Local Authority Sustainable Planning for Tourism, Lessons from Ireland: A Longitudinal Analysis

Abstract:

Purpose - Sustainability is an essential word in the vocabulary of modern planning it is the key principle that underpins the Irish planning process. Yet, despite decades of academic and practical debate on sustainable planning and its application to tourism, there still exist many gaps, especially when it comes to its implementation. The purpose of this paper is to highlight, over a ten year period, how Local Authorities in Ireland have responded to the increasing tourism arrivals, which is having major implications for tourism planning.

Design/methodology/approach - This study employed a multi-method approach to determine the level of sustainable planning for tourism as evident from all legally required Local Authority County Development Plans (CDPs) in Ireland.

Findings - While findings have identified a slight increase in the provision for sustainable planning for tourism over the decade, there continues to be poor levels of policy provision in key areas. Despite the responsibilities placed on Local Authorities to sustainably plan for tourism, findings continue to question the ability of Local Authorities in Ireland to plan sustainably for tourism and protect the tourism product.

Originality/value - This research provides the first longitudinal study on the level of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in Ireland. It provides an assessment of the current state of sustainable planning as evident from county development plans (CDP) in 2016 compared to the original study of 2006. While developing new knowledge on Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism and the incorporation of tourism indicators.

Keywords: *sustainable tourism planning, longitudinal study, tourism planning, Local Authorities, Ireland*.

Introduction

Tourism is now one of the fastest growing industries in the world, constantly striving to assert its importance (Budeanu et al, 2016). No more so than in Ireland, where tourism has grown from humble beginnings in the 1920's to become an extremely valuable segment of the Irish economy (Metha, 2007). It should be noted however, that many of the indicators used to describe the industry are almost exclusively in terms of economic metrics. As discussed by Franzoni (2015) tourism as an industry gives weight to employment creation and economic growth. Internationally, tourist arrivals grew by 4.4% in 2015 to reach a total of 1,184 million, with some 50 million more tourists having travelled to international destinations around the world in 2015 as compared to 2014 (UNWTO, 2016). In Ireland, 2016 was considered as the best for inward tourism, with the number of visitors climbing 11% to 10.5 million, contributing more than €5.4bn in revenue (Fáilte Ireland, 2017). Ireland's tourism industry is driven by strong enterprises together with strong attractions. However, as Ireland's EU borders are set to change, the long-term sustainability of its tourism industry is of critical importance. Blancas, Oyola and González (2015) in their recent study on tourism sustainability in Europe discuss how tourism as an economic activity can have a significant impact on economic growth and job creation. But international experience has shown that tourism, similar many other activities, can have both positive and negative impacts (Wall and Mathieson, 2006; Telfer and Sharpley, 2008; Stylidis, Biran, Sit and Szivas, 2014; Hanrahan and McLoughlin, 2016; Kim, Jun, Walker and Drane, 2015; Mowforth and Munt, 2016). Therefore, the need to plan for tourism, and its associated impacts has in recent years become a focus for Local Authority planners around the world. Unfortunately, the potential for linking "futures thinking" to debates about sustainable development at local and regional government levels is relatively undeveloped, particularly in Ireland (Kelly, Sirr and Ratcliffe, 2004) and this research highlights that this remains the case today. Farmaki (2017) notes that through the academic study of tourism, its multi-dimensionality and complexity has been acknowledged. And while tourism has indeed contributed to economic development and made a substantial difference in some areas, it has failed to live up to expectations in others (Sharpley, 2009; Hatipoglu, Alvarez and Ertuna, 2016).

Effective planning is required by Local Authorities in order to seek durable solutions to inevitable challenges, while controlling current activities and future product development. According to Fáilte Ireland (2016a) the tourism industry in Ireland is now well placed to deliver significant employment and foreign earnings towards 2020 and beyond. However, with this

growth more demands will be placed on Ireland's natural environment and the irreplaceable resources of many local communities. The challenge now facing Local Authorities, who are legally responsible under the Planning and Development Act (2015) for facilitating and directing tourism development, is to ensure that future tourism planning is sustainable. While the need to plan for tourism and its associated destinations has become increasingly important in recent times. Kerr (2003) in his study on the development of tourism and public policy, discusses how the literature in the field of tourism policy is insufficiently developed particularly regarding the strategic management of failure of destinations to realize tourism's commercial success. Due to the formulation of tourism policy, often being considered a relatively new activity, Maxim (2013) noted how it is frequently neglected by governments, thus the literature in the field of tourism policy is insufficiently developed and is missing specific approaches, frameworks and theories (Kerr, 2003; Maxim, 2013). Also, due to this limited implementation of sustainable principles by tourism organisations and governments (Dodds and Butler, 2009) there are few studies on how sustainable planning has been implemented in practice by Local Authorities (Dodds and Butler, 2009, 2010). Building on previous research conducted in 2006 by Hanrahan (2008) on sustainable planning for tourism in Ireland evident from Local Authority CDPs, the purpose of this study is to provide an up to date assessment of Local Authority CDPs and their provision for sustainable planning for tourism in 2016. These findings make a valuable contribution to new knowledge by providing the first longitudinal study on Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism in Ireland.

