents</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.17 – Non-Residents Respondents Highest Qualification</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.18 – Non-Residents Respondents Annual Household Income</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.19 – Respondents Definition of Rural Tourism</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.20 – Non-Residents that have Holidayed within a Rural Area based on Income</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.21 – Non-Residents that have Holidayed within a Rural Area based on Age</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.22 – Purpose of Non-Resident Respondents Trip</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.23 – Non-Residents Respondents Motivations to Visit

Figure 4.24 – Activities that may Motivate Non-Resident Respondents to Visit a Rural Destination

Figure 4.25 – Where Non-Resident Respondents Have Visited in Monmouthshire

Figure 4.26 – What Non-Residents Respondents Believe Monmouthshire has to offer Tourists

Figure 4.27 - Non-Residents Respondents that have seen Promotional Material by Monmouthshire

Figure 4.28 - Word Cloud
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
1.0 Introduction

During the 1970’s, the rural world saw a wave of change and regeneration, in response to the decline of the farming industry. It was then that rural tourism begun. Rural tourism breaks away from that of resort based holidays and instead involves lush countryside and heritage (Lane, 2009).

Rural tourism is a growing tourism industry in many parts of the world and has significantly expanded since the 1970s, both in terms of demand and supply (Lane, 2009). In the 1990’s a quarter of main holidays in Europe were spent within a countryside environment (Davidson, 1988). Now rural tourism provides £17 billion a year to the English economy alone (Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, 2018), it is estimated that two thirds of the tourism industry in Wales is generated in the rural counties (Welsh Government, 2018).

There is very little accurate knowledge of the precise size of the rural tourism industry, and most figures are included within the special interest tourism market. The Countryside Alliance (2006) suggested that rural tourism is worth over £11.5 billion and creates over 380,000 jobs in England; figures show that in Wales, the tourism industry is worth an estimated £6 billion a year, and two-thirds of that is generated in the rural counties of Wales (Alston, 2011).

Figure 1.1 Performance of enterprises in tourism related industries in rural and urban areas, 2003/04 to 2009/10

(Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2011)
Figure 1.1 shows the economic performance of rural tourism, in terms of number of enterprises, turnover and employment statistics. The chart shows that the number of enterprises, turnover and employment in tourism related industries increased by at least 11% in rural areas between 2003/04 and 2009/10, meaning it is a growing industry.

Gulcan, et al., (2009) also states that, tourism in rural areas not only benefits destinations and the community economically through increased employment opportunities, but it can also enhance local communities socially, through helping preserve local culture and traditions and keeping young people within their rural areas.

Within the inquiry into rural tourism in Wales, the Rural Development Sub-Committee, (2011) state that “tourism is vital to the Welsh economy, in particular to the rural economy”. They believe that tourism should be considered important across the government and is of importance for the rural economy. They also state that alongside the economic benefits such as increased employment, tourism also has a role in keeping rural communities together, reinforcing Sharpley’s (2007) suggestion that rural tourism development is often used as a tool to restore and improve rural economies.

Though there are many positive effects that may arise with the success of implementing tourism in rural areas, the development of rural tourism has often been limited by poor planning, lack of the correct infrastructure and lack of distinct differentiations between other rural areas and products (Haven-Tang and Sedgley, 2013). Many rural destinations possess similar assets, such as familiar landscape and historic culture and heritage; many destinations also lack iconic structures that have the power to draw tourists in. Haveng-Tang and Sedgley, (2013) also state that due to the lack of standout attraction and appeal, it can therefore be difficult for rural destinations to create a sense of identity. This can cause problems when it comes to creating a successful destination brand, which requires a distinctive aspect of the destination or stand out appeal to focus on. Therefore, making it difficult for rural destinations to gain a competitive advantage and successful tourism industry.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

Therefore, this study sets out to analyse and investigate the capability of rural destinations to create a successful tourist industry, despite the limitations they face, whilst getting a better
understanding of what rural tourism is and involves. The study will use Monmouthshire as a case study as it is the researchers home county; laying emphasis on the way in which the country has overcome the barriers it faces, and the procedures they have used to create a competitive destination. To do this, the researcher will undertake primary research with residents of Monmouthshire and non-residents to gain their opinions and experiences of rural tourism.

The academic literature and secondary research will be used to focus upon existing research relating to rural tourism, rural destinations, destination branding and destination competitiveness. These topics will be analysed and discussed throughout the project to have a thorough knowledge of the background, prior to focusing on the participants responses. Other primary research undertaken will include semi-structured interviews with a Monmouthshire holiday cottage owner, local hotel and attraction owners, to include an in-depth understanding of the ways in which tourism in Monmouthshire is marketed and developed. The study overall aims to give recommendations to other rural destinations, on how they too can use their individual features, to create a competitive destination.

1.2 Introduction to Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire was chosen for this project due to it not only being the researchers home county, but its previous high dependence on agriculture. The rural county remains one of the least densely populated counties in Wales, located on the Wales-England border (Visit Monmouthshire, 2018). The county is home to many strengths, it has beautiful landscape; with the Brecon Beacons National Park, Wye Valley Area of outstanding Natural Beauty all within the area. It is also home to many historical churches and castles and the Tintern Abbey. Like many rural destinations, its’ dependence on agriculture became economically unsustainable and there was a high demand for the creation of a successful tourism industry (Haven-Tang and Sedgley, 2013).

Tourism therefore plays a vital role within Monmouthshire’s overall economy, and now generates £190 million, with 2.3 million visitors in 2016. Visitors also play a vital role in supporting 2,900 full time jobs (Monmouthshire County Council, 2017).
Despite its many assets, unlike many mass tourist destinations Monmouthshire does not have any stand-out destination appeal (TEAM Tourism Consulting, 2012) and has therefore had to work harder and think creatively to differentiate and brand themselves, with limited marketing resources (Arkenford Ltd & Yellow Railroad, 2012). The county, in recent years, has played on their strengths and branded themselves as the ‘food capital’, being home to a number of reputable Michelin star restaurants, gastro-pubs, vineyards and food festivals (Visit Monmouthshire, 2018). The previous Destination Development plan (TEAM Tourism Consulting, 2012), recommended increasing off-peak demand through the development of events and festivals, something that since has been achieved, with the Abergavenny Food Festival being one of the leading food festivals in the UK, with an international reputation (Cole and Shaw, 2018). Within its latest figures, food and drink came second to accommodation in economic impact, insinuating that their branding is very successful (Monmouthshire County Council, 2017).

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Research Project

The main aim of the project is to investigate and analyse how rural destinations can create a competitive destination, despite their lack of stand-out appeal. With the use of Monmouthshire as a case study, having developed a successful tourism industry, despite its rural location and lack of unique selling point, and how this could lead to a model of practice. To achieve this, the researcher identified five objectives which will allow for overall answering of the main aim:

1. To undertake a critical review of the literature concerning rural tourism, rural destinations, destination branding and destination competitiveness.

2. To identify and evaluate Monmouthshire County Council’s tourism product and destination promotion strategies.

3. To explore the perceptions, experiences and motivations of Monmouthshire’s residents regarding rural tourism in their county and whether it has been positive or negative.
4. To explore the perceptions, motivations and experiences of non-Monmouthshire residents on rural tourism and the meaning of it.

5. To make conclusions and recommendations on best practice in destination branding and competitiveness.

1.5 Overview of the Dissertation

The dissertation will be separated into chapters, including a literature review on the existing literature available, providing the reader with theory and information in relation to the topic area. The methodology, identifying the ways in which the primary data was collected and justifying the approach taken and the limitations faced. Results, analysis and discussion of the results from the primary data, through the means of graphs and charts, discussing the main findings in relation to the secondary data. The conclusion and recommendations, summarising the main findings from both secondary and primary research, finalising with recommendations for rural destinations.
CHAPTER TWO: THE LITERATURE REVIEW
2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The researcher aims to explore the literature readily available within the subject area within this chapter. Allowing them to identify gaps and areas of which have not yet been investigated and or are lacking depth, leading to an effective data collection method (Oliver, 2012).

This chapter will examine the existing literature available on rural tourism and destination branding and competitiveness. Due to the limited research available on rural tourism, as well as there being no specific definition (Lane, 1994), research focusing on rural destinations will be fully analysed alongside rural tourism.

2.2 Rural Tourism

The fundamental basis of a discussion into any given subject is the understanding of the concepts and the issues that are involved; however, in the case of rural tourism this is difficult to achieve, due to there being no definite definition.

Many researchers have attempted to define the industry and most emphasise the geographical aspect of the industry, with the majority accepting that it embraces a range of tourism activities, which are taken place in the countryside (Lane, 1994., Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997). The EU define rural tourism as:

\[
\text{a holiday that is primarily motivated by the desire to closely experience the countryside, its people, heritage and way of life. The holiday should be primarily based in a rural setting (Failte Ireland, 2004).}
\]

The Welsh Government – Agriculture, Fisheries and Marine Group - CAP Planning Division, (2014), describe rural tourism as a type of tourism that takes place in the countryside or along the rural coast.

Although these are somewhat accurate definitions for rural tourism, there is still a big emphasis on the location aspect. Yet no type of tourism can be simply defined by its location alone, with many non-rural activities such as theme parks etc. being located within rural areas. Some researchers suggest that rural tourism is a set of activities that occur within a rural setting (Sharpley, 2007).
An older definition by Lane, (1994) however, considers rural tourism as both located within rural areas and functionally rural. He described rural tourism activities as growing slowly, being traditional in nature, as well as small-scale, and deeply rooted within the local population. This definition takes slightly more than just location into consideration, defining the type of activities that are considered rural, characterising what type of activity taking place in a rural setting is traditionally ‘rural.’

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1994) suggested that there are many reasons that there is significant struggle in producing a definition for rural tourism. They believe that resort based tourism itself can sometimes spill into rural areas, however this is urban in form but simply being carried out within a rural setting. They also propose that rural areas themselves are difficult to define, with rural landscape being home to an urban resort, it can become confusing. It can therefore be argued that the challenge of defining rural tourism may be down to the difficulty of defining what rurality is itself.

Instead of defining what rural tourism is, OCED, (1994) have listed various points of what rural tourism should be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Tourism Requirements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Located within a rural space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In contact with nature and the natural world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural in scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traditional in character, controlled locally and developed for the good of the destination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable, the tourism should help sustain the rural character of the destination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OCED, (1994)

Many authors suggest that the rural tourist market tends to be made up of medium-high class tourists whom possess elevated levels of education, disposable income and frequently travel with family (Lane, 2009; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997). However, despite the high socio-economic levels of many of the rural tourist market, expenditure tends to be low when
compared with resort and beach tourism. This may be due to the lack of attractions, shops and restaurants to spend money at compared with a resort area.

With many rural destinations having few stand out attractions and no ‘’major magnet’’ to pull in visitors (Law, 2002), rural areas trying to enter the tourist industry can struggle. For example, Oppermann, (1996) found that for two-thirds of the operators of rural tourism in southern Germany, tourism-related income accounts for less than 20% of their total net-income. Sharpley, (2002) found that most agritourism businesses in Cyprus faced the problem of low occupancy rates, ranging from 20% to 70%. Liu, (2006) found that the development of major resorts meant that rural tourism within Malaysia was extremely challenging.

These findings make it clear to see that many rural destinations struggle with tourism competitiveness and this may be due to the lack of attractions they offer. It is therefore essential that rural destinations entering the tourist industry, have other qualities that have the power to attract tourists. MacDonald and Jolliffe, (2003) suggested that culture and heritage can be a valuable resource for rural tourism, not only historical sites, but also living heritage such as rural culture and traditions.

As rural tourism is a highly diversified product and can be a matter of individual perception. Hjalager et al, (2018) undertook a survey to discover what respondents in Germany, Denmark, Norway and Sweden opinions were on their likely demand for a number of activities whilst on a rural holiday.
Figure 2.1 - Demand for undertaking specific types of activities in rural areas in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway by four segments

Figure 2.1 shows the average likelihood demands of “Current”, “Likely”, and “Potential” tourists.

It is not a surprise that outdoor activities score high in priority, with most studies on rural tourism suggesting that the primary motive to visit is the environment and outdoor activities (Kastenholz et al., 2012). Guided tours are however lower in demand, suggesting that many tourists consider outdoor activities as self-organised and not needing a guide. There is then, potential to improve and increase the self-guiding version of these types of activities. Visiting farms scored very low, which suggests that the typical rural image has now begun to move away from farming and farms, with food events and markets scoring much higher within the survey, coinciding well with the growth in food lovers and search for interesting products/experiences (Richards, 2015). Many researchers study into rural tourism, has suggested that food is now a key aspect in the success of tourism in rural areas (Blichfeldt and Halkier, 2014).
2.2.1 Types of Rural Tourism

Jamal and Robinson, (2009) suggest that while rural tourism was once farm based or classed as ‘agritourism’, it has now developed into much more and continues to diversify. They believe that it is a series of niche activities within a larger niche activity. That it is an umbrella concept instead of a concept that is tightly defined and consists of many different holiday types including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ecotourism</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The International Ecotourism Society state that ecotourism is related to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservation, communities and sustainable travel. Ecotourism should not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harm either the environment or the people involved in the area. For tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be truly eco, it must help protect and preserve nature, use local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources, have an educational aspect and the activities taking place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should not have a negative effect on the environment (Nistoreanu et al, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some common ecotourism activities include: hiking, biking and local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community trips to buy local crafts etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ethnic tourism</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic tourism is highly involved with the locals of a destination with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourists, displaying their way of life and traditions. Wood (1984) suggests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that the focus should be displayed on people living with a cultural identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and uniqueness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Agritourism</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This type of tourism is primarily farm based and uses the location for most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the activities. Darău et al. (2010) states that agritourism is organised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by farmers, as a secondary income. In agritourism, tourists usually spend the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>night in the farmers’ households and not in accommodation such as hotels or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guesthouses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daugstad and Kirchengast state that, “agritourism appeals to a target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that is eager to have extensively intimate, personalised, and ethically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correct experiences in their holidays” (2013, pp. 183-184).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Culinary tourism</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Within culinary tourism, the main motivator for tourists to travel is their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desire to discover specific dishes that are traditional to a certain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>destination. The activities that culinary tourists partake in whilst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>travelling, can include, visiting food festivals, wineries and vineyards and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thematic museums (Tomescu and Botezat 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With such a large variation of tourism types, it can be understood why there is much difficulty in finding common ground in the defining of rural tourism. Some academics therefore suggest that the definition of rural tourism must start with defining rural destinations themselves.

### 2.3 Rural Destinations

There are several mixed definitions of what it means for an area to be rural, for example, the OCED (1981), suggested that for an area to be rural there are three main discussion areas; population density, the use of land and the social structures of the local communities. Many National Governments use the population of an area to specify whether it is rural or not. This can vary from country to country. However, although Portugal and many other countries need their destination to have fewer than 10,000 people for it to be known as rural. Both England and Wales have no definition of population size for a destination to be known as rural, it is therefore, impossible to use population alone as a decider on whether an area is rural or not.

Moseley, (1980) suggested that for a destination to be classed as ‘rural’ it must have the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A pleasant environment which will attract the willing or unwilling unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A ‘spaced-out’ geographical structure which leads to accessibility problems and costly public services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A distinctive local political ideology which favours the market, the volunteer and the self-helper over the public-sector intervention.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moseley, (1980)

Cloke and Park, (1986) define rurality in terms of areas which; have extensive land uses for agriculture and forestry, contain smaller settlements than that of urban areas, which demonstrate a strong relationship between buildings and extensive landscape and are thought of as rural by the locals; and engender a way of life in which the residents have respect for the environment and possess behavioural qualities that of living as part of an extensive landscape.
Many researchers seeking to define rurality have developed the concept of comparing the rural environment to the urban to understand and cope with the complexity of defining the subject. Rural sits at one end of the spectrum; with most destinations being lightly populated and urban sitting on the other end of the scale being over populated. Frankenberg, (1966) defined the characteristics and contrasts of an urban society to a rural society as a way of explaining what it means to be rural as seen in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social fields involving few but multiple role relationships</td>
<td>Social fields involving many overlapping role relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different social roles played by same person</td>
<td>Different social roles played by different people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Economies</td>
<td>Diverse economies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little division of labour</td>
<td>Great specialisation in labour force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascribed status</td>
<td>Achieved status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education according to status</td>
<td>Status derived from education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role embracement</td>
<td>Role commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close-knit networks</td>
<td>Loose-knit networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locals</td>
<td>Cosmopolitans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic class is one of several divisions</td>
<td>Economic class is the major division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>Segregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration with work environment</td>
<td>Separation of work environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Frankenberg, 1966)

One thing that stands out throughout the debate on the search for a definition of rurality is how important of a condition rurality is. Many academics, planners and politicians all believe that rurality possesses characteristics that are worth preserving, particularly because urban conditions are growing throughout the world (OCED, 1981).

It can be determined through the literature that rurality is a concept that relates to an area in which has a low population density, much open space, land use that is often dominated by
farming and forestry, societies tend to be close knit and traditional and local government policies lean towards conservation over anything else.

With rural destinations being areas with very little in terms of large attractions and offerings, it can be of much help to tourism development to invest in a solid destination brand (Haven-Tang and Sedgley, 2013).

### 2.4 Destination Branding

The concept of branding is not a new phenomenon and has been used extensively for products and services for many years, however, in a tourism destination context the concept is still new. A brand can be defined as a name, term, design or any other thing that will identify one seller’s product to another (Wood, 2000).

Brand recognition can be created through the growth of positive experiences with a product or service, relating to its use, and through the advertising, media commentary and design (American Marketing Association, 2011). Aaker, (1991)’s definition of branding is one of the most widely used. He believes that the use of branding is to: “identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors” (p.7).

A well as products, geographic locations are also able to be branded. The purpose of this branding is to make potential consumers aware that it exists. Desirable associations to the location are linked to increase an attractive image of the place that will consequently attract tourists (Baker & Cameron, 2008). Branding has gained importance to destinations due to the ever-increasing competition. Blain, Levy, & Ritchie (2005), suggest that a destinations brand and image is a significant factor when it comes to visitor choice.

Ritchie and Ritchie, (1988) have defined a destination brand as:

> A name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to
consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience (P. 103).

Therefore, destination branding is one of the most powerful tools destination marketers have available to them, confronted by constant competition and product similarity. In an industry where most destinations have unique culture, heritage and boasting the ‘friendliest people’, there are no differentiators. Therefore, the need for rural destinations to create a unique identity and brand, to differentiate themselves from the competition is crucial (Morgan et al, 2002).

For a destination brand to be successful and create an emotional attachment, Baker and Cameron, (2008) suggest that it should feature certain characteristics. Ideally it should be credible, deliverable, convey powerful ideas and should not only be enthralling for stakeholders but should also resonate with the potential consumers.

There are several research studies that support the theory of destination branding being crucial in terms of promoting tourism in rural areas. Spilková and Fialová (2013) are just one example of authors who understand that the branding of rural areas can lead to promotions of the destination and its products by creating a link between small or medium sized enterprises. Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2011) take it further and suggest that destinations only exist through its marketing, meaning that a place will only become a successful tourist destination if it is portrayed through the communications by tourism promotional material.

Morgan et al, (2011) recognises that having a strong brand is important for any destination wanting to target tourists. However, in rural areas it can be a challenge to develop a distinctiveness and a brand where the same products can be offered by others in a better-known area (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). Several benefits can arise due to the creation of a destination brand, such as; the ability for a destination to differentiate themselves from competitors, creating emotional benefits and facilitating decision-making for visitors, building a coherent destination product, representing destination identity and building a positive internal and external destination image (Besanko et al, 1996; Govers and Go, 2009; Kapferer, 1992). Therefore, it is essential for rural tourist destinations that have high
competition, alongside a lack of differentiation in their product, to consider how the assets that they possess, can be developed into a destination brand (Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009).

### 2.5 Destination Competitiveness

With this study being based upon developing the competitiveness of rural destinations, we need to understand the meaning of competitiveness itself. There is no such accepted definition of competitiveness, due to its complex nature. However, Newell, (1992) views national competitiveness as:

> Producing more and better-quality goods and services that are marketed successfully to consumers at home and abroad. It leads to well-paying jobs and to the generation of resources required to provide an adequate infrastructure of public services and support for the disadvantaged (P.94).

This in-depth definition views competitiveness as a tool to national prosperity and can be viewed as the key successor in terms of economic growth. However, in terms of tourism the meaning of competitiveness is not always the same and can be extended further. For example, tourism is not always used as an economic tool and can be used to benefit other areas such as protecting the wildlife against poaching, to facilitate international understanding and in terms of rural areas it can encourage rural residents to pursue their traditional culture (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999). Competitiveness has also been identified within academic literature as a crucial factor for the success of any destination (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Mazanec, Wöber and Zins, 2007).

The discussion into destination competitiveness began by focusing on price related factors, with destinations being defined as competitive by factors such as market share, profits and other financial factors. However, the discussion has since expanded into non-price related factors that include; technology and innovation (Fagenberg, 1996; Lall, 2001; Wignaraja, 2004). This suggests that destinations that possess more international arrivals are considered competitive. Yet, Ritchie and Crouch, who have carried out the most comprehensive academic research into destination competitiveness to date, suggest that competitiveness is linked to; improved quality of life and sustainable development, not just economic growth. Their research spans through several publications throughout the space of ten years (Crouch
Ritchie and Crouch, (1993, 2000, 2003) define destination competitiveness as the ability to increase tourism expenditure, whilst still attracting visitors and providing them with satisfying and memorable experiences; both of which is done in a way that it is profitable, enhances the wellbeing of the local population and sustains the environment for future generations. This explanation contains more than a simple definition and seems to include assumptions that link to sustainability issues by mentioning the residents of the population and the environment. Their research led to the creation of the Ritchie and Crouch Model of Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). As seen in figure 2.2, the model distinguishes both comparative and competitive advantages over five different layers which include; qualifying and amplifying determinants, destination policy, planning and development, destination management, core resources and attractors and supporting factors and resources.