2. Literature review

2.1 The need to plan for tourism

Planning is an essential element of successful tourism development and management (Hall, 2005, 2007). Furthermore, effective planning ensures that:

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

For Pearce (1989), tourism planning should consider various factors such as land use zoning, development density, transport, environment, landscape, and carrying capacity, all of which are functions of Local Authorities. Expanding on the view of Hall (2005, 2007) and the definition provided by Sharpley (2008), Wan (2013) clarifies the role of tourism planning as

the decision-making process and detailed, on-the-ground outline of how a tourism destination should be developed. Consistent with this view, Dredge and Jamal (2015) point to planning as having the most significant influence on how tourism develops. Essentially the who wins and fails, and how benefits and impacts of tourism are distributed (Dredge and Jenkins, 2007; Hall and Jenkins, 1995) are all down to effective tourism planning. Without effective planning in place tourism has been known to cause various economic, socio cultural and environmental changes upon the host community (Lee, 2013; Stylidis et al, 2014). But, the issue here is whether change is positive or negative, as some of these impacts are of course, more beneficial than others.

The need to plan has become overshadowed somewhat by the notoriously difficult task of implementing tourism development plans. Indeed, Yüksel and Yüksel, (2000) identified issues such as a lack of collective action, vagueness of proposed goals, lack of implementation, and the absence or inclusion of some actors as concerns that may hamper the process of implementing tourism planning. The familiar economic benefits associated with tourism has in recent years not become the primary goal for local communities when attaining their support for tourism development. The support from local communities is considered essential for the very success and sustainability of tourism (Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004; Pérez and Nadal, 2005; Sharpley, 2014). Current research now tends to focus on the ability of tourism planning to incorporate such views (Amuquandoh, 2010ab; Spencer, 2010; Andereck and Nyaupane, 2011; Sharpley, 2014) as it gives forward planners a greater understanding of the relevant impacts of tourism within the community (Mason, 2008; Deery et al, 2012; Sharpley, 2014). However, there is a consistent conclusion in the wider sustainability theory (Smith and Scharicz, 2011; Gibson, 2012; Budeanu et al, 2016) that there is considerable confusion and conflict over what sustainability is or should be. Therefore, sustainable development and sustainable planning for tourism need to be defined and discussed further.

2.2 Sustainable planning for tourism

Discussions on the importance of sustainability in tourism have been plentiful within the broader tourism literature. From an academic perspective, the concept of sustainability as discussed by Redclift (2005) is widely accepted as the basis for planning and managing future human activity. McKercher (2003), notes how tourism as an industry is ideally suited to adopting sustainability as a guiding philosophy. Essentially the sustainable planning for tourism can be seen as a strategy focused on how best to encourage tourism development, while

minimising potential negative impacts (McLoughlin, 2017). This is in large part, according to Bramwell (2015), down to the growing interest of sustainability in tourism witnessed over the years.

In Sharpley's (2009) formative research on tourism development and the environment, it has been suggested that sustainable tourism development has represented the dominant tourism development theme in academic, policy and planning circles. But a number of recent discussions on sustainability have focused on the problems with its implementation and practical application in the context of tourism (Dodds, 2007; Logar, 2010; Daphnet et al., 2012; Farmaki, et al, 2015). Connell et al (2009) argued that despite this discrepancy and the abundance of definitions available, there exists a clear debate on the application of sustainability. Yet, Bramwell (2015) cautions against more rhetoric, debates, applications and evaluations of sustainability in tourism. Instead he suggests that more of an understanding is needed on this phenomenon. But, a lack of importance placed on tourism as a core element in the planning process is highlighted by Dredge and Moore (1992). Similarly, Diamantis and Ladkin (2000) and later Ivars (2004) discuss how the concept of sustainable planning for tourism is in a crisis. For example, sustainable planning for tourism's lack of precision and an absence of a clear identification of its principles have been given as just two examples (Diamantis and Ladkin, 2000; Ivars, 2004). Further criticisms have also been directed at its practicality, its practices, the extent of its application, and its effectiveness (Saarinen, 2006; Weaver, 2009). This can be reflected in Liu's (2003:459) assertion that 'sustainable tourism is patchy, disjointed and at times flawed'. While more recently Mowforth and Munt (2016) allude to the different interests among multinational organisations, socio-environmental organisations and social classes, with many adopting their own theory of sustainability. Thus, contributing to what Harrison (1996) describes as the 'muddy pool' on the debate on sustainable tourism. In the end however, it is Local Authorities who control most of the planning aspects needed for tourism development (Dredge and Jenkins, 2007; Nunkoo, 2015). And the criticisms directed towards sustainability in tourism could have a profound effect on the ability of Local Authorities to incorporate sustainable long-term planning policies for tourism.

As with defining tourism, several studies have highlighted the wealth of definitions for sustainable development and sustainable planning for tourism (Page and Dowling, 2002; Liu, 2003; UNEP/UNWTO, 2005; Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins, 2013; Mowforth and Munt, 2016). The UNWTO (2001) argue that the sustainable development of tourism provides a high-quality

experience for visitors, while maintaining the quality of the environment. These elements are reflected also in the definition provided by the UNWTO:

> 'Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems' (UNWTO, 2001).

At the same time, the UNEP/UNWTO (2005) also illustrate how sustainable planning for tourism signifies a condition of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development;

> 'Taking full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts' (UNEP/UNWTO, 2005: 11-12).

The above definitions are consistent with current theoretical thinking on the need to balance development and sustainability in all three sustainability dimensions, economic, environmental and socio cultural (Ruhanen, 2004; Hatipoglu, Alvarez and Ertuna, 2014). Recognising the positive aspect towards sustainability in tourism, Chen (2015) suggests that is has become a practical concept that is deemed beneficial to the progress of tourism development, with Mason (2016) explaining that the concept of sustainable planning for tourism has continued to change over the last decade. Moreover, the importance of sustainable development in tourism has been highlighted further with the UNWTO (2015c) designating 2017 the international year of sustainable tourism for development. To this end, it is reasonable to think that the sustainable approach to tourism planning has therefore become widely accepted among Local Authorities in Ireland.

2.3 The need for Local Authority involvement in tourism planning

Elliot (1997) considers the political stability, security, and legal and financial frameworks as examples regarding the need for Local Authority involvement in tourism planning. Charlton and Essex (1996) in their analysis of the involvement of district councils in tourism in England and Wales noted that their involvement:

> 'has become established principally through the provision of local tourism infrastructure, the maintenance of an attractive environment through planning and development control, proactive policies to stimulate the private sector and the promotion and marketing of tourism' (Charlton and Essex, 1996, p.176).

Their study highlighted the role of Local Authorities in the development of tourism policies and strategies. This is coupled with the adoption of regulations for site planning and the drafting of guidelines for tourist services and development standards, an approach which is similarly discussed by Maxim (2013). For Page and Dowling (2002), the need for Local Authority involvement in tourism planning is partly driven by the necessity for the development of tourism policy.

In Ireland, Local Authorities are in an ideal position to plan for tourism. Attractions, infrastructure, signage and environment, which are so important to mobility at destination level, are all planned and managed by Local Authorities. However, Local Authorities are subjected to specific laws and guidelines developed at both national and EU level that govern the development of these necessary resources and infrastructure. In Ireland, the large body of planning legislation and regulations developed over the years, particularly since Ireland's membership of the European Union (EU) (DEHLG, 2007b), were finally consolidated into one piece of legislation, the Planning and Development Act (2015). This act reflects the expansion of economic growth and the rising public concern for environmental protection that developed in Ireland in the years since Irelands membership of the EU commenced in 1973. It was this higher-level governance from Europe that according to McLoughlin (2017) has been largely responsible for Irelands planning system supporting the culture of sustainability. Besides the task of policy formulation and planning according to Mason (2016) is closely related. And it is through such policy formulation that Ruhanen (2013) discusses the vital role Local Authorities have in facilitating sustainability in tourism. Although it is the Planning and Development Act (2015) that provides the legal framework for sustainability in Local Authority planning. How they go about this is set out in their respective CDP, which all Local Authorities are legally required to produce every six years (DEHLG, 2007b). According to Conaghan (2013) it is these strategic documents that contain the key elements of Local Authority tourism destination planning.

This legal requirement for Local Authorities in Ireland to develop and adopt a CDP is set out under section 9 of the Planning and Development Act (2015). CDPs must:

> 'Create a clear strategic framework for the proper planning
> and sustainable development of the area' (DEHLG, 2007b:8).