This model uses an extensive number of factors that may have an impact on the competitiveness of a tourist destination and takes both a micro and macro view, unlike much
of the early research which focuses on mostly the economic factors of destination competitiveness.

There seems to be agreement that destination competitiveness is regarded as an antecedent to economic welfare and prosperity of the resident population. It is, however, open to discussion whether external criteria for destination competitiveness, such as destination market share or sustained relative growth, may be characterized as indicators, or whether these variables are better considered to be effects within the overall causal chain.

With competing in such a competitive marketplace, rural destinations are realising that there is a need for a sustainable competitive advantage to separate them from other destinations. Hence the reason that many rural areas are now trying to attract visitors through innovative packaging of those aspects of their destination, which are difficult to copy in other rural destinations. This package is then reinforced with a strong destination brand. Achieving this has allowed many rural destinations to recognise that their cultural distinctiveness, such as their arts, history and food and drink is one of the ways they can differentiate themselves and their offering to tourists (Bessière, 1998; Cole, 2006) and assist in creating a strong destination brand (Kuznesof et al, 1997; Spilková & Fialová, 2013).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

![Figure 2.3 – Theoretical Framework](image-url)
Figure 2.3 shows the theoretical framework that the researcher has developed to understand how the main themes from the literature review will inform the methodology.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a range of the existing literature available on rural tourism and rural destinations, as well as destination branding and destination competitiveness. Theorists suggest that tourism within rural areas can benefit rural communities not only economically but also socially. It is however suggested that rural tourism can be more of a challenge to develop than that of mass tourism, due to its rural nature, meaning there is no stand out attraction or landmarks, which can be used to easily create a destination brand. Evidence suggests that in foreign rural destinations, using food festivals and events can cause a higher demand in tourists. This could be one way in creating a successful destination brand.

The researcher has critically reviewed a range of the current literature that is of relevance to the overall research aim.
CHAPTER THREE:
METHODOLOGY
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Crotty, (1998:7) describes a methodology as a ‘plan of action’, with this chapter discussing the plan for the methods in which will be used to collect primary data. The chapter will explore and consider a wide variety of different data collection methods, such as qualitative, quantitative and a case study approach.

Kaden and Levinson, (2006) state that insuring that the right methodology is chosen can be crucial to successful research. The researcher will therefore justify the reasons for the methods chosen to meet the aim of the project. The researcher will also discuss the sampling, any limitations, both the validity and reliability of the project, as well as any ethical issues that may arise.

For this study, the researcher has used both a case study approach, as well as using mixed methods. Mixed methods research has been known to offer a much broader and more complete range of research questions due to the researcher not being confined to a single method nor approach (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

3.2 Case Study Approach

This project will take a case study approach, which has been proven beneficial due to its role in allowing researchers to study phenomenon in depth and therefore capture the meaningful and holistic characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2009). It allows a researcher to explore an issue in depth with a specific context (Brotherton, 2008)

Monmouthshire was selected as the case study for the research, as it is the researchers home county and represents one of the most successful rural tourist destinations in Wales; with over 2.3 million visitors and contributing £190 million to the local economy (Steam, 2016). This will allow the researcher to address the research question successfully and provide recommendations to other rural destinations.
3.3 Primary and Secondary Research

There are two main types of research, primary and secondary. Primary research has been defined as the creation of new data to address a specific issue or research question (Jup, 2006). Primary data collection can be both quantitative and qualitative and can be in the form of questionnaires, interviews, surveys and focus groups. Primary research allows the researcher to obtain information that is not already readily available through secondary research, making the information unique and private, allowing it to assist within a project such as a dissertation (Collins, 2010).

Secondary research a type of data which is already readily available publicly and has been put together by another person or organisation (Coles et al, 2013). This type of data is cheaper and easier to access than primary and is usually in the form of journal articles, reports, books, websites and databases such as Mintel (Collins, 2010).

Within this project, the researcher has used both secondary and primary data in order to answer the final research question. Using secondary data in the literature review to discuss the meaning of rural tourism, rural destinations, destination branding and competitive destinations. The researcher has used secondary research through the analysis of documentary evidence, including a range of public documents relating to the case study, such as official government documents and statistics. This secondary research was used to discover statistical data on Monmouthshire to understand the extent of their success.

This review of the secondary research, has informed the questions and methods for the primary data collection of an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

3.4 Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Quantitative data can be simply defined as data in which is presented in numerical form, such as a statistic or percentage (Blaikie, 2003). Quantitative research methods that can be used include: questionnaires and surveys, as well as observations, all of which allow the researcher to turn the opinions of others into numerical data (Hair et al, 2016). The results derived
through quantitative data are usually conducted using statistics and diagrams (Saunders et al, 1997).

Qualitative data is much different than quantitative, being more in-depth and useful for researching complex ideas, especially that of opinions and perceptions (Coles et al, 2013). This research method can be carried out through the means of in-depth interviews, observations, focus groups, all of which allow the researcher to obtain real data which is descriptive and holistic (Tracey, 2013)

Saunders et al, (2016) states that the main differences between both research methods are that qualitative research results allow the researcher to group them into categories and are typically analysed through conceptualisation, however quantitative data is finalised in numbers and then analysed through charts, tables, statistics and diagrams. Within this project, the researcher thought the best approach would be to use a mixed methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed methods have been defined as:

*The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. (Creswell, 2015, p. 4)*

Wilson, (2013) suggests that implementing the mixed methods approach can obtain results in which produce a fuller picture, as well as a deeper understanding of a phenomena. Therefore, this method is best suited to meet the aim and objective due to its ability to provide a deeper understanding of the research topic, through a combination of interviews and questionnaires. This will hopefully allow the researcher to gain the opinions of those across a wide range of businesses, as well as those of residents and non-residents.

**3.5 Research Design**

The main methods used for primary research within the project are online questionnaires and interviews.
3.5.1 Questionnaires

Brotherton, (2008) has defined questionnaires as a vehicle in which aids in accessing accurate information from a respondent. Questionnaires are amongst one of the most widely used and valuable means of data collection as stated by Crowther and Lancaster, (2009). For this project, the researcher chose to distribute the questionnaires online through the Cardiff Metropolitan Qualtrics system. Online questionnaires are a convenient way to gather a wide range of views from people, free of charge. There are however a few disadvantages to this method. These being, their low response rate, being unsuitable for certain subgroups, such as those with no access to the internet and the researcher having no control over the completion of them (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001). To combat any potential disadvantages, the researcher has ensured that a full description of the questionnaires purpose is included at the start, this ensured that participants were aware of the purpose and were more inclined to fill out the entirety of it.

Due to questionnaires being a valuable means of collecting a large amount of data on a given topic (Salmon et al, 2009), the researcher believes that this method is the most appropriate in supporting the research aims and objectives.

3.5.1.1 Questionnaire Design

The design of questionnaires varies greatly and can depend on the type of data required, they can include long or brief questions, with either open or close-ended answers, collecting qualitative or quantitative data or both (Reja et al, 2003). For this project, the researcher decided that using two separate questionnaires with a combination of both open and closed questions, place online for residents and non-residents of Monmouthshire would give the best results. This also allows respondents to elaborate on their answers and give any additional information at the end.

In total there were over 99 responses completed on the resident’s questionnaire and 88 on the non-residents. The non-resident questionnaire consisting of 14 questions and the resident’s questionnaire consisting of 13. As well as basic questions such as gender and age range, there were also more complex open-ended questions, including “Have you ever heard of
Monmouthshire?” and “do you believe that you would be interested in visiting and why?” See appendix 1 for the questionnaires.

3.5.1.2 Participants

The researcher created an online questionnaire which was shared online through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, available to anyone over the age of 18. Wright, (2017) states that internet based research not only saves time for researchers but also allows them to reach what may be hard-to-reach populations much quicker than if it would be face-to-face.

3.5.1.3 Piloting

To ensure the success of the questionnaire, the final draft was sent to a close family member of the researcher, with experience of questionnaires via email so that they check the validity and relevance to the project. The person also checked for clarity, flow, duration and whether it was suitable for the public to complete. Conducting this pilot ensured that the release of the questionnaire to the public was hassle free and allowed the researcher to change questions that did not flow.

3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Brotherton, (2008:151) states that an interview’s purpose is to “to obtain the required information from the respondent”. There are three main types of interviews; structured, semi-structured and unstructured. The researcher thought semi-structured interviews would be most suitable for this project due to its ability to be elaborated on, which gives the option for more information to be gathered. (Finn et al, 2000) suggests that semi-structured interviews allow for the interviewee to probe, which seeks clarification and elaboration on a topic. Hair et al. (2016) emphasises that using semi-structured interviews can strengthen the findings due its ability to lead to unexpected information, as the interviewer is able to add questions when needed.
3.5.2.1 Interview Structure

To gain the most accurate and thorough information regarding the research topic, the researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews alongside the questionnaires. There were thirteen open-ended questions planned for each participant, ranging from questioning their experience within the industry to their thoughts upon destination branding. Turner, (2010) states that open-ended questions allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they want and it allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up if needed.

The researcher took time to ensure that the planned questions were clear and free of jargon and ethically sensitive. They also took the time to create specific probes to follow each question, such as; can you be more specific and what is your best estimate?

3.5.2.2 Participants

Creswell (2007) discusses the importance of selecting the appropriate candidates for interviews. Therefore, the researcher insured they chose the best participants that would speak for the majority, as well as whom would be willing to be open and share their information regarding the topic.

The researcher therefore conducted three semi-structured interviews, who did not mind not being anonymous. The first with The Angel Hotel, Abergavenny. Taken over in 2002 by Caradog Hotels Ltd., The Angel has been awarded a 4-silver star rating by the AA and has also been named AA Hotel of The Year, Wales 2016/17.

Another interview was also carried out with the owner of Brook Cottage, Llanvapley. A highly successful, holiday cottage let, voted five stars by Visit Wales. A final interview was carried out at a local tourist attraction within the Monmouthshire area, White Castle Vineyards. A family run business, offering vineyard tours and wine tasting, nestled in-between Abergavenny and Monmouth. Appendix 2 shows the transcribed interviews.
All participants were given a consent form to complete and were reminded that their data would remain confidential and stored securely. They were also reminded that they had the right to remain anonymous.

### 3.5.2.2 Piloting

Turner, (2010) suggests that the implementation of pilot testing is an essential element to the interview preparation. The pilot test assisted the researcher in determining whether there are any flaws, limitations or any other weaknesses concerned with the interview design and will allow them to make the necessary changes in order for the successful implementation of the interview.

A pilot test was therefore delivered with the researcher’s family, whom of which have a similar business to the one in which would be interviewed. This test was not only crucial in developing the interview questions and the refinement of them, but also in developing the researchers interview skills and confidence.