The then Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government [DEHLG] (2007b) suggests that high quality CDPs lie at the heart of a good quality planning system. They provide

blueprints for all development within the area they represent. All planning policies contained within CDPs are developed in consultation with the local community to ensure the plan meets the needs of the community they serve. Guidelines prepared by the DEHLG (2007a:25) note how these plans must contain specific polices for the development of tourism. Also, these plans need to reflect the requirements of the area's natural resources and tourism (DEHLG, 2007a:34). Also, it is within these CDPs that Local Authorities in Ireland can also utilise the numerous tourism guidelines and strategies developed by higher level governance structures. These all aim to facilitate the integration of sustainable planning criteria for tourism into policy. The CDP can therefore be an important tool to facilitate Local Authorities in sustainably planning for tourism as it can determine planning permission decisions for potential tourism developments. However, Maxim (2013) in her study on sustainable tourism planning in London noted how Local Authorities tend to be reactive rather than proactive when it comes to tourism planning. This criticism was also discussed by Dredge (2001) within the context of tourism planning policy making in Australia. Indeed, Ashworth and Page's (2011) review of current paradoxes in tourism research does mention that a large percentage of tourism planning is likely to be reactive to address the negative impacts of tourism perceived by the local community. This can be a result of the growing influence local communities are having on the Local Authority tourism planning process. Therefore, with the increasing numbers of visitors to Ireland and the financial and resource cutbacks experienced by Local Authorities since 2008, it is necessary to build on previous research conducted in 2006 and examine the depth and level of tourism planning performance and whether it has changed over the last decade in Ireland.

Methodology

The aim of this study is to determine, by way of a longitudinal study, the level of Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism in Ireland. Therefore, the philosophical nature of this research question was the key driver. For a pragmatist the research question is more important than either the method used or the paradigm that underlies the method (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003; Pansiri, 2005). Longitudinal studies are regarded by Menard (2002) as a suitable research method for creating temporal order, measuring change, and making strong causal interpretations. This study employed a multi-method approach to determine the level of sustainable planning for tourism as evident from Local Authority CDPs. This enabled the authors to provide an assessment of the state of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in 2016 compared to Hanrahan's (2008) original study conducted in 2006. The weaknesses of each single method were compensated by the counterbalancing the strengths of

another (Denscombe, 2003; Conaghan, 2013). The view here that both quantitative and qualitative methods were taken as complementary is in line with Guba and Lincoln (1994:105) observation that these two methods can be used appropriately with any research paradigm. Moreover, this allowed the authors to verify the research findings against the former, thus contributing to the validity of the research (Veal, 2011).

At different stages in this study, the authors considered the use of quantitative methods to be more appropriate than qualitative methods and vice versa. For example, by conducting a content analysis of Local Authority CDPs, the authors could identify the current level of sustainable planning for tourism through the acknowledgement of specific criteria. In multi-method studies employing diverse methodologies, Hall (2005) agrees with Veal (2011) that this approach enhances the validity of results by minimising biases. To gain a deeper understanding and develop new knowledge on Local Authority tourism planning and the factors, the quantitative method was complemented by a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all Local Authority senior planners, this method allowed for the collection of rich data, while also offering the opportunity for clarifications on issues.

This research was conducted in the Republic of Ireland were local government functions in Ireland are exercised by thirty-one Local Authorities, termed County, City or City and County Councils (see Figure 1). Local Authorities were selected as they have the legal power to reject or grant planning permission for all tourism development projects and their associated infrastructure and are legally obliged to make CDPs.

Insert Figure 1 here

The area under the jurisdiction of each of these Local Authorities corresponds to twenty-six of the traditional counties of the Republic of Ireland plus the three new Local Authorities since 1994: Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown (DLR), Fingal (FL) and South Dublin (SD). This brings the total number of Local Authorities (County Councils) in Ireland to twenty-nine, covering twenty-six different counties including the three Dublin administrative counties. This longitudinal research was conducted on the same Local Authorities as the original study by Hanrahan (2008). The content analysis focused on the CDPs developed by the 26 Local Authorities in Ireland, together with the three Local Authorities serving County Dublin (29 in total), with structured interviews with the senior planners, who are responsible for making CDPs. The research involved a complete population of all twenty-nine Local Authority CDPs

and all twenty-eight Local Authority senior planners. This procedure yielded a 100% success rate.

The original framework used in the 2006 study was updated to reflect current theory and legislation regarding sustainable planning for tourism. Results here provide the first longitudinal analysis of the provision of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in Ireland. The first section within the framework, provides the authors with a basic understanding of the acknowledgement of tourism within Local Authority CDPs. Following on, the next section of the framework enables the authors to identify if any process was being utilised by the Local Authorities. For example, tourism land use zoning, resort planning guidelines, disabled provision in tourism, tourism signage policy, and tourism development design standards. This section determines if Local Authorities are utilising any specific tourism indicator systems when planning for tourism.

The third section of the framework allows for the assessment of the integration of global, EC and national planning guidelines for tourism. This allows this current study to determine if Local Authorities in Ireland are benefiting from higher-level policy formulation from organisations outside of Ireland, together with national bodies such as the DTTAS and Fáilte Ireland (NTDA). The next section examines if Local Authorities are mitigating against the potential environmental impacts associated with tourism. This section address some of the core fundamental elements of tourism planning. The framework determines the CDPs ability to deal with concerns on tourisms interaction with the environment. Section five of the framework deals with the economic impacts from tourism. Here it is assessed if CDPs can manage the economic impacts of tourism. For example, do CDPs support local production and the reduction of tourist leakages? This aspect of the framework also will aim to determine if a productive business environment is being supported for tourism entrepreneurs within the county. The final area assesses planning for the socio-cultural impacts of tourism such as tourism disaster policies and if intellectual and cultural property rights are considered in the preparation of tourism components of CDPs. These individual sections (1-6) within the theoretical framework then combine to illustrate by way of a longitudinal study, the level of Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism in Ireland. While there has been previous research into the role of local government in tourism planning (Dredge, 2001; Ruhanen, 2013; Nunkoo, 2015). There has been no framework to examine evidence based planning by Local

Authorities in Ireland. From the review of theory, it was possible to construct a theoretical framework to examine Local Authority tourism planning in Ireland and the use of tourism indicator systems.

Insert Table 2 here

The first section allowed the authors to determine if adequate staff designations and specific funding for tourism planning has been subject of much discussion within theory (Mowforth and Munt, 2016). Moreover, understanding how institutional arrangements of governance are conceptualised is important as it can affect tourism policy (Hall and Page, 2014). Previous studies have discussed the importance of consulting stakeholders in the planning process for tourism (Hall, 2007; Currie, Seaton, and Wesley, 2009; Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins, 2013). This helps to ensure accountability (Beaumont and Dredge, 2010). Furthermore, the DMO has a vital role in co-ordinating tourism (Kruger and Meintjies, 2008; Bornhorst, Brent Ritchie and Sheehan, 2010). This facilitated the researcher in examining the process of Local Authority tourism planning. The second section of the theoretical framework allows for the examination of tourism planning in Ireland. This section will assess whether Local Authorities are collecting data on tourism activity to establish visitation patterns (Jennings, 2010) to determine future planning needs. This is followed by investigating if Local Authorities are measuring and monitoring tourism impacts. Furthermore, Head (2008) discusses how such evidence gathered can become central to the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. Previous studies have used economic, environmental and social indicators of sustainability to assess tourism practices (Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Lozano-Oyola et al, 2012). Their findings suggest that sustainable tourism indicators are necessary to objectively measure the degree of such practices' sustainability (Lee and Hsieh, 2016). The last section of the theoretical framework will determine whether Local Authorities in Ireland are facilitating evidence-based planning through tourism indicator systems.

To facilitate the constant comparison throughout the research process and to illustrate any variations between the Local Authorities, the data was manually inputted into a content analysis tool for each CDP. All elements collected from each category were recorded into numerical variables using SPSS Software (version 22). Data from each category was then discussed in the context of current international literature. To draw comparisons with the original 2006 study, the authors also employed semi structured interviews were conducted with all senior planners. This approach facilitated a broad investigation into the way Local Authorities planned

for tourism within their respective counties. Besides, Botterill and Platenkamp (2012) suggest that the fluid conversation style offered by semi-structured interviews is one reason for their popularity. Their use in this longitudinal study facilitated extra comments or observations. This style of conversation supported the authors in seeking additional insights into sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in Ireland, while also providing substantial longitudinal data. These questions were designed to reflect the 2006 study's questions and the numerous categories that comprised the theoretical framework (Table 3). All references to a Local Authority were removed from planner responses to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondent.

The data was then analysed with the help of the NVivo 10 software package, which is one of the most widely used qualitative data analysis computer software packages (Veal, 2011:401). The constant comparison of data, a corner stone of grounded theory (Matteucc and Gnoth, 2017) is at the heart of this research process. Through grounded theory this study facilitated the deductive analysis of empirical material to construct conceptual understandings of the studied phenomena (Charmaz, 2006). Besides, grounded theory opens opportunities for new theory building (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in areas of little extant research or where new insights are needed (Matteucci and Gnoth, 2017). The authors were therefore able to generate holistic theories, and an understanding of human behaviour that is not readily quantifiable (Jennings and Junek, 2007). As with any methodological approach there are limitations, and one of the biggest disadvantages of conducting longitudinal studies is participant attrition (Goemans et al, 2018). However, this research was conducted on the same Local Authorities are the original study in 2006, thus allowing the findings in 2016 to be compared and analysed to results from the previous research. Limitations also arise from aligning the 2016 study with the 2006 study. For example in relation to Table 1, how the data was collected in 2006 by Hanrahan (2008) could not be changed as this may not be a viable option for 2016 as it may not allow for comparison.