### 3.6 Sampling

Wilson, (2014) states that sampling is used both within qualitative and quantitative research. It is the process of knowing who to collect the data from, and why they are the best fit for the research. There are various methods of sampling, including; snowball sampling, systematic sampling and convenience sampling (Cohen et al, 2003). The researcher decided that the best method for this project was to use convenience sampling for questionnaires and purposive sampling for interviews.

Convenience sampling for questionnaires was chosen due to the researcher’s belief that this was the most convenient way to get responses from many participants. As Hair et al, (2016:183) states that convenience sampling “involves selecting sample elements that are most readily available to participate in the study and can provide the information required.” However, there are criticisms to using this method of sampling. Some writers suggest that convenience sampling is weak, due to the researcher not taking the time to get to know the
population and having no control over the representation (Gravetter and Forzano, 2016). To combat this issue, the researcher ensured that the sample is taken from those that are residents of Monmouthshire for the one questionnaire and non-residents for the other questionnaire, with both positive and negative views of rural tourism.

The researcher felt that using a purposive method of sampling was the best fit due to its ability to ensure that the participants chosen to possess specific knowledge and experience (Etikan et al, 2016). In this case the researcher chose them due to their work within the tourism industry in the Monmouthshire area. Patton (1990) highlights the key to purposeful sampling is selecting those that are information rich. This supports the researcher’s choice in interviewing participants from some of Monmouthshire’s most successful accommodation providers and attractions. The danger with using the purposive method, is that the researcher exercises judgment on the informant’s reliability and competency (Tongco, 2007). Alexiades, (1996) states that reliability involves how consistent the information is across the community. To ensure that the information is reliable, the researcher used participants from various areas of the community and contrasting types of accommodation, such as a luxury hotel and holiday cottage, to gather opinions of the both.

3.7 Data Analysis

Due to the questionnaires being designed through Qualtrics, the results will automatically be analysed. The software places participants answers into pie charts and graphs, as well as listing open ended responses. This means that the data will be simple to view and interpret, giving the researcher an easy understanding of patterns that emerge.

To examine the interviews that have been carried out, the researcher used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to expose themes and concepts frequently presented between several types of data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Reading over the transcripts (Appendix 2) will allow the researcher to identify any themes and patterns that may emerge. The researcher will then refer to the findings within the literature review to compare both the findings.
3.8 Limitations and Improvements

It is expected within any study that the researcher will face limitations along the way, they need to be aware of this, so that they can overcome them and increase the validity of the research.

The researcher faced a few set-backs and limitations during the research process. The first being the weather. The researcher had first planned to deliver the questionnaires, face to face on the streets of Abergavenny and Cardiff. However, due to heavy snow on numerous attempts, the researcher found that it would be less time consuming to recreate the questionnaire online through Qualtrics and share it through social media instead to ensure that they were keeping to a strict schedule and did not fall behind. Due to the questionnaire now being internet based, the researcher had to keep in mind that not everyone is online and those who are, may not be represented of the sample.

The researcher also faced challenges in setting up face-to-face interviews, with two participants stating it would be easier for them to answer questions via email. The researcher decided to carry out all three interviews out over email as well as sending the consent forms (See Appendix 3). This meant there was no worry in finding a convenient time and place for both parties and the researcher still had the chance to email back further questions if there was not sufficient information.

Although the research suffered the limitations discussed, overall, they were resolved efficiently and had no lasting impact on the results gathered for the overall study. However, if the researcher were to conduct a project such as this again, they would make some changes and improvements. The researcher would have chosen to use focus groups over questionnaires, as this could have enhanced the data collected and gained more in-depth responses from those living within the Monmouthshire area. Although, this would have been more time consuming for the researcher and would have left less time for the interviewing of participants and analysing results.
3.9 Reliability and Validity

When conducting any sort of research, it is essential to ensure that it is both reliable and validated so that the research can be classed as objective and measurable (Brotherton, 2008). Cohen et al. (2003) describes reliability as a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time. Seale (2012) describes an example of reliability as; if an individual was given two of the same questionnaires but at separate times, would they demonstrate the same answers. Validity has been described as how well the research measures what it is supposed to measure (Phelan and Wren, 2016).

The researcher ensured both the reliability and validity of all research methods used within this project. This was thought about when choosing a sample size, with the large sample size of the questionnaires giving an equal chance for a large variety of participants to answer, from various locations and backgrounds. Furthermore, the researcher ensured there was no bias in the questionnaire. For example, it did not discriminate against either negative or positive experiences of visits to Monmouthshire.

The researcher also believes that the questions provided within the interviews were to a professional standard and were approved by their supervisor and ethics team prior to being delivered. Whilst conducting interviews, the researcher found that many questions prompted a similar response, showing the reliability of the questions.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations should form a vital, ongoing part of any research project (Miller, 2012). They consider that the research is conducted to an efficient and appropriate manner, which is sensitive to participants. Before the researcher conducted any primary research, an ethics form was completed and approved by the university’s ethics committee (see appendix 4). Bell and Waters, (2014) state that ethics committees play a key role in ensuring no badly designed research is permitted before it takes place. To ensure that the researcher kept all research ethical, they ensured all participants read and understood the given participant information sheet (see appendix 5) and signed a consent form prior to the interview, which included information that they had the right to withdraw at any time during the project. In
terms of the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that all participants were above the age of 18, to disable anyone vulnerable from participating.

3.11 Summary

To summarise, this chapter has outlined the research approach that was chosen to collect the primary data that was necessary to complete the aims and objectives. The researcher justified their decisions for using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires and why they chose the described sample. As well, this chapter provided an overview of how the researcher will analyse the methods as well as the ethical considerations for the project.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS
4.0 Results, Discussion and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will review the results of the mixed methods primary research, as discussed within the previous chapter. The data will analyse tourists’ and residents’ perceptions of rural tourism and destination branding through the results of the two questionnaire surveys. In addition to this, the results of three semi-structured interviews will also be analysed, establishing the trends and reoccurring themes, linking back to the secondary research as discussed within the literature review.

4.2 Monmouthshire Resident Questionnaire

4.2.1 Demographic Information

The researcher thought that the best fit for the opening section of the questionnaire would be to include profiling questions including age, gender, income and educational background. This information is essential to know, due to the academic suggestion that the rural holiday market is targeted more towards the more affluent and older generation (CBI, 2016; Lane, 2009; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997).
Out of the 95 respondents of the questionnaire, 78 were female and 17 were male, aged between 18 – 70+. Many of the respondents were between 40-50 with 25%, and 51-61 following closely second with 23%.

The results of the average household income show that over 16% of respondents have a household income between £10,000 and £19,999, followed by less than £10,000, £20,000 - £29,000 and £30,000 - £39,999 all with 12.63%. 12.63% of those asked noted that they would prefer not to disclose this information.

The highest percentage for educational attainment was a professional degree with 34%, closely followed by college education with 29%. Only 7% of respondents had not completed high school.
4.2.2 Residents Perception of Rural Tourism

This section will analyse the questions from the resident’s questionnaire, which were primarily aimed at gaining information about their perception of rural tourism and its impacts, as well as their motivations to holiday within their own rural county.

One of the first non-demographic questions participants were asked, was whether they believed their home is a rural area or not and why. This was asked due to there being much confusion over what it means for a destination to be rural.

Figure 4.4 – Respondents opinions of the rurality of their area

The same number of participants (44.46%) voted yes and no to their home being a rural area, with 7.8% believing it to be a semi-rural area.

When participants were asked why they believe it to be rural/not rural there were responses such as:

- Yes. It is not heavily built up, there are no high-rise buildings or multi-storey car parks. Plus, there are few urban conveniences
Yes, it’s a small market town, far less built up than larger towns and cities. Proximity to open farm land and mountain
Yes, it’s in the national Park area and hills are nearby!
Semi-rural I feel as urban area surrounding us very closely but within a rural setting
No, it has a town
No, we have shops and a supermarket
Semi-Rural, we have mountains and farm land etc.
but also have a small sized town with chains

With the respondents being very much divided in their responses to whether they feel their home within Monmouthshire is rural or not, it further supports OCED, (1994)’s theory that there is much confusion and difference of opinion over what it means for a destination to be truly rural, even with those that live within a proven rural county. This suggests that there is a need for further research surrounding the topic.

The next question participants answered was aimed at discovering what residents’ perceptions of their area was and why they feel the county attracts the tourists it does, despite having no major attractions. Participants were asked to choose multiple responses that they agreed with.
Amongst the most popular responses were the landscape and scenery, with 98.94% of participants selecting this, 81.91% choosing cycling, walking and mountaineering and festivals and events coming in third with 77.66%. Interestingly, both museums and attractions only scored 18.09%, despite much tourism literature stating that attractions are one of the most crucial factors in attracting tourists to a destination as well as the overall success (Leask, 2010). This suggests that rural destinations do not necessary need attractions to attract tourists and instead, are able to rely on their landscape and the provision of events and festivals.

### 4.2.3 Residents Motivations for Holidaying in a Rural Destination

The next question looked at how popular holidays within Monmouthshire were with the residents, asking them, have they holidayed within any other area within Monmouthshire in the last five years?

The results were surprising to the researcher, with a staggering 89% answering yes, and only 11% having not holidayed within Monmouthshire. The 89% that answered yes were then asked what the purpose of their trip was, to gather an idea of what it is that motivates so many residents to holiday within the Monmouthshire county.

![Figure 4.7 – Purpose of respondent’s trip](image)

The most popular response was that of shopping, with 50%, followed closely by camping with 40% and attending local festivals and events and trying local food and drink both with...
30%. It is with no surprise that visiting farmers markets and agricultural experiences scored 0%, as these have been noted as being outdated in the rural tourist experience (Jamal and Robinson, 2009) and many of the participants already live in an area where these are readily available. The results show that a new shopping experience and various events are popular in attracting residents to holiday within different areas of the county.

The remaining 11% of participants who had stated they had not holidayed within a different area of Monmouthshire were asked whether they would be likely to in the future.

Figure 4.8 – Respondents that would be likely to holiday within Monmouthshire in the future

75% of respondents answered no, they would not be likely to holiday within Monmouthshire in the future, and 25% stated that they would. Of the 75% that answered no, they were asked why. Some of the responses included:

- *I can drive and visit as a local area within a day*
- *Too close to home*
- *We can do day trips easier and cheaper*
- *Prefer holidays abroad*
- *I would do day trips to various towns, but not holiday as I live within 45 minutes of everywhere in Monmouthshire*

These results suggest that the main factor for residents not wishing to holiday within Monmouthshire is the proximity to their home, and it being more cost efficient to travel back
home later in the day. With the average cost of a day in Monmouthshire being between £50-$120 (Lonely Planet, 2017). This is nothing for concern, with no responses stating they simply would not visit for a negative reason.

To further understand the claims that the rural tourists are generally older and from higher socio-economic groups (CBI, 2016); the researcher broke down the responses to the question of whether they had holidayed within Monmouthshire, based on their answer to the income and age question earlier in the questionnaire.