Results and Discussion

A number of changes have occurred in Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism since the prior research was conducted in 2006. The findings that emerged from this longitudinal study are summarised and displayed below (Figure 2) to illustrate a moderate shift towards greater levels of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in Ireland. This variation in levels of sustainable planning for tourism was achieved by firstly determining the number

of assessment criteria from Table 1, acknowledged in the 2006 study. These criteria are in listed in numerical order as they appeared in the theoretical framework. This process was then repeated for all development plans in 2016. The 2006 (blue line) illustrates the number of planning criteria (2) for Co. Clare (CE) in 2006. Above this the 2016 (green line) shows an increase to 16 criteria. At the same time, the shaded box below CE highlights whether criteria were present within the CDP in 2016. Furthermore, below CE you can see the year the development plan was published, volume of development plan, number of specific tourism policies, number of tourism strategies and percentage of tourist arrivals. When this is repeated for each Local Authority a larger picture is revealed for Ireland showing a longitudinal evaluation of sustainable planning for tourism.

Insert Figure 2 here

Given the aim of this study, it is necessary to discuss longitudinal comparison in the changes occurring in Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism from 2006 to 2016. It is easy to expect change to be more rapid than the results of this study suggest in Figure 2. But acknowledging the level where Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism has risen from in 2006 (26%), to its current position in 2016 (43%) is a cause for encouragement. While Budeanu et al (2016) discuss how sustainability has become an established function of governmental agendas, Dredge and Jamal (2015) note how effective policy provision and planning lie at the heart of the discussion on how tourism develops. While a moderate increase was exhibited nationwide for 2016 in comparison to 2006, in some cases this shift has at best been minimal. At this rate, the moderate shift towards greater sustainability in the Local Authority tourism planning process may be insufficient considering the increasing numbers of visitors coming to Ireland. Essentially the positive shift identified in this study is not happening fast enough. The counterargument can also be that tourism growth in Ireland is too fast as Local Authorities are struggling to keep up. Thus, it can be argued there is a need for less marketing but more training, resources and investment to be made available. Therefore, without the necessary training for senior planners in implementing policy, this longitudinal comparison raises questions on the actual ability of Local Authorities to sustainably plan for tourism. Without a greater push towards increased levels of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities nationwide, irreversible damage could potentially degrade Ireland's tourism product. We know that Local Authorities can be slow to embrace change, but if the DHPLG and Fáilte Ireland were to provide support and guidelines for the development of CDPs it could help set an example for Local Authorities in the future when making plans.

It is clear from this longitudinal analysis that a number of development plans built upon previous levels of sustainable planning for tourism and did progress towards greater degrees of sustainability in the decade since 2006 (DL, DLR, FL, MO and SO). Could Local Authorities simply be recycling tourism planning policies from plan to plan with little consideration of the requirements and capacity of the county. In any case it would be reasonable to think that tourism components of development plans would naturally be moving towards increasing levels of sustainability due to the increasing attention directed towards responsible tourism development. Mihalic (2016) notes that the translation of a belief in sustainability into implementation is a process that must be managed. The DHPLG needs to examine the reasons behind such findings and ascertain why several Local Authority CDPs are not embracing greater levels of sustainable planning when it comes to tourism. However, with the continued absence of indicator systems within tourism components of CDPs, a consensus on sustainability in tourism may be difficult to achieve.

> 'We do have other priorities to consider and the use of indicators is not top of the to-do list' (Planner 26).

> 'No, we don't incorporate these indicator systems in tourism planning (Planner 9).

This suggests that these indicator systems and their benefits have not been communicated to senior planners in Local Authorities. Insights drawn from scholarly literature have emphasised the presence and application of tourism indictor systems in the planning process as an important factor when assessing a destinations progress towards sustainability (McLoughlin, 2017). For example, Kelly Sirr and Ratcliffe (2004) discussed how sustainable indicators have long been recognised in Ireland as vital tools to assist Local Authorities map the course towards a more sustainable future. The presence of such would thrust the implementation of sustainable planning for tourism beyond the existing levels identified in Figure 2. In relation to national level tourism policy, its application appears weak. The 38% increase noted over the last decade in the utilisation of these guidelines is not sufficient. These guidelines should be witnessing adoption rates of at least 90% or greater since many of these are intended to be utilised by Local Authorities to ensure sustainability in tourism planning.

The longitudinal analysis of Local Authority sustainable planning for tourism (Figure 2) highlights there was no apparent association between the levels of sustainability in development plans and the percentage of visitor arrivals to the county (bottom row of the figure). While many Local Authorities (DLR, SD, KY and FL) continue to receive a

significantly higher proportion of tourists than others. For example, DLR, SD and FL are all located in the Dublin region received over six million visitors in 2015, while County Kerry (KY) welcomed over 1.5 million visitors (Fáilte Ireland, 2016d). Also, it is clear from Fáilte Ireland (2016d) that these destinations are generating significant levels of revenue from tourism, thus potentially requiring the Local Authority to invest more in the tourism planning process and managing tourism impacts. However, it is evident from this longitudinal analysis that higher proportions of tourist arrivals do not correspond with higher levels of assessment criteria acknowledged within CDPs. A potential consequence of the growth in tourism numbers, is the increased pressure on Local Authorities to safeguard key assets vital to the future sustainability of Irish tourism such as scenic landscapes from unsustainable tourism development.