**Figure 4.10 – Residents that have holidayed within Monmouthshire based on income**
Figure 4.10 shows that those within the lower income categories (less than £10,000, £10,000 - £19,999 and £20,000 - £29,000) were responsible for all the no responses (4, 4, 1, 1), with all those asked with an income over £40,000 voting yes. Figure 4.11 shows that most of no responses (6) in terms of the age category, came from those aged between 18-28, with no one over the age of 61, having not holidayed within Monmouthshire. This supports the theory, that the rural tourism market is more appealing to those that are older and more affluent (CBI, 2016; Lane, 2009; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997). Meaning that the marketing of this type of holiday should be personally tailored for this market segment whilst also working on ways to attract new segments.

For the next question, the researcher decided to discover what would persuade those who were not likely to visit Monmouthshire as a tourist to visit. This was put forward to gain an understanding of what rural destinations could introduce as a way of attracting tourists, that would not otherwise visit. Respondents could select as many answers as they felt applicable.
Figure 4.12 – What would persuade respondents to visit?

The most popular response to this question as seen within figure 4.12 was attending local festivals or events with 61.84% and trying local food and drink with 50%. Showing that these are an efficient way to attract tourists, who would otherwise not consider a rural holiday. Although popular with those respondents who had visited, camping only got 14.7% of the vote. Business was the lowest of answers with only 6.58%. This may again be due to the closeness to home and there being no need to stay overnight on a business trip.

4.2.4 Residents Perception of Monmouthshire’s Marketing

The penultimate question put towards all respondents was to get an idea of how successful Monmouthshire is in marketing its offerings within its own county. Respondents were asked whether they had seen any type of promotional material distributed by Monmouthshire to attract tourists.
Figure 4.13 shows that over half of respondents had seen some type of marketing by Monmouthshire with 68% answering yes and only 32% having not seen anything. Those who answered yes were asked what type of material they had seen/heard. Some of the most popular responses included:

- *Seen plenty of posters, newsarticles, flyers, e-mails etc. for local food festivals year-round, with offerings of discount for residents.*
- *See advertising boards for the many castles daily on my commute to work*
- *Always see Monmouthshire marketing attractions and what is going on, on Facebook and twitter.*
- *I regularly get sent an e-newsletter.*
- *I have been on the Visit Monmouthshire website when looking for things to do with the kids in half term.*
- *Seen Visit Wales post about the Abergavenny food festival.*
This shows that Monmouthshire is successful in marketing within their own county through the means of both social-media and newspapers, marketing to a wide range of market segments, particularly during the time of an event or festival.

### 4.2.5 Residents Perceptions on the Impact of Tourism

The final question within the questionnaire to residents of Monmouthshire were asked for their opinions on how they feel tourism has impacted the county, either positively or negatively. This was a multiple-choice question, with respondents being able to select as many of the impacts that they agree with.

**Figure 4.15 – Impacts of tourism in Monmouthshire**

![Impacts of tourism in Monmouthshire](image)

Figure 4.15 shows that the highest scoring impacts are that of positive, with 67.44% of participants stating that they believe tourism has helped the growth of the economy, and 54.65% believing it has helped create jobs. 53.33% also think that tourism has helped preserve the local culture and history of Monmouthshire. The highest scoring of the negative impacts was traffic congestion with 46.51%, this may potentially be down to the small size of Monmouthshire towns, allowing it to become busy and congested easily during peak season, or during an event. Otherwise, the introduction of tourism supports Gulcan, et al’s, (2009) theory that tourism within rural destinations can provide growth of the economy and preserve local culture.
4.3 Non-Residents Questionnaire

4.3.1 Demographic Information

There was a vast difference in the ages of the respondents within the non-residents questionnaire, with more younger respondents. This potentially may be because the Monmouthshire questionnaire was limited to a specific area, which is known for having a high retirement population (National Assembly for Wales, 2010). Out of the 84 respondents of the questionnaire, 45 were female and 39 were male, aged between 18 – 70+. The highest age demographic within this questionnaire was 18-28 with 31%. With 40-50 being the second most popular with 24%, closely followed by 51-61 with 21%.

Figure 4.16 – Age of Non-Resident Respondents

Figure 4.17 – Non-Residents Respondents Highest Qualification

most popular with 24%, closely followed by 51-61 with 21%.
The highest percentage for education attainment was a college education with 30%, closely followed by a degree with 29%. Only 3% of respondents had not completed high school.

**Figure 4.18 – Non-Residents Respondents Annual Household Income**

The results of the average household income show that the average income was higher than that of the Monmouthshire residents, with over 17% of respondents having a household income between £20,000 and £29,999, followed £10,000-£19,000 with 13.10%. Only 4.76% of the participants earn more than £100,000-£149,999 a year. It is noteworthy to say that over 14% of participants however, chose not to disclose this information.

4.3.2 Non-Residents Perceptions of Rural Tourism

This section of the project will analyse the questions from the non-resident’s questionnaire, which were primarily aimed at gaining information about their perception of what rural tourism is, as well as what would motivate them to visit, and their views on Monmouthshire’s marketing.

One of the first non-demographic questions participants were asked, was what definition of rural tourism they most agreed with. This was asked due to there being many varying definitions of rural tourism, and no one being agreed on (OCED, 1994). Over half the
participants asked, agreed that the best fit description for rural tourism was tourism within the countryside, with 64%. This is one of the most commonly used ways to describe rural tourism. Tourism located in low populated areas got 17% of the vote. However, as located within the literature in chapter two, both England and Wales have no definition of population size for a destination to be known as rural, it is therefore, impossible to use population alone as a decider on whether an area is rural or not (OCED (1981)).

4.3.3 Non-Residents Motivations for Holidaying in a Rural Destination

The next two questions put towards participants aimed at discovering whether they had ever holidayed with a rural area before, to determine their purposes for travelling and the reasons why the participants had not holidayed within a rural area. The results showed that 66 of respondents had holidayed within a rural area and 18 hadn’t.

Those who had not holidayed within a rural destination were asked if they would consider it in the future. 80% answered yes and 20% stated no. When asked why, the respondents commented explanations such as:
I prefer somewhere busy with lots of things to do

Sounds boring

Would find it too quiet

I like to go to hot countries with beaches

These findings show that rural holidays aren’t the best fit for everyone and it is somewhat of a niche market, however, with the correct branding and marketing, it can offer something for all.

As with the resident’s questionnaire, the researcher broke down the responses to the previous question, based on their answer to the income and age question earlier in the questionnaire, to further investigate the claims that rural tourists are older and from higher socio-economic groups (CBI, 2016).

Figure 4.20 – Non-residents that have holidayed within a rural area based on income
Figure 4.20 shows that respondents with an income above £50,000 had not holidayed within a rural destination. Whereas within the lower income respondents (£20,000-£29,000), more than half (7) respondents out of 8 had not holidayed within a rural area. Figure 4.21 shows that many of no responses in terms of the age category, came from those aged between 18-28 and 29-39, with no one over the age of 61, having not holidayed within Monmouthshire. This adds further support to the claim that the rural tourism market is more appealing to those that are older and more affluent (CBI, 2016; Lane, 2009; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997).

The 66 (80%) of respondents who answered yes to having holidayed within a rural area were asked to give the purpose of their trip, to discover their motivations for travel.
21.64% of the 66 that were asked, stated that the purpose of their trip was to stay at a country inn or cottage, this is no surprise with many rural tourists choosing to rent local, rural accommodation during a rural holiday (CGI, 2016). Visiting friends or family came second highest as a purpose for holidaying within a rural area with 13.43%. Lower scoring answers included business with 0% of the vote, which is no surprise, due to there being a lack of conference centres and hotels big enough to hold business meetings and conferences. As with residents, agricultural experiences scored low when compared with other responses (2.24%), this supports the literature that rural tourism has moved away from farming and agriculture (Richards, 2015).

The next question asked all respondents, including those not likely to holiday within a rural area, what would motivate them to visit.
Figure 4.23 shows that the main motivator is relaxation (21.85%) and observing natural beauty and enjoying the countryside (20.17%). Most respondents expressed that experiencing and gaining a knowledge of a different culture and way of life would not be a motivator in travelling to a rural destination, with only 10% of the votes.

Although this determines the motivator for tourists to travel to a rural destination, it does not determine the activities and attractions that would motivate them. The next question was therefore developed, to discover what activities would be most appealing.
Figure 4.24 – Activities that would motivate Non-Resident Respondents to visit a rural destination

Figure 4.24 shows that, similarly to the resident’s questionnaire, attending local festivals and events and trying local food and drink was the most popular activity with respondents, both with 13.77%. Interestingly, visiting historic sites came joint second with camping at 12.13%. This supports the literature within chapter two that historic sites can be a valuable resource for rural tourism MacDonald and Jolliffe, (2003).

The next few questions were aimed at gaining a view on non-residents perceptions of Monmouthshire as a tourist destination. The researcher asked the respondents whether they had visited Monmouthshire in the past, with 85% saying yes and 15% not having visited. The 85% were then asked where they had visited, to get an understanding where within Monmouthshire is more successful in attracting tourists and why may be.
The results showed that Abergavenny was the most popular town with the respondents, with 19.93% of the vote. Usk was second most popular with 14.53%. These two areas may well be the most popular with respondents due to their highly successful food festivals that run each year (Visit Monmouthshire, 2018), and figure 4.23 showing that attending local festivals and events was a big motivator when deciding on visiting a rural destination.

Respondents were also asked what they believe Monmouthshire had to offer tourists.

Figure 4.26 – What Non-Residents Respondents believe Monmouthshire had to offer tourists
Only 2% of respondents stated that they believed that the destination within Monmouthshire had nothing to offer tourists. The most popular responses were festivals and attractions (17.42%), and beautiful landscape and scenery (15.81%). Golf and attractions scored low when compared with other responses, despite being noted as a key to success in attracting tourists to a destination. These results provide an indication of why tourism in Monmouthshire is as successful as it is, despite it having no large attractions. With literature suggesting that the typical rural image has now begun to move away from farming and farms, with food events and markets becoming more popular, coinciding well with the growth in food lovers and search for interesting products/experiences (Richards, 2015).

### 4.3.4 Non-Residents Perception of Monmouthshire’s Marketing

The final question focused on the marketing of Monmouthshire, asking whether respondents had seen any promotional material distributed by Monmouthshire, to see the success of their marketing outside the county.

**Figure 4.27 – Non-Residents Respondents that have seen Promotional Material by Monmouthshire**

Figure 4.27 shows that 65% of respondents had seen some sort of marketing material by Monmouthshire, and 35% had not. When asked what sort of material they had seen, respondent’s answers included:
• Seen signs within Abergavenny for their food festival when I was there
• Seen sponsored posts on Facebook from Visit Monmouthshire
• Seen some of their attractions on Visit Wales
• Seen advertisement for the Eisteddfod when it was in Monmouthshire
• Follow their posts on Twitter

These results suggest that Monmouthshire, is also successful in their marketing of tourism further afield as well as within the county, particularly when it comes to the various events they have on offer. Destination marketing is essential within a rural area and when successful can mean the difference between a competitive destination and a poor tourist industry.

4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

This section will analyse the three interviews undertaken to gain a deeper understanding of Monmouthshire’s tourism industry. The researcher carried out three interviews with; Ross, a food and beverage manager within one of Monmouthshire’s most successful hotels, Rob, the owner of a vineyard, popular with tourists and Sharon, the owner of a small family run holiday cottage.

All interviewees were first asked what they believe it is that makes tourism in Monmouthshire so successful. All three that were asked, stated that the food festivals and events and the way that the county has branded and marketed itself as the ‘foodie capital’ has helped them tremendously.

*The varying activities it has on offer, the great marketing of it and its many festivals and events. It also benefits from large events such as The Ryder Cup and Eisteddfod being held in Monmouthshire and the surrounding areas. (Sharon)*

*We are lucky to have the Brecon Beacons on our doorstep, to be famed for our food festivals and gastronomy and to be known as the food capital of Wales. The Hotel benefits from these associations and I feel that the local food tourism market is strong. I think that people are enticed by the fact that we have so much on our doorstep, much of which can be experienced in a long weekend without having to*
travel long distances, which is a winner! You can hike the Beacons, visit some amazing castles, eat in beautiful restaurants, fish the Wye and Usk all in a weekend! Are we spoilt perhaps? (Ross)

The promotion and branding of the area, its beautiful scenery and links to cities, whilst remaining within a rural area. (Rob)

This has been a reoccurring theme throughout the primary research, with festivals and events and local food and drink being amongst the most popular responses within the questionnaire surveys for motivating tourists to visit a rural destination. This also supports the academic research within the literature suggesting that that food is a key aspect in the success of rural tourism (Blichfeldt and Halkier, 2014) and that food and food events, coincide well with the current growth in food lovers searching for interesting products/experiences (Richards, 2015). Monmouthshire successfully promote their famous destination brand through a page dedicated to food and drink; including local recipes, their most popular pubs and restaurants as well as the nearby vineyards within a main section on their Visit Monmouthshire website (Visit Monmouthshire, 2018).

Interviewees were also asked whether there is a time of year where they see a higher number of bookings/interest, and why they think this is. Again, the analysis has shown that festivals and events were a key theme in attracting tourists.

We are fortunate to have a consistent and stable market. The only real time where we experience higher than average trade and interest is during the summer and with the food festival. Obviously, there are only a limited number of dates available meaning there can be a bit of competition to secure bookings. (Ross)

Summer, as there are more tourists due to there being more going on within the local area. (Rob)

Through June to September was our busiest periods, partially due to the warmer weather and the Abergavenny food festival, with this weekend usually getting booked up a year in advance and repeat visitors booking again for the following year, bringing along more friends and family. (Sharon)

As stated in chapter two, Blain, Levy, & Ritchie (2005), suggests that a destinations brand is a significant factor when it comes to visitor choice. With Ritchie and Ritchie, (1988) stating that it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination.
To get the perspectives of professionals within the industry, the researcher asked all interviewees their thoughts on destination branding and the way that Monmouthshire is branded as the foodie capital.

*Destination branding can be very helpful. Having Monmouthshire branded as a foodie capital has absolutely helped, with more business from those interested in the foodie scene, and visiting the vine yards etc.* (Sharon)

*I think destination branding is extremely useful and needed when marketing a rural area, but it can also be dangerous if expectations are not met). I think Monmouthshire is a ‘foodie destination’ and that one should be proud of the fact. We are very lucky to have such fabulous produce, producers and establishments in our county. People travel from everywhere to enjoy Monmouthshire products, we have two Michelin starred eateries and many famous TV chefs from the area. We host the most amazing food festival and garner interest from all over the UK. Marketing the county as the foodie capital is completely warranted* (Ross)

*I think destination branding gives a reason to visit, it intrigues people and has helped us, being a vineyard situated in a foodie town.* (Rob)

These responses shown within these interviews, suggest that Monmouthshire’s destination branding of the foodie capital of Wales is both accurate (Visit Monmouthshire, 2018) in regards of its tourism offering and is successful with its marketing of it. Monmouthshire have also successfully developed events that fit in with their branding, that give motivations to visit what otherwise may not be of interest to a tourist and allows the county to attract a considerable number of tourists during that time of year, leading to repeat visits.

### 4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has displayed the findings as discovered within the primary research and the key themes from the data collection. The researcher has broken down the different methods of primary data to allow for easy analysis. The findings have displayed the perceptions of both residents of Monmouthshire and non-residents on rural tourism and their marketing, as well as their motivations for visiting a rural destination.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will conclude upon the key findings that have been discovered from this project. The researcher will conclude upon the strengths and weaknesses, whilst also providing suitable recommendations for other rural destinations and any limitations they have faced. This chapter will also draw conclusions on whether the objectives set were achieved and whether the research was successful in answering the overall aim and question.

5.2 Evaluation of Aim and Objectives

The researcher believes that they have achieved the overall aim of the project of:
To investigate and analyse how rural destinations can create a competitive destination, despite their lack of stand-out appeal, using Monmouthshire as a case study.

The researcher accomplished this through meeting the objectives set at the start of the project.
The first was achieved within chapter two in the literature review, establishing the key theories and findings of rural tourism, destination branding and competitiveness. This provided the background information needed to successfully complete the project.

Primary research allowed the completion of objective two, through the three interviews and two questionnaires. This was effective in delivering the researcher knowledge surrounding the county and through thematic analysis they were able to discover what type of tourism Monmouthshire offers, the ways in which they promote and the success of their methods. The researcher discovered that Monmouthshire has developed a very strong destination brand and that this works well for them in terms of promotion and marketing of their offerings.

Primary research also allowed for the completion of objective three. The analysing of the results of the online resident’s questionnaire, allowed the researcher to gain an insight into the perceptions of those living in the county on their experiences, perceptions and motivations to holiday within the county.
Objective four, was also fulfilled through primary research, with the non-residents questionnaire outlining the perceptions, experiences and motivations for non-residents to visit Monmouthshire. As well as their thoughts on the meaning of rural tourism. The researcher discovered that festivals and events was a key motivator with both residents and non-residents.

Finally, the fifth and final objective, will be addressed within this chapter, with section discussing the recommendations for rural destinations wanting to develop a competitive tourism industry.

5.3 Summary of Key Findings

The researcher identified the following key findings from the literature and primary research.

- Rural tourism holidays can be a vast number of types; including eco-tourism and culinary tourism. It can therefore be understood why there is still such difficulty in deciding on the definition.
- Rural destinations face a struggle in developing a competitive tourism destination due to their lack of standout appeal, leading to difficulty in developing a destination brand, which has been proven to be essential in developing the competitiveness of a destination.
- The rural tourism market tends to be more appealing to those with a higher income and of a higher age, this was confirmed within the both questionnaire results. This may be down to the fact that those with more disposable income are able to take an extra holiday, over those with less income; who may choose to spend that holiday somewhere abroad.
- Motivations for rural tourism seem to have moved away from the once popular farming holidays and activities and are now transitioning into food and drink and festivals and events. With festivals and events coming out top as the main motivator for visiting a rural destination within both questionnaires.
- Monmouthshire is an established rural tourism destination that have been innovative and successful in developing a strong destination brand of the ‘foodie capital.’ Introducing many highly successful food festivals, which resonates well with the
current trend of food and drink lovers, festival and events becoming more popular and the decrease in rural farming activities.

- Monmouthshire’s promotion strategies; although not on the scale of many mass tourist destinations are successful in reaching their audience and marketing their key attractions and events.

- Interview respondents also stated that they received a higher number of visitors/bookings during the time that the food festivals took place, meaning they are a successful tool in attracting and developing tourism.

### 5.4 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

#### 5.4.1 Strengths

During this project, there were several strengths of the project. Due to the researcher living within the county that the project was based upon, the background information on Monmouthshire was mostly known and it was easy to find participants for the interviews. The researcher also found that once the questionnaires were online, there was no problems in getting a large response rate.

Overall, the researcher believes that the dissertation topic was interesting and that the primary research provided some relevant insight into the topic.

#### 5.4.2 Weaknesses

There were a few points within the project that the researcher felt there were weaknesses. For example, due to rural tourism often being considered a sub-category of special interest tourism, there was a lack of literature surrounding the topic. The existing literature available mostly consisted of discussion surrounding the definition of rural tourism and its advantages and disadvantages. Another weakness included the difficulty in contacting members of Monmouthshire County Councils tourism department to interview, which was unsuccessful. The researcher feels if they had of interviewed a member of this department, the findings may have been extended further and more in-depth. If this project were to be completed again, these changes would be implemented.
5.5 Reflection of Process

The completion of this project has allowed the researcher to develop new skills; including critical thinking and analytical writing, through the highlighting of key themes of primary data. In addition to this, their knowledge of rural tourism and destination competitiveness has developed, which will allow the researcher to apply this to other destinations in future academic work. Conducting interviews and developing questionnaires has also allowed the researcher to gain essential communication and technology skills which will beneficial in all aspects of life. Overall, this project has vastly expanded the researcher’s academic skills and knowledge of the topic that will allow for successful future research projects.

5.5 Recommendations

One of the key themes throughout this study was how festivals and events are a key motivator for tourists deciding to visit a rural destination. This is evident through both questionnaire responses and within the interviews, supporting Jamal and Robinson’s, (2009) statement that rural tourism is no longer farm-based and has instead begun to shift and diversify. It further supports Blichfeldt and Halkier, (2014) theory that food and foodie events is now a key aspect of rural tourism and its development.

Therefore, this suggests that for rural destinations to develop a competitive tourist destination, they must focus on their unique characteristics, emphasising on potential experiences to create a destination brand. Instead of attractions and specific physical attributes which are similar within most of their competition. Monmouthshire are a key example of this, by focusing on an experience, creating new and exciting food festivals; something that is increasing in popularity within rural tourism and developing it into a successful brand, that they are now known for, contributing to their overall competitiveness.

The results derived from both the literature and the primary data suggested that the rural tourism sector is one of which is more popular with the older generation. With this target market in mind, rural destinations can tailor their marketing and promotion accordingly, with newspaper articles and posters/signs being more beneficial than that of expensive social media campaigns.
5.6 Chapter Summary

The researcher has successfully fulfilled the projects overall aim and objectives through the completion of the research. It has explored destination branding and competitiveness whilst applying this to rural tourism. As a result, the project has identified the ways in which Monmouthshire has been are able to create a competitive destination, despite their lack of stand-out appeal. Furthermore, the research has contributed to the recommendations of destinations of a similar scope, and how they too can create a competitive destination.
Appendices

Appendix (1)

Developing the competitiveness of a rural tourism destination: Non-Resident Questionnaire

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 What is your age?

- 18-28 (1)
- 29-39 (2)
- 40-50 (3)
- 51-61 (4)
- 61-70 (5)
- Over 70 (6)

Q2 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Prefer not to say (3)
Courtney Phillips
ST20080140

Q4 What is your highest qualification?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school graduate (2)
- Some college (3)
- 2 year degree (4)
- 4 year degree (5)
- Professional degree (6)
- Doctorate (7)
Q5 What is your annual household income?