Current results in 2016 are consistent with previous findings from 2006 on the preparation and publishing of Local Authority CDPs. Results from the longitudinal content analysis illustrates a significant increase nationwide however, in the volume dedicated to tourism planning and development within CDPs between 2006 to 2016. To put this change in a nationwide perspective, collectively the total volume dedicated to tourism planning and development by all twenty-nine CDPs increased by 192% in the years 2006 to 2016. Certainly, this substantial increase points to a greater emphasis being placed on tourism as a development activity by Local Authorities.

Insert Table 3 here

The need for practical and feasible planning policies to ensure the sustainability of tourism is discussed by Liu (2003). Findings do however; reveal that the actual number of these policies or objectives contrasted significantly from one Local Authority to another. This longitudinal study has indicated that the presence of specific strategies to aid in policy implementation has dropped 26% in 2016, when compared to 2006. For example, in 2016 County Kerry's (KY) CDP had seventy-one policies and objectives relating to tourism planning and development. Yet there were no tourism strategies identified within the CDP to implement these policies or objectives. Strategies for policy implementation are necessary for successful policy implementation (McLoughlin, 2017). But the presence of tourism indicator systems, specific budgets, timelines for implementation and staff allocations in tourism policy continues to be absent from development plans. This challenges whether a policy for the sustainable planning of tourism could even be comprehensively implemented. This overview of Local Authority

sustainable planning for tourism has provided new material and understanding. The ten-year study has provided the first nationwide move towards modest levels of sustainable planning for tourism by Local Authorities in Ireland. This moderate increase represents an opportunity for Local Authorities to reinforce their shift towards a more sustainable approach to tourism planning by addressing these inadequacies in future development plans.

Concluding Remarks

This longitudinal study found that overall, the number of specific criteria from the theoretical framework (Table 1) acknowledged in Local Authority CDPs in 2016 has increased by 17% when compared to the results from the original study of 2006. The question remains however, is this shift happening fast enough to protect the Irish tourism product into the future? As evident from Figure 2, there continues to be poor levels of policy provision in key areas that relate to sustainable planning for tourism within CDPs. The low levels of tourism policy relating to land use measures, resort planning guidelines and development design standards for tourism seriously questions the ability of Local Authorities to adequately plan for an industry generating €4.7 billion in revenue and employing 220,000 people (ITIC, 2017). This suggests a clear need for in depth guidelines and training to be provided by the DHPLG in collaboration with the NTDA specifically aimed at Local Authority senior planners. These CDP tourism planning guidelines for planners can provide the rationale for determining the future land use, planning controls and infrastructure needs for tourism, based on sound planning principles particularly in popular destinations. The DTTAS (2015:57) in their 'People, Place and Policy' clearly state how Local Authorities need to have due regard for national tourism policy. However, during the period 2008-2012, revenue expenditure to Local Authorities was reduced by €736m (14%) and total staff by 8,250 (22%) across all Local Authorities (DECLG, 2012). Therefore, the plausibility of tourism guidelines being incorporated voluntary into future CDPs must be questioned. It is clear from Figure 2 (criteria 13-15), that the current mechanisms in place to facilitate the incorporation of tourism guidelines within CDPs is cumbersome and slow. This is evident through integration levels of national tourism guidelines only increasing by 38% in the decade since 2006. This has resulted in many of these detailed tourism planning guidelines simply ending up on a shelf and not making their way into tourism components of Local Authority CDPs. Also, the presence of a tourism officer with the necessary qualifications and experience would be able to communicate the need for the utilisation of such guidelines. It is therefore recommended that all global, EC and national tourism guidelines be reviewed and incorporated into the national planning framework. This can ensure a clear policy

framework for Local Authorities to facilitate the sustainable planning and development of tourism within future CDPs. Furthermore, it is evident from Figure 2, that since 2006, tourism planning by Local Authorities continues to be characterised by a lack of clear environmental, economic and socio-cultural planning policies within tourism components of CDPs. Consequently, Local Authority tourism policy does little to protect the natural resources and environment within their county, the corner stone of Ireland's tourism industry. In addition, the continued lack of analysis on the economic impacts of tourism has raised genuine questions on the ability of Local Authorities in Ireland to grasp the full economic potential of sustainable tourism development. Findings also highlight significant short comings in the provision of several key criteria relating to socio cultural sustainability in tourism planning, which continue to be absent from tourism components of CDPs, all of which appears to suggest that the current approach to tourism planning by Local Authorities is slowly diminishing the Irish tourism product. Possibly greater levels of funding and training is needed for senior planners to develop future tourism policy based on evidence from data collected on tourism activity within future CDPs. Regarding the responsibility of the marketing bodies towards facilitating the sustainability of tourism, both the DTTAS and Tourism Ireland are allocated large budgets, €122 million and €42 million respectively, for marketing and promoting Ireland as a destination. With Fáilte Ireland also awarded €65million for a capital grants scheme to promote existing destinations brands. Perhaps these organisations could adjust their activities and ensure visitor growth does not outstrip the destinations ability to adjust to the increase in visitation by collecting sustainable tourism indicator data on tourism activity within every Local Authority. This could help provide evidence informed planning which in turn can protect the tourism product so that it can remain a desirable tourism destination and be marketed in the future.