- Less than £10,000 (1)
- £10,000 - £19,999 (2)
- £20,000 - £29,999 (3)
- £30,000 - £39,999 (4)
- £40,000 - £49,999 (5)
- £50,000 - £59,999 (6)
- £60,000 - £69,999 (7)
- £70,000 - £79,999 (8)
- £80,000 - £89,999 (9)
- £90,000 - £99,999 (10)
- £100,000 - £149,999 (11)
- More than £150,000 (12)
- Prefer not to say (13)

Q8 How would you best describe rural tourism?

- Tourism in the countryside (1)
- Tourism located in low populated areas (2)
- Traditional and small in scale (3)
- Opposite of urban tourism (4)
- Eco/Sustainable tourism (5)
- Other (Please specify) (6) ________________________________________________
Q9 Have you ever holidayed in a rural destination?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q11 What was the purpose of the trip?

- Attending local festivals or events (1)
- Trying local food and drink (2)
- Agricultural experience (3)
- Visiting farmers markets (4)
- Business (5)
- Hiking/Golf/Cycling (6)
- Wildlife (bird watching etc) (7)
- Attending local festivals or events (8)
- Visiting friends and family (9)
- Staying at a country inn or cottage etc. (10)
- Shopping (independent shops, arts and crafts etc) (11)
- Visiting historic sites (castles etc) (12)
- Camping (13)
- Other (please specify) (14) ____________________________________________
Q12 Would a rural tourist holiday be something you'd be interested in the future?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No - Why? (2) ____________________________________________

Q13 What would motivate you to visit a rural destination? (tick all that apply)

☐ Attending local festivals or events (1)

☐ Relaxing (2)

☐ Observing natural beauty/enjoying countryside (3)

☐ Experiencing and gaining knowledge of different culture and way of life (4)

☐ Enjoying a change of pace from everyday life/ getting away from urban setting (5)

☐ Visiting family and/or friends (6)

☐ Other (Please specify) (7) ____________________________________________
Q14 What activities would persuade you to visit a rural destination?

- Attending local festivals or events (1)
- Trying local food and drink (2)
- Visiting farmers markets (3)
- Hiking or trekking (4)
- Wildlife (bird watching etc.) (5)
- Shopping (independent shops, arts and crafts etc.) (6)
- Visiting historic sites (castles etc.) (7)
- Camping/Cottage holiday (specify) (8)
- Mountaineering, rock climbing, mountain biking, golf (9)
- Visiting family and friends (10)
- Business (11)
- Other (please specify) (12) ________________________________________________

Q15 Have you ever visited a destination in Monmouthshire?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
Q16 Where? (Tick all that apply)

- Abergavenny (1)
- Caldicot (2)
- Chepstow (3)
- Monmouth (4)
- Magor (5)
- Usk (6)
- Tintern (7)
- Raglan (8)

- Other (Please state) (9) ________________________________________________

Q17 Do you believe the destination you visited has a lot to offer tourists?

- Yes (1)
- No- Why? (2) ____________________________________________
Q18 Such as? (Tick all that apply)

☐ History and Culture (1)
☐ Beautiful landscape and scenery (2)
☐ Attractions (3)
☐ Festivals and events (4)
☐ Local food and drink (5)
☐ Cycling/Walking etc. (6)
☐ Golf (7)
☐ Museums (8)
☐ Local Markets/Shopping (9)
☐ Other (Please specify) (10) ________________________________________

Q25 Have you ever seen any promotional material distributed by Monmouthshire?

☐ No (1)
☐ Yes (2)

Q26 What type of material?

End of Block: Default Question Block
Developing the competitiveness of a rural tourism destination: Monmouthshire Residents Questionnaire

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 What is your age?

- 18-28 (1)
- 29-39 (2)
- 40-50 (3)
- 51-61 (4)
- 61-70 (5)
- Over 70 (6)

Q2 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Prefer not to say (3)
Q4 What is your highest qualification?

- Less than high school (1)
- High school graduate (2)
- Some college (3)
- 2 year degree (4)
- 4 year degree (5)
- Professional degree (6)
- Doctorate (7)
Q5 What is your annual household income?

- Less than £10,000 (1)
- £10,000 - £19,999 (2)
- £20,000 - £29,999 (3)
- £30,000 - £39,999 (4)
- £40,000 - £49,999 (5)
- £50,000 - £59,999 (6)
- £60,000 - £69,999 (7)
- £70,000 - £79,999 (8)
- £80,000 - £89,999 (9)
- £90,000 - £99,999 (10)
- £100,000 - £149,999 (11)
- More than £150,000 (12)
- Prefer not to say (13)

Q7 Do you class your home as a rural area? Why?
Q9 As a resident, what do you feel Monmouthshire has that attracts tourists? (Tick all that apply)

- History and Culture (1)
- Beautiful landscape and scenery (2)
- Attractions (3)
- Festivals and events (4)
- Local food and drink (5)
- Cycling/Mountaineering/Walking etc. (6)
- Golf (7)
- Museums (8)
- Local markets (9)

Q10 Have you holidayed in any other Monmouthshire town apart from your own within the last five years?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
Q12 What was the purpose of the trip?

☐ Attending local festivals or events (1)

☐ Trying local food and drink (2)

☐ Agricultural experience (3)

☐ Visiting farmers markets (4)

☐ Business (5)

☐ Hiking/Golf/Cycling (6)

☐ Wildlife (bird watching etc) (7)

☐ Attending local festivals or events (8)

☐ Visiting friends and family (9)

☐ Staying at a country inn or cottage etc. (10)

☐ Shopping (independent shops, arts and crafts etc) (11)

☐ Visiting historic sites (castles etc.) (12)

☐ Camping (13)

☐ Other (please specify) (14) ________________________________________________

Q13 Would you be likely to holiday within Monmouthshire in the future?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No - Why? (2) ________________________________________________
Q17 What would persuade you to visit?

☐ Attending local festivals or events (1)
☐ Trying local food and drink (2)
☐ Agricultural experiences (3)
☐ Visiting farmers markets (4)
☐ Business (5)
☐ Hiking/Golf/Cycling (6)
☐ Wildlife (bird watching etc) (7)
☐ Attending local festivals or events (8)
☐ Visiting friends and family (9)
☐ Staying at a country inn or cottage etc. (10)
☐ Shopping (independent shops, arts and crafts etc) (11)
☐ Visiting historic sites (castles etc) (12)
☐ Camping (13)
☐ Other (please specify) (14) ________________________________

Q20 Have you seen promotional material put out by Monmouthshire to attract tourists?

☐ Yes (1)
☐ No (2)

Q21 If Yes, what type of marketing have you seen?
Q18 Please tick those that apply to the following statements, regarding your opinions on the impact of tourism in Monmouthshire.

- Growth of Economy (1)
- Job Creation (2)
- Preservation of local culture and history (3)
- Landscape development (New retail stores, hotels and restaurants etc.) (4)
- Traffic Congestion (5)
- Price incensement (land, houses, food etc.) (6)
- Job Loss (7)
- Environmental damage (litter, pollution etc.) (8)

End of Block: Default Question Block
Appendix (2)

Sharon (Holiday Cottage)

Interview responses

What do you believe makes tourism within Monmouthshire as successful as it is?

The varying activities it has on offer, the great marketing of it and its many festivals and events. It also benefits from large events such as The Ryder Cup and Eisteddfod being held in Monmouthshire and the surrounding areas. (Sharon)

Is there a particular time of year where you see a higher number of bookings/interest, and why they think this is?

Through June to September was our busiest periods, partially due to the warmer weather and the Abergavenny food festival, with this weekend usually getting booked up a year in advance and repeat visitors booking again for the following year, bringing along more friends and family. (Sharon)

What are your thoughts on destination branding and the way that Monmouthshire is branded as the foodie capital?

Destination branding can be very helpful. Having Monmouthshire branded as a foodie capital has absolutely helped, with more business from those interested in the foodie scene, and visiting the vine yards etc. (Sharon)
Rob (Vineyards)

Interview Responses

What do you believe makes tourism within Monmouthshire as successful as it is?

*The promotion and branding of the area, its beautiful scenery and links to cities, whilst remaining within a rural area.* (Rob)

Is there a particular time of year where you see a higher number of bookings/interest, and why they think this is?

*Summer, as there are more tourists due to there being more going on within the local area.* (Rob)

What are your thoughts on destination branding and the way that Monmouthshire is branded as the foodie capital?

*I think destination branding gives a reason to visit, it intrigues people and has definitely helped us, being a vineyard situated in a foodie town.* (Rob)
Ross (Angel Hotel)

Interview responses

What do you believe makes tourism within Monmouthshire as successful as it is?

*We are lucky to have the Brecon Beacons on our doorstep, to be famed for our food festivals and gastronomy and to be known as the food capital of Wales. The Hotel benefits from these associations and I feel that the local food tourism market is strong. I think that people are enticed by the fact that we have so much on our doorstep, much of which can be experienced in a long weekend without having to travel long distances, which is a winner! You can hike the Beacons, visit some amazing castles, eat in beautiful restaurants, fish the Wye and Usk all in a weekend!*

Are we spoilt perhaps? (Ross)

Is a time of year where you see a higher number of bookings/interest, and why they think this is?

*We are fortunate to have a consistent and stable market. The only real time where we experience higher than average trade and interest is during the summer and with the food festival. Obviously, there are only a limited number of dates available meaning there can be a bit of competition to secure bookings. (Ross)*

What are your thoughts on destination branding and the way that Monmouthshire is branded as the foodie capital?

*I think destination branding is extremely useful and needed when marketing a rural area, but it can also be dangerous if expectations are not met). I think Monmouthshire is a ‘foodie destination’ and that one should be proud of the fact. We are very lucky to have such fabulous produce, producers and establishments in our county. People travel from everywhere to enjoy Monmouthshire products, we have two Michelin starred eateries and many famous TV chefs from the area. We host the most amazing food festival and garner interest from all over the UK. Marketing the county as the foodie capital is completely warranted (Ross)*
Appendix (3)

Cardiff Metropolitan University
Ethics Committee

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Cardiff Metropolitan University Ethics Reference Number:
Participant name or Study ID Number:
Title of Project: Developing the Competitiveness of a Rural Destination: A Case Study on Monmouthshire
Name of Researcher: Courtney Phillips

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. [ ]

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. [ ]

3. I agree to take part in the above study. [ ]

4. I agree to the interview being recorded [ ]

5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications [ ] [ ]

6. I would like my organisations’ name to be anonymised in all publications [ ] [ ]

_________________________________________   _____________________
Signature of Participant                                      Date

_________________________________________   _____________________
Name of person taking consent                                      Date

_________________________________________
Signature of person taking consent

BA (Hons) International Tourism and Events Management  2018
Appendix (4)

DEVOLED ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION SUMMARY

Student Name:  Courtney Phillips  Student Number:  ST20080140

Module Name:  DISSERTATION  Module Number:  

Programme Name:  ITEM.  Supervisor Name:  Vicky Richards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To be completed by student and supervisor before submission to Ethics Approval Panel</th>
<th>Student Signature;</th>
<th>Supervisor Signature;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Y] Application for ethics approval</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Participant information sheet</td>
<td>[ ] N/A</td>
<td>[ ] N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Participant consent form</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Pilot interview/s</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ] Pilot questionnaire/s</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter/s to participating organisation/s</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
<td>[ ] Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation of interviewee participation</td>
<td>[ ] N/A</td>
<td>[ ] N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First Submission  Resubmission

Date:  5/12/17  

For use by the devolved ethics approval panel:

Panel Members  Name  Signature

Module leader, Chair:  Sheena Carlisle  

Vicky Richards  

CSM Ethics Committee Representative:  Nic Matthews

Date of Reassessment:  

Chair’s Action  [ ]  Reference number issued:  

[ ] Application not Approved  [ ] Supervisor: Date:  

Comments for projects not fully approved:

Minor Amendments to be approved by supervisor before submission. See Notes.