With the growing number of visitors to Ireland, there is a clear need for ongoing longitudinal research on determining the sustainability of tourism planning in Ireland. Without such an approach it would be difficult to illustrate any changes among Irelands Local Authorities towards embracing increasing levels of sustainability in tourism policy. While this study is one step in this direction and has benefited from gaining initial longitudinal data on sustainable planning for tourism in Ireland. The two theoretical frameworks utilised in this research could allow for a series of longitudinal studies over specific timelines. Similar to this research, these studies could be conducted every ten years to continually assess the sustainability of tourism planning in Ireland and determine whether evidence informed planning using tourism indicator systems is informing the development of tourism components of CDPs and be possibly

modified and adapted to be used in other countries. Furthermore, this research was conducted at a time when Local Authorities in Ireland are struggling to provide public services due to serious underfunding and staff levels down one-fifth since 2008. It was not surprising to find a lack of enthusiasm among senior planners towards collecting data on tourism activity. But as the Irish economy improves, Local Authorities are potentially offered additional resources. Future longitudinal studies can track the level and depth of future tourism components of CDPs, while also giving a clear indication of whether Local Authorities are adopting an evidence informed approach to tourism planning.

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#	Assessment criteria within the theoretical framework found in tourism components of Local Authority CDPs	∑ of criteria (1)	∑ of criteria (2) = total found in tourism components of Local Authority CDPs in 2016
1	Stand-alone Local Authority tourism development plan	33	10
2	Specific tourism policy section in CDP	32	29
3	Tourism policy integrated in other areas of CDP	31	29
4	Sustainable planning for tourism supported in CDP	30	11
5	Sustainable development of tourism supported in CDP	29	29
6	Specific tourism land-use measures	28	9
7	Sustainable resort planning guidelines	27	8
8	Development design standards for tourism	26	16
9	Tourism policy benefited from the use of indicator systems	25	0
10	Provision of tourism signage policy	24	18
11	Sustainable tourism policy on caravan and camping	23	17
12	Inclusion/accessibility for tourists with disabilities	22	4
13	Tourism policy compliant with global tourism guidelines	21	0
14	Tourism policy compliant with European tourism guidelines	20	0
15	Tourism policy compliant with national tourism guidelines	19	17
16	Policy recognise the environmental impact of tourism	18	26
17	Tourism carrying capacity calculations for sensitive areas	17	3
18	Sustainable development of eco-tourism	16	14
19	Support the protection of sensitive landscapes	15	24
20	Good environmental management for tourism enterprises	14	7
21	Support the protection of biodiversity	13	6
22	Positive economic impacts of tourism supported	12	16
23	Analysis of tourism flow (volume and value)	11	0
24	Management of leakages from tourism	10	4
25	Provides opportunities for local tourism entrepreneurs	9	12
26	Tourism industry regulation supported in CDP	8	2
27	Consultation/participation techniques utilised in planning	7	18
28	Local satisfaction, ratio of tourists to local calculated	6	0
29	Archaeological/historic preservation in tourism policy	5	24
30	Protect public rights of way for tourism	4	9
31	Tourism disaster plan	3	0
32	Intellectual and cultural property rights of communities protected by tourism policy	2	3
33	Best practice examples for tourism at sensitive sites	1	0

Column headers (Local Authorities): CW, CN, CE, CK, DL, DLR, SD, FL, GY, KK, KE, KY, LS, LM, LK, LH, LD, MH, MO, MN, OY, RN, SO, Ts, Tn, WD, WH, WX, WW

Key: CW = CarloW (Local Authorities abbreviated by the first and last letter)

Shaded cell = the presence of that particular activity in 2016

• = the total number of assessment criteria found in tourism components

∑ of criteria (1) = The number of criteria found in tourism components of Local Authority CDPs defined by blue for 2006 and green for 2016

———— Assessment criteria found in tourism sections of Local Authority CDPs in 2006

———— Assessment criteria found in tourism sections of Local Authority CDPs in 2016

The ∑ of criteria (2) = total found in tourism components of Local Authority CDPs in 2016