The original to be retained by the supervisor and a copy given to the student and module leader.

In the case of a resubmission being required this original form should be submitted with the resubmission not a new, blank, one.
CARDIFF METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

When undertaking a research or enterprise project, Cardiff Met staff and students are obliged to complete this form in order that the ethics implications of that project may be considered.

If the project requires ethics approval from an external agency (e.g., NHS), you will not need to seek additional ethics approval from Cardiff Met. You should however complete Part One of this form and attach a copy of your ethics letter(s) of approval in order that your School has a record of the project.

The document Ethics application guidance notes will help you complete this form. It is available from the Cardiff Met website. The School or Unit in which you are based may also have produced some guidance documents, please consult your supervisor or School Ethics Coordinator.

Once you have completed the form, sign the declaration and forward to the appropriate person(s) in your School or Unit.

PLEASE NOTE:
Participant recruitment or data collection MUST NOT commence until ethics approval has been obtained.

PART ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of applicant:</th>
<th>Courtney Phillips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor (if student project):</td>
<td>Vicky Richards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / Unit:</td>
<td>Cardiff Metropolitan School of Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student number (if applicable):</td>
<td>ST20080140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme enrolled on (if applicable):</td>
<td>International Tourism and Events Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>Developing the competitiveness of a rural tourism destination: A Case Study of Monmouthshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected start date of data collection:</td>
<td>20/12/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate duration of data collection:</td>
<td>60 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Body (if applicable):</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other researcher(s) working on the project:</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve NHS patients or staff?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the study involve human samples and/or human cell lines?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Does your project fall entirely within one of the following categories:

| Paper based, involving only documents in the public domain | No |
This project aims to analyse the success of Monmouthshire’s tourism industry despite being a rural county and how it can lead as an example. The author will conduct desk research to analyse the rural tourism sector and in addition to this primary research will be conducted through interviews and questionnaires, to find out the methods in which Monmouthshire have used that have been successful in developing their tourist industry. Alongside this, the research will analyse non-residents and residents’ perceptions of rural tourism and tourism in Monmouthshire. The findings of this research will then be used to give recommendations for destinations of similar scope that are struggling to develop a tourist industry.

DECLARATION:
I confirm that this project conforms with the Cardiff Met Research Governance Framework

I confirm that I will abide by the Cardiff Met requirements regarding confidentiality and anonymity when conducting this project.

STUDENTS: I confirm that I will not disclose any information about this project without the prior approval of my supervisor.

Signature of the applicant: C.Phillips  Date: 07/12/2017

FOR STUDENT PROJECTS ONLY

Name of supervisor: Victoria Richards  Date: 07/12/2017

Signature of supervisor: V.Richards
Research Ethics Committee use only

| Decision reached:                      | Project approved     |          |
|                                      | Project approved in principle |          |
|                                      | Decision deferred     |          |
|                                      | Project not approved   |          |
|                                      | Project rejected       |          |

Project reference number: Click here to enter text.

Name: Courtney Phillips
Date: 07/12/2017
Signature: C.Phillips

Details of any conditions upon which approval is dependant:
N/A

PART TWO

A RESEARCH DESIGN

A1 Will you be using an approved protocol in your project? No

A2 If yes, please state the name and code of the approved protocol to be used\(^1\)
N/A

A3 Describe the research design to be used in your project

Questionnaire analysing perceptions of residents and non-residents on rural tourism and tourism in Monmouthshire:
- Two separate questionnaires to be produced
- The researcher aims to gather around 50-100 questionnaires of each type to gain a large amount of data
- The researcher will hand out questionnaires at a busy street in Monmouthshire town Abergavenny and Queen Street in Cardiff to get two different perspectives
- It will take participants around five minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Sample:
- Cardiff residents, which will include individuals who have never visited a rural area, will be asked to participate, to understand what would motivate them to travel to a small county for a holiday.
- Monmouthshire residents will be asked to participate to gather their opinions and perceptions on tourism in Monmouthshire.

\(^1\) An Approved Protocol is one which has been approved by Cardiff Met to be used under supervision of designated members of staff; a list of approved protocols can be found on the Cardiff Met website here
• The participant will be told details of the study and its purpose, before completing the questionnaire and all participants will be over 18.
• The questionnaire will take approx. 5 minutes to complete

Semi structured interviews to gather perceptions of business holders on tourism in Monmouthshire:
• Open ended questions will be asked, in order to collect qualitative information on various topics regarding rural tourism and Monmouthshire tourism.
• Freedom of response will allow the researcher to gain opinions and thoughts of the participants
• Each interview will be recorded and will be around 30 minutes in length
• These participants will be mostly contacted privately due to knowing them personally
• Interviews will be held within business owners’ premises and Monmouthshire county council.

Sample:
• The researcher intends to have face-to-face interview with a member of Monmouthshire tourism board, an accommodation provider, a tourist attraction and self-employed business owner all located in Monmouthshire
• Self-employed business owners will be chosen to reflect the opinions of many other business owners in the Monmouthshire area.

Participants:
• The types of samples chosen are to guarantee no discrimination against age, gender, race, disability etc.
• All participants will be over the age 18 at the time of interview
• Participant’s right to anonymity will be allowed throughout the research process and they may withdraw their data at any point.
• The researcher will only record the age and gender of any participants

Analysis:
• The quantitative data from the questionnaires will be formatted through graphs, tables and charts on Excel.
• Thematic analysis for the semi structured interviews.

Consent:
• Consent from participants is required from the interviewees by the completion of the consent form before they can take part in the study and will also be provided with a participant information sheet.

| A4 Will the project involve deceptive or covert research? | No |
| A5 If yes, give a rationale for the use of deceptive or covert research | N/A |
| A6 Will the project have security sensitive implications? | No |
A7 If yes, please explain what they are and the measures that are proposed to address them

N/A

B PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

B1 What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project do you have?

The researcher of this project has previous experience involving human participants from her final year in college. The researcher undertook an individual investigation into the marketing of tourism in both Wales and Scotland for the Advanced Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. Examples of research included; questionnaires given to samples to assess the thoughts of the Welsh population on the success of Wales and Scotland’s marketing techniques.

B2 Student project only

What previous experience of research involving human participants relevant to this project does your supervisor have?

The supervisor of this project has previous experience of research involving human participants at undergraduate, Masters and PhD level in the areas of public administration, sports and leisure management, tourism, disability and social justice respectively. Her research has involved quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaires, focus groups, semi-structured and conversational interviews.

C POTENTIAL RISKS

C1 What potential risks do you foresee?

Questionnaires:

Risks to the researcher:

- Questions may cause offense to participants.
- Public may not be willing to stop and participate.
- Aggressive behaviour.

Risks to the participants

- May feel uncomfortable giving out personal data.

Semi Structured Interviews:

Risks to the researcher:

- The interviewee may feel uncomfortable answering the questions if the information is confidential or personal.
- The interviewee may get offended by the chosen questions.
- Participants may get anxious or nervous about what they have said to the researcher which may progress into anger.
Risks to the participants:
- Participant may disclose information that is confidential leading to trouble with their business.
- Researcher may cause inconvenience to participant during their normal working day.

C2 How will you deal with the potential risks?

Questionnaires:
- The researcher will be sensitive and act professionally when approaching potential participants.
- A description of the research will be included with the questionnaires so that participants are fully aware of what they are involved with as well as the fact they have the right to withdraw at any time.
- Researcher will take care to ensure that questions are appropriate for the audience.
- Survey will take place during daylight hours.

Semi Structured Interviews:
- Arranged far into advance with a confirmed location by the participant that will not cause inconvenience to any party.
- Participation information and a consent form will be sent in advance to interviewee so that they are aware of the topics being discussed.
- The location of the interview will be identified beforehand and given to a member of family.
- The participant will have the right to withdraw their data at any point.

Family and friends will be aware of my location and have contact information at all times during questionnaires and interviews.

All participants will be aware that any data used in the report will remain anonymous and they will be coded to safeguard from identification.

When submitting your application, you **MUST** attach a copy of the following:
- All information sheets
- Consent/assent form(s)

An exemplar information sheet and participant consent form are available from the Research section of the Cardiff Met website.

**Approved Ethics Number: 2016D53600**
Appendix (5)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Developing the competitiveness of a rural tourism destination: A Case Study of Monmouthshire

Project summary
The purpose of this project is to understand how rural destinations can create a successful and competitive tourist industry whilst having no major stand out appeal, using Monmouthshire as an example of good practice. Your participation will enable the collection of data which will form part of a study being undertaken at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Why have you been asked to participate?
You have been asked to participate because you are involved within the tourism industry in Monmouthshire.
Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

Project risks
The research involves your participation in an interview, which with your permission will be recorded for later analysis. We are not seeking to collect any sensitive data on you; this study is only concerned with the tourism industry in Monmouthshire and your opinions on it. We do not think that there are any significant risks associated with this study. However, if you do feel that any of the questions are inappropriate then you can stop at any time. Furthermore, you can change your mind and withdraw from the study at any time – we will completely respect your decision.

How we protect your privacy
All the information you provide will be held in confidence. We have taken careful steps to make sure that you cannot be directly identified from the information given by you. Your personal details (e.g. signature on the consent form) will be kept in a secure location by the research team. When we have finished the study, and analysed all the information, the documentation used to gather the raw data will be destroyed except your signed consent form which will be held securely for 5 years. The recordings of the interview will also be held in a secure and confidential environment during the study and destroyed after 5 years.

YOU WILL BE OFFERED A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET TO KEEP

If you require any further information about this project then please contact:
Courtney Phillips
Cardiff Metropolitan University email: st20080140@outlook.cardiffmet.ac.uk
References


Tracey, S (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, communicating impact*, John Wiley and Sons ltd: Sussex


Visit Monmouthshire, (2018) *The Abergavenny Food Festival - Abergavenny Christmas Fair 10th December 2017*, Available at:


