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**Article**

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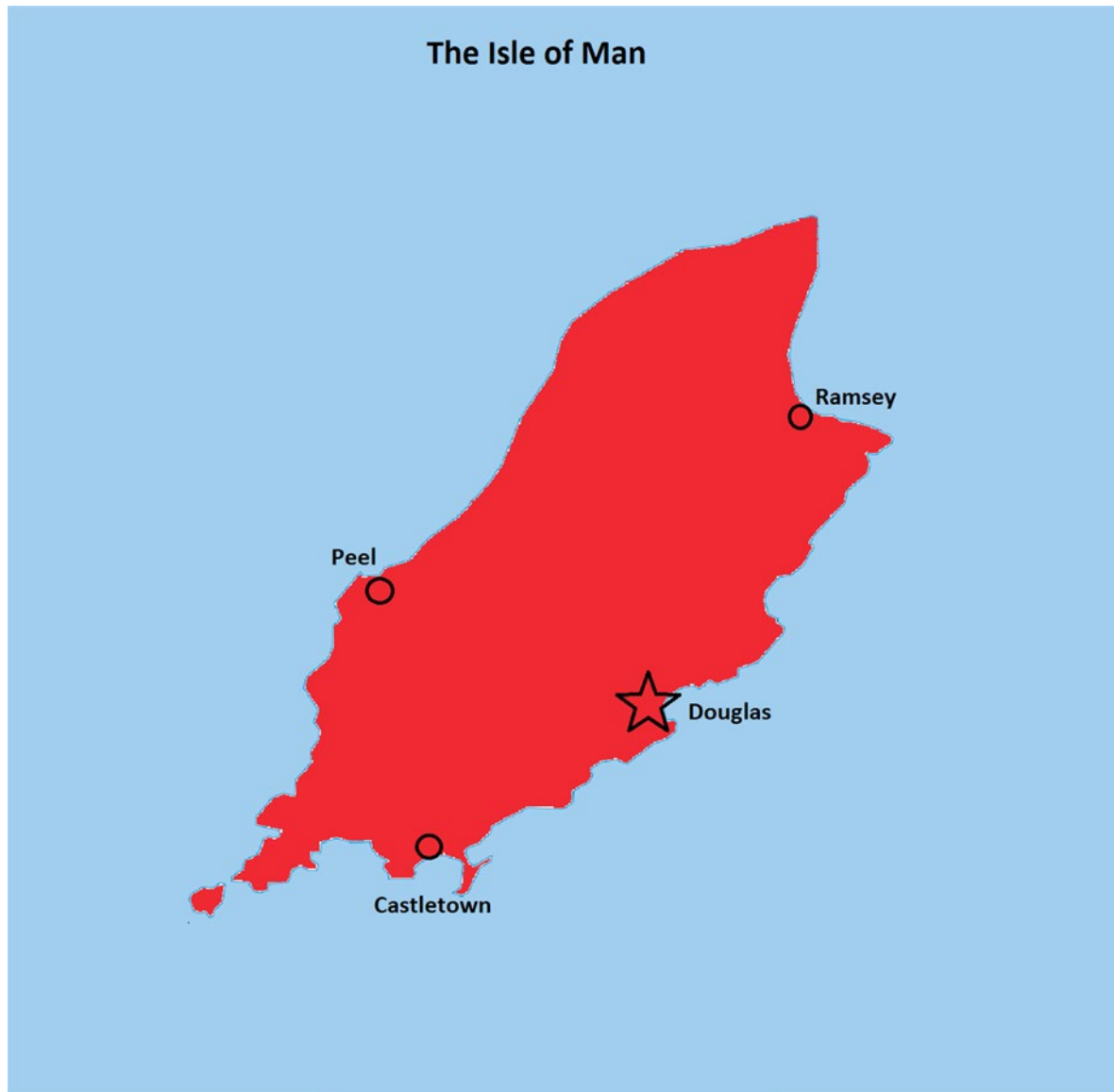
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## MARKETING | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Marketing a tourism industry in late stage decline: The case of the Isle of Man

Brendan Canavan<sup>1\*</sup>

**Abstract:** Qualitative interviews in the Isle of Man uncovered local perceptions of a tourism industry in late stage decline. Social impacts of decline are pronounced including facilities loss, cultural changes and a heightening of perceived peripherality: which taken together undermine local identity. Tourists are welcomed as they help to affirm the pride residents have in their island in creating a more active atmosphere, to provide social interaction opportunities and to combat negative stereotyping. Thus, findings emphasise the diverse, unique and persistent benefits of tourism in the Isle of Man, despite its decline. Destination marketing recommendations are therefore made to better address the experiences and desires of communities experiencing decline.

**Subjects:** Tourism and the Environment; Sustainability; Tourism Development/Impacts; Destination Management; Destination Marketing

**Keywords:** Isle of Man; destination marketing; marketing post-mature destinations; consequences of tourism decline; stakeholder perceptions; qualitative research

### 1. Introduction

The stagnation and decline of tourism resorts is an internationalised problem. Tourism globalisation has brought attendant increased competition between ever more homogenised destinations (Chapman & Speake, 2011). Likewise, it has contributed to the increased fragmentation of tourist behaviours (Urry, 2002). Many locations have increasingly struggled to compete for visitor arrivals in this increasingly competitive, splintered and fast-moving marketplace. Further undermining destinations abilities to compete long term is the environmental damage and lost attractiveness of place frequently associated with tourist hosting, (Mihalič, 2000).

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brendan Canavan is a lecturer in marketing, based within the Marketing and Strategy division at the University of Huddersfield Business School, UK. He is involved in research regarding marketing and branding, with a focus upon tourism and sustainability. From the Isle of Man, small island tourism is a passion; in particular, the sustainable management of the industry in peripheral locations.



Brendan Canavan

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This paper looks at the effects of tourism decline in a small island. The Isle of Man was an important tourism destination for over a century; however, since the late 1970s, the industry has been in decline. Local industry stakeholders, such as island residents and tourism sector employees, were interviewed about impacts of tourism decline. This process is shown to bring negatives, such as a sense of isolation from, and rejection by, the outside world. Tourism is an industry seen to bring many economic, environmental and social positives. For example, tourist spending supports jobs and facilities. Interviewees feared further decline might put these at risk. Island residents thus seek a return to tourism growth. It is explained how destination marketing may help to achieve this.

To illustrate, the stagnation, decline and battle to revive first-generation tourism resorts, such as those of Northern Europe or North America, are widely noted (Baum, 1998; Bramwell, 2004; Brooker & Burgess, 2008; Cooper, 1995; Strapp, 1988). Similarly highlighted, is a trend towards stagnation of second-generation destinations, such as those of the Mediterranean (Ayres, 2000; Bull & Weed, 1999; Leslie, 2005; Theuma, 2004). Such a process, which may moreover be happening with increasing speed in emergent destinations (Chapman & Speake, 2011), is of concern to researchers because of the particular challenges faced by stakeholder communities in post-mature destinations. Decline is linked to interrelated economic, social and environmental (referring to both natural and cultural environments throughout this paper) problems. Such issues of decline may be especially heightened in small islands and peripheral areas, often highly dependent on tourism, and with few realistic development alternatives (Brown, 1998).

Yet, resorts suffering long-term stagnation are little covered by past tourism literature (Agarwal & Brunt, 2006). Focus tends instead to be upon nascent, growing or mature destinations, as it does on primary destinations and those orientated towards warm water, sun, sea and sand pursuits (Baldacchino, 2006; Canavan, 2014; Ritchie & Inkari, 2006). Consequently, there is a lack of evidence upon which to base theoretical and practical recommendations for tourism decline management and marketing. Flawed policy and planning may result, such as a tendency for over-pessimism which undermines investment, in sustainability initiatives (Tao & Wall, 2009).

Emphasised therefore, is a need for relevant research in untypical locations, in order to better understand attitudes towards, dynamics, experiences and management of, decline. The following research aims to address such a gap. This paper outlines stakeholder perceptions of the tourism industry in the Isle of Man; a small, cold water island destination, experiencing long-term decline of its tourism industry. Research was conducted in order to explore local stakeholders' experiences of, and attitudes towards, tourism in a destination which is experiencing long-term stagnation and decline.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The small island context

A brief overview of the small island context highlights the number of challenges to their continued habitation. Peripherality of small islands, referring to their geographic isolation, both from physical mainland and population centres (Wilkinson, 1989), and small geographic and population size (Briguglio, Archer, Jafari, & Wall, 1996), limits economic and social opportunities available. Further restrictions are placed on economic growth because of typically expensive and restricted infrastructure, import dependencies, foreign control of assets and limited economies of scale (Ayres, 2000; Baum & Hagen, 1999; Buhalis, 1999; Marcouiller, 1997). Socially meanwhile, isolation may result in a dearth of relationship and entertainment opportunities, social restrictions and stagnation of cultural development (Brown, 1998; Duffield & Long, 1981; Marjavaara, 2007).

The most serious consequence of peripherality is the outflow of residents putting community continuity in doubt, as residents are attracted by greater financial and social opportunities abroad (Andriotis, 2005). For example, the islands of Ireland in 1841 held a population of 38,138 across 211 islands, but in 1999, just 9,700 inhabited 66 (Berry, 2009). Abandonment represents absolute cultural loss (Royle, 2003). Likewise, it may accompany mutually evolved natural landscape degradation (Rouan, Kerbiriou, Levrel, & Etienne, 2010). Keane (1992) argues that depopulation and abandonment is a spectre, which overhangs all small islands as a consequence of their economic and social restrictions.

In light of these challenges, tourism development is often pioneered by small islands worldwide (McElroy, 2006). Tourism may be an easy industry to establish in areas with limited resources (Buhalis, 1999), and where the scope for developing or attracting other industries is restricted (Brown & Hall, 2000). For instance, tourism is geared towards unskilled labour with low barriers to individual

entrepreneurship, thus allowing local involvement in, and ownership of, the industry (Almeyda, Broadbent, Wyman, & Durham, 2010). By contrast, other industries, including offshore finance, have been criticised as restricted to certain people and places, limiting their wider social benefits (Brown, 1998).

Moreover, the impacts of tourism may be particularly relevant in the small island context (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008; Wilkinson, 1989). Economically, tourism development has been associated with increased employment (Buhalis, 1999), support for, and development of, facilities and infrastructure (Keane, 1992), and linkages with other economic sectors, such as farming (Ayres, 2000). As such, tourism can be a pioneer industry, helping to stimulate wider, long-term, economic transformation (Mansfeld & Winckler, 2008). Socially, enhanced civic pride and social cohesion is noted to result from tourism (Pennington-Gray, Reisinger, Kim, & Thapa, 2005), as is greater social opportunity and variety (Marjavaara, 2007), entertainment options (Duffield & Long, 1981) and increased social space in what may otherwise be restrictive environments (Canavan, 2013b). Environmentally meanwhile, tourist interest can stimulate revivals and reinterpretations of traditions (Simpson, 1993). Tourism may also both fund (Eagles, 2002) and motivate conservation efforts. Marcouiller (1997, p. 353) summarises: “(the) effects of tourism (are) in developing a sense of place and pride, increased awareness and appreciation of environmental, historic and cultural resources, provision of recreational activities for lower income residents and political benefits.”

## 2.2. Tourism decline

Hence, tourist success has been linked to stabilising island populations. This is as a consequence of contributing to more attractive local landscapes, making habitation prospects more viable, and encouraging new and returning migrants attracted through social exchanges and in pursuit of economic opportunities (Andriotis, 2005; Buhalis, 1999; Royle, 2008; Tsartas, 1992).

Yet, tourism may be an unpredictable, unreliable, cyclical or short-term industry (Aremberri, 2006). Experience shows that destinations tend to go through periods of relative expansion, often followed by stagnation or decline (Chapman & Speake, 2011). This process may be fostered by the innate restlessness of travellers; keen to experience the new and swayed by changing fashions (Urry, 2002). The experiences of many north European coastal destinations, including the Isle of Man, would confirm such a perspective. Here, changing tourist tastes for more exotic holidays, in locations with guaranteed sunshine, rapidly undermined the appeal of traditional destinations (Rawcliffe, 2009; Walton, 2000).

Likewise, tourism decline may be preceded by the environmental degradation which often accompanies tourism development, and which renders a locale less attractive to tourists (Mihalič, 2000; Sedmak & Mihalič, 2008). This can be a particular problem in the limited and fragile landscapes of small islands. Tourism development has thus been suggested as bringing short-term economic stimulus at significant environmental cost (Sharpley, 2003). Landscape uniqueness and quality are sacrificed, ultimately reducing the ability to compete for visitors other than on price. Tourism may be inevitably short-termist, an initial route to further economic development, to be moved beyond where possible, and perhaps inevitably fated to decline (Agarwal & Brunt, 2006; Aremberri, 2006; Wheeller, 1993).

Albeit, such a perspective has increasingly been criticised as overly deterministic, simplistic and pessimistic. Evolution of each resort is unique (Choy, 1992). And locations are not necessarily fated to decline (Ivars i Baidal, Rodríguez Sánchez, & Vera Rebollo, 2013). Indeed, cases exist of destinations operating over long time periods, for instance, the Frisian Islands hosting continuously successful domestic tourism industries since the beginning of the twentieth century. The role of effective marketing in renewing, repositioning and revitalising destinations, in order to achieve such longevity, is noted (Brooker & Burgess, 2008; Bull & Weed, 1999; Leslie, 2005; Theuma, 2004; Walton, 2000).

### 2.3. Impacts of tourism decline

Whilst the inevitability of tourism decline is debateable, potential for adverse impacts of the decline process is generally acknowledged. A number of authors detail how destinations' natural and cultural landscapes have evolved alongside and shaped by tourism over time. Tourism may become inextricably associated with local traditions, beliefs and identity (Sindiga, 1996; Smith, 1989). Effectively these melange aspects of host and guest cultures, and co-create new cultural expressions, to form a unique tourist culture (Sindiga, 1996; Smith, 1989; Smith, 2003). Tourism had played an important role in Isle of Man economic, sociocultural and environmental development for a century prior to downturn (see Rawcliffe, 2009): as is often the case for destinations worldwide. Rich legacy in the Isle of Man is evidenced by the predominant architecture of the island.

Such landscapes are vulnerable to economic upheaval and changes to new economic practises, which may make obsolete or conflict with traditional land use patterns (Peron, 2004, Saarinen, 2006). Loss of traditional architecture and facilities may accompany displacement of tourism for instance (Hampton & Christensen, 2007). It has also been noted stewardship of natural resources, and diversity of flora and fauna in small islands, can depend upon continuation of the industry, and the economic impetus alongside continuation of traditions, which it brings (Rouan et al., 2010). "The reduction of tourism thus places the architectural, economic and social future of traditional resorts in jeopardy" (Cooper, 1995: 63).

Alongside environmental disruption, tourism decline is associated with a reduction in benefits brought by the industry. The loss of these not only threatens to undermine those stakeholders involved in tourism, but in locations with few development alternatives, and which frequently fail to transition to new forms of economic sustenance, may bring severe consequences community-wide. For instance, socio-economic deprivation may result from failures to transition to new economic models (Agarwal, 2002; Agarwal & Brunt, 2006; Brown, 1998). To illustrate, Anglesey and the Isle of Wight, two British Isles islands economically dependent upon stagnant tourism industries are characterised by relatively low levels of GDP and incomes, youth migration and social deprivation (Shiel, Rayment, & Burton, 2002). Social and environmental deprivation may also be a consequence. The cultural interactions, stimulation and mutual learning brought by tourism, are highlighted as important to community identity, vibrancy and overall well-being (Pennington-Gray et al., 2005; Simpson, 1993; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). The reduction in tourism thus threatens loss of this valued cultural interconnectedness (Canavan, 2014). The rapid population decline of Irish Islands, which have failed to develop or have lost tourist interest, is noted by Royle (2008).

Hence, it may be anticipated that tourism decline might bring negative economic, social or environmental consequences for local stakeholders. Understanding the dynamics of decline, therefore, may assist the development of sustainable decline management strategies (Canavan, 2014), or promote awareness of, and investment in, destination revitalisation. As previously highlighted however, relevant research, and subsequent theoretical and practitioner discussion, remains limited.

### 3. Methodology

Resident attitudes have been extensively used in tourism studies to measure the success or otherwise of tourism destination management and marketing (Haley, Snaith, & Miller, 2005). Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2010) consider overall attitude to be a function of the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts of tourism. Thus, briefly speaking, those locations with more persistently positive resident attitudes towards tourism, tend to have industries more sustainable in terms of their balance of impacts and longevity (Irandu, 2004; Lepp, 2007). Hence capturing resident attitudes towards tourism, in order to draw inferences, was used in this study.

Qualitative research was identified as the most appropriate method for data collection. The approach is recognised for being used to explore the phenomena of interest in detail, within local context, and as they emerge and change over a period (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This enables



the researcher to capture knowledge within its wider social-specific context (Miner & Mezas, 1996), and offers holistic descriptions of realities that cannot be reduced to a few variables (Gephart, 2004). In-depth interviews were considered the most suitable qualitative technique to apply to best gain these advantages, because of their ability to capture the meanings and interpretations actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena (Johnson, Buehring, Cassell, & Symon, 2006).

A total of 29 in-depth interviews were conducted by the author, speaking to 35 individuals over a 12-month period. A number of interviews were conducted with more than one individual according to particular requests or practical circumstances. Interviews lasted for an average of 35 minutes, with times between 20 and 55 min, and took place at various locations convenient to participants, such as in workplaces, at home or at a cafe. Four were conducted via email or telephone exchanges due to mutual access constraints or following participants' request. As no new patterns emerged, no further interviews were arranged.

All interviewees were current island residents and included general community members, politicians, tourism planners, managers, employees, community organizations and conservationists. A variety of stakeholders were targeted and recruited for interview, using purposive sampling, which aimed to select subjects of interest to the study (as per Adu-Ampong, 2014). Identified targets of interest were contacted via phone or email explaining the nature of research and asking to arrange an interview. Although not used explicitly, some network sampling may have taken place, as a number of respondents were known to the researcher to a greater or lesser extent. In all cases, subjects were approached for their potential interest to the subject area, not because of personal contact; although this may have influenced participation. Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) do suggest that theoretical sampling is opportunistic in this manner.

All interviews were transcribed within 48 h of conduct by the author. NVIVO computer software was used to assist data coding and analysis. This process assisted immersion in the data and the process of developing emergent theory, particularly as more interviews were processed. These patterns were allowed to emerge from the data itself, thus following the largely inductive approach to analysis outlined by Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007). Research was an inductive process based upon pragmatic use of principles of social constructivism to explain how data are created, and grounded theory to frame the interpretation of data. A number of initial themes were identified from interviews that evolved over the research process and were further refined at the analysis stage.

### **3.1. The Isle of Man**

Located in the centre of the Irish Sea, the Isle of Man has an area of 588 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to circa 75,000 inhabitants (Isle of Man Government Digest, 2010). The Isle of Man has a strong and often contested sense of independence, manifest in a proudly upheld sense of nationality amongst many island residents. Politically, Man is a self-governing crown dependency of the UK, and lies outside of the EU. The locally elected island parliament (the Viking established Tynwald; reputed to be the oldest in continuous existence in the world) has power to pass legislation that affects the island, without outside influence.

The island has a varied landscape of central moorland bisected by wooded glens, with agricultural plains, cliffs or dunes towards the coast. Flora and fauna of the islands is diverse; the many different habitats of the island leading to descriptions of it representing the British Isles in miniature. Many rare and migrant seabirds breed on the island (Hopson & Lamb, 1995). Natural beauty combines with a unique local culture informed by the islands' geographic position and contested history. This is manifest in a rich variety of cultural traditions and sites, such as the Man Gaelic language, Laxey Wheel, Rushen and Peel Catles, and Tourist Trophy (TT) motorbike festival (Table 1). This, the world's longest running road races, celebrated its centenary in 2007, and remains the highlight of the tourist calendar, attracting upwards of 40,000 tourists annually.

**Table 1. The Isle of Man**

Key statistics		
Location	Irish Sea, British Isles	
Geographic size	520 km <sup>2</sup>	
Population size	80,000	
Visitor numbers	287,000	
Visitor spending	£113 million	
Bed-spaces	8,000	
TALC stage	Long term decline	
Primary industry	Finance	
Political status	UK crown dependency	
Attractions	Laxey Wheel, Tynwald Hill, Heritage railways, Peel and Rushen Castles, Birdlife, Beaches, Countryside, TT Festival	

From the 1890s to the 1960s, the Isle of Man was a major British domestic tourism destination. Around 95% of tourists still come from within the British Isles. However, from the mid-1970s onwards, visitor arrivals began to fall, to levels around one-third of past levels. Similar declines in tourist spending, available bed-spaces and length of stay, are recorded. Stagnation has persisted for over two decades, despite initiatives to revitalise the industry. Today, tourism is only the sixth biggest sector of the island economy, creating around 5% of GDP and 14% of jobs. The offshore finance industry now accounts for the bulk of local economic activity, 23% of jobs, and 36% of GDP (Isle of Man Government Digest, 2010).

#### 4. Research findings

Interviews revealed that stakeholders on the Isle of Man had highly positive attitudes towards tourism. Despite long-term decline, the local tourism industry is viewed as bringing significant, relevant and largely positive (with few negative), economic, environmental and social impacts. These help to diversify respective island landscapes, contributing to the island as an attractive and viable place to inhabit. Hence, findings were also of concern at continued industry decline: something expressed by all participants. The benefits brought by tourism were seen to be placed under threat by this decline. In many cases, they were thought to have already reduced. All interviewees thought that the tourism industry had capacity for future growth, wished to see this, and believed that continued investment in the industry was a good thing. Indeed, greater investment in promoting local tourism was desired by a majority. Future emphasis was sought on natural and cultural landscapes considered unique and the island's main source of tourist attractiveness.

These findings will now be looked at further, before implications for tourism decline management, are discussed.

##### 4.1. Impacts of tourism

Interviewees shared common perspectives of tourism in the Isle of Man as bringing many advantages. These were described in terms of economic, environmental and social contributions of the industry, as shall be briefly outlined.

The economic benefits of tourism to the Isle of Man were thought to be both positive and significant by all interviewees. It was expressed that economic impacts benefitted the entire island through employment and increases in government revenue. This in turn could be used to support community infrastructure. Tourists themselves supported a wide range of facilities available on the island through their spending. Beyond paying for upkeep of visitor attractions, which residents also use,



benefits to transport services and shopping facilities were discussed. A majority of respondents believed that tourism played an important role in the island economy and that industry growth would be desirable. It was thought that more tourists would bring greater benefits and should be encouraged.

It's not just the increase in the share of tax from what they spend on the island. The way I see it more tourist spending would increase government income as well as the local hoteliers and pubs and restaurants and whatever. (P, Attraction Manager)

I know for a fact that they spend a lot. You might not think it but it would be different if they didn't come; places would close. (N, Tourism employee)

That is why you need the visitors... There aren't enough of us (island inhabitants) to keep things going. (V, Accommodation Manager)

Secondly, tourism could be seen to contribute to the diversity and vibrancy of local cultural and natural landscapes. Economic input from tourism was thought by many participants to be a source of funding for protecting natural and built resources. Furthermore, visitor interest generated awareness amongst the public and politicians, which could assist conservation.

It is the fact that you can say this is something tourists visit that is something they enjoy which makes them (government) have to appreciate and look after more. (J, Conservationist)

Yeah and also awareness, that's also the key. If people don't know there is anything there to look after then why the hell would they look after it? I guess, yeah, money and awareness for us from tourism. (K, Conservationist)

There were meanwhile, few negative comments about impacts of tourism on the natural environment. These tended to be reserved for specific policies or niche groups, and qualified by comments that the majority of visitors were environmentally sensitive. Indeed, two conservationists believed the tourists were more so than local inhabitants, who took environmental resources for granted. Hence, all interviewees largely disagreed when asked whether tourists caused environmental problems or would bring them if numbers increased. Opinion seemed to be that the island could handle more tourism without environmental harm, and that if problems were to emerge, they would be dealt with.

I don't think there will ever be enough boats (to cause disturbances to marine wildlife) and by the time that happens there should already be codes of conduct to pre-empt. The impacts are pretty well known so would pre-empt. So yeah tourism is good. (K, Conservationist)

I think I'd like to see us moving towards that and then worry about it rather than worry about it in advance. (P, Attraction Manager)

Thirdly, social benefits of tourists hosting were discussed at length by participants. Much cited was the added atmosphere, social space, social variety and social opportunities, which tourists bring to the islands bars and clubs. Discussion was of domestic tourism sharing public spaces and experiences with visitors who helped to create a convivial and holiday atmosphere. Distinctions were frequently made between the vibrant summer season, and quieter winter period; with participants often stating how much they looked forward to having visitors about. Examples of migrants moving to the island, friendships, business partnerships and romantic relationships, between hosts and guests, exemplified the sociocultural exchanges getting stimulated. And stories about sexual encounters with tourists were recounted. These were novel, memorable, exciting and positive events. Such interactions appeared to be made all the more possible because of the anonymity of encounters with tourists, in an otherwise small, closely knit community; discussed by some in terms of being restrictive and homogenous. For instance, sexuality might be suppressed for fear of being subject to "gossip".

All the bikers are everywhere having a nice time and it gives the town a busy feel... I'm really sorry the day after they've gone. (J, Conservationist)

A visitor is in the pub; finally someone can flirt with not related to! (S, Resident)

There were two of them (tourists) in the pub... Took him home with me (laughs). The next night went back and got his friend! (R, Resident)

I hate how everybody knows all your business; nothing is private. (KA, Resident)

Other respondents discussed affirmative emotions of seeing others enjoy their locale, positive social interactions with visitors and appreciation of the extra bustle created. The added atmosphere of the summer season was a welcomed contrast with the quieter winter period. Triggering memories was important for residents—whether reminding them that they live in an attractive location and, hence, feeling fortunate they do so or bringing back nostalgia.

Ramsey on a summers day; it only takes a few tourists wandering round and you feel like you could be in the south of France. (S, Resident)

Reminds me that I live here in this place people want to come on holiday, how lucky I am I actually do live by the sea everyone wants that and it is two minutes from my door and I don't even notice it's there now in a way, so, so they coming, it reminds me. (C, Retired Accommodation Manager)

It is lovely to see the kiddies playing on the beach. It used to be full of kiddies years ago and I'd take my (x) down and sit under the pier... reminds me of that time. (B, Resident)

#### **4.2. Consequences of tourism decline**

Research highlighted the largely positive assessments of local tourism by Isle of Man stakeholders across economic, environmental and social dimensions. Accordingly, a downturn in tourism was believed by all participants to undermine such positive impacts.

Economically speaking, many examples were given of closed shops, hotels and other tourist focussed facilities. At the same time, some respondents worried that the increasingly limited range of island facilities could disappoint visitors and potentially damage the tourism industry. Two industry managers described the industry as at risk of losing “critical mass” and becoming unviable in terms of adequate infrastructure or bed-spaces to host tourists. Moreover, the state of decline of town centres, viewed as increasingly littered, dirty and with many empty shops, was a source of disappointment for many residents. Tourism decline was henceforth described as something of a vicious circle; reduced economic impacts undermining investment in the industry, predicating further loss of competitiveness and decline.

I haven't got a job if tourist numbers go down... local people don't use the trains, if tourists go down I don't think, (pause), they cost a lot, I don't think they can keep it up. (A, Tourism employee)

I am concerned we seem to be gaining fewer visitors each year which in my opinion leaves the economy quite vulnerable. (S, Resident)

Douglas is very ordinary really; you have so few shops it isn't even a small town across. It probably does not give a good impression to people getting off the boat and then if they stay there. (P, Attraction Manager)

I think that is why (tourist numbers are declining); because the civic centres are quite run down and for most visitors that is what they see, not the country. (N, Tourism employee)

Eventually we will get ourselves into the situation where we (can't) have (tourists) whether we want to or not because the infrastructure just won't be there. (U, Politician)

Regards the environmental dimension, tourism decline had for a significant minority of respondents, caused natural, cultural and built landscape damage—through loss of architecture and facilities replacement. Respondents talked about the loss of historic buildings, hotel and leisure facilities. Others were disappointed by habitat loss and scenic damage. It was clear from discussion that such facilities loss and landscape damage also had social impacts, such as restrictions on indoor and outdoor leisure opportunities. There was feeling that such changes had made the island less unique, less attractive and severed links to the past. By contrast, an elderly resident remembered the diverse facilities associated with tourism in the past including many activities provided such as dances, tennis and plays. These, and the social interactions and associated atmosphere, were all missed.

If you could have seen it: all the way down to the beach it was boarding houses, shops at the bottom all along the terrace... It's not the same now they've all gone and they're going to pull the rest down now aren't they but it does need it now to look at the state of it. It was beautiful, lovely, really lovely. (B, Resident)

They closed the Grand Island (hotel) last year. It isn't just the loss of a historic building, or that they are just putting up a load more flats we don't need, but it was a facility for all the community... school concerts held there... now they have nowhere to go. (J, Conservationist)

If they (developers) had their way, they would turn the whole island into one big housing estate... They have done it to Jersey, it is (now) a horrible place... and they are letting it happen here. (X, Resident)

Socially speaking meanwhile, just as sharing the island with outsiders appeared to bring a sense of affirmation for many participants, loss of tourism had brought one of rejection. A heightened sense of peripherality emerged because of reduced outsider interest. All interviewees regarded off-islanders awareness of the Isle of Man's existence limited. At best knowledge was of few attributes; typically, unfavourable ones centred on offshore finance and social conservatism. The wider political, economic and cultural limitations of being overlooked were also mentioned. For example, the island's limited ability to defend its political interests in broader discussions.

We are not the Isle of Wight! Oh for God's sake we are not the Isle of Wight! (L, Resident)

Well it certainly doesn't help does it; no one knows we exist which is actually better than the image we have amongst those that do; sort of a cold, wet Jersey with attitudes out of the Wicker Man. (X, Resident)

I mean nobody outside of the Isle of Man knows anything about the Isle of Man, I mean before I moved here I knew TT and that's pretty much it. That's why history and culture (need to be better promoted to attract niche tourists); I knew nothing about them... We get a lot of tourists asking us about it, saying they never knew there were whales and dolphins in Manx waters. They are kind of amazed by it. (K, Conservationist)

I came here from England and I was amazed at how ignorant I was about the Isle of Man when I got here. (P, Attraction Manager)

How did I know you had birds on the island? There's no RSPB here and I assumed you've no protection or are even bothered about; the impression you get from the magazine and sources is a negative one. I am actually very impressed and I think it is a real shame, real shame, not to recognise that. (D, Tourist)

We have a big challenge trying to get our voice heard. (U, Politician)

They don't understand how things affect the Isle of Man... Small decisions which if we don't inform them and say 'look hang on and think what this might do to us', can have massive ramifications here. (Z, Politician)

Ignorance of the island was perceived by residents to rob them of their identity, as the Manx nationality is little recognised in wider contexts, such as job application forms. Furthermore, vocal and often offensive stereotypes about the Isle of Man had been encountered by a significant minority of participants. These serve to undermine identity and generate negative emotions.

You say 'I'm Manx' and people just look at you like you're crazy. To most people that doesn't exist. Even after I explain it they just say; 'so you're English'. (S, Resident)

It's horrible the way people see the Isle of Man. I hate it. (A, Resident)

I introduced myself, and first thing was asked: 'Oh so is your father also your brother then and your mum your sister? You're all interrelated over there aren't you?' I was so angry I just wanted to leave. (N, Tourism Employee)

#### **4.3. Future of tourism**

Awareness of the positive impacts of tourism, and concern for these being further reduced through continued industry decline, explained why all interviewees desired a revival and expansion in the industry. Creating jobs and generating revenue was much discussed, particularly in light of wider economic slowdown on the island, for instance, comment on employment uncertainties in the financial sector. Economic diversification was commonly mentioned. Tourism was additionally viewed as having an educational role. Stakeholders described how they hoped tourism might help generate awareness of the island abroad, and reposition it in a more positive light. Such a role was especially valued in light of the negative results of ignorance about, and stereotyping of, the Isle of Man, encountered by many residents.

Maybe they will go home and remember nice things about us. (L, Resident)

Nevertheless, the island's current tourism image was viewed as not successfully challenging this awareness deficit. A lack of investment, in terms of financial, but also human resources, was commonly discussed and criticised. Frustration was at a perceived lack of attention from government: perhaps distracted by other economic sectors seen as more glamorous and valuable a number suggested. These also argued that such assessments were flawed, with tourism a proven industry, whereas sectors such as film, were not. Moreover, that purely economic assessments failed to appreciate the wider social and environmental impacts of tourism.

We seem to be gaining fewer visitors each year, which in my opinion leaves the economy quite vulnerable. (S, Resident)

Is it really a good idea to be so dependent on the (one) industry? (V, Accommodation Manager, Isle of Man)

If you see in terms of the multiplier effect, tourism is still a major part of the economy. (NN, Attraction Manager, Isle of Man)

Description was that underinvestment had reduced marketing effectiveness, allowed tourism infrastructure to deteriorate and reduced collaboration opportunities; with resulting conflicts, missed opportunities and competing strategies all illustrated. Comparisons with other islands which had larger tourism budgets were drawn. Likewise with tourism campaigns conducted elsewhere and held up as examples of better practice. Interviewees also made clear their desire for more emphasis on cultural and natural tourism in light of the uniqueness and quality of these, and their likely appeal to realistically attractable niche tourists.

There are plenty of people who would appreciate all the nature and beauty we have if they knew about it... as good as the national parks and as you probably know, they get phenomenal visitor interest. (T, Conservationist)

There is no doubt that it is a beautiful place, it is a beautiful place and that is why people keep coming back. (K, Conservationist)

(Reviewing the Isle of Man tourism website during interview) No mention of nature, they have put culture in, is just a few lines... nothing at all on the fauna, few bits about birds, mammals – it's just hares. (P, Attraction Manager, Isle of Man)

## 5. Discussion

A number of issues emerge from the research that has implications for the management of tourism in small islands, particularly those islands of Northern Europe whose industries are in decline. It is of course acknowledged that experiences of each resort are likely to be unique (Choy, 1992), whilst islands are far from homogenous (Milne, 1992). However, inferences may be broadly drawn. Most significant is highlighting the potential importance of tourism in peripheral locations. Henceforth, the potential destruction which may accompany tourism decline. And the need for increased awareness of this threat, and investment in managing and marketing decline.

Research on the Isle of Man illustrates tourism, despite long-term decline, continues to be viewed as an important contributor to local economic, environmental and social landscape diversity, as it is a source of cultural connectedness. As outlined in the literature, such increased diversity makes the island a more attractive and viable place to inhabit. Briefly, tourism was valued for maintaining facilities, generating government revenue and providing employment. Both more people, and the facilities supported by more people, add to the atmosphere and entertainment opportunities available to residents. Important social space and potential social opportunities are also contributed by tourism. In addition, awareness amongst outsiders of the island, and a sense of connectedness with the outside world, were valued by stakeholders.

Such impacts of tourism strongly influenced stakeholders' civic identity. This identity is made up of one's own enjoyment and pride in living in a place, and is influenced by the range of facilities, quality of environments, social variation available, as well as the pride generated through experiencing external interest in local culture (see also Canavan, 2013a, 2014). For example, tourist attention confirms the attractiveness of a location to a resident. Research additionally illustrated how hosting tourists can trigger positive emotions associated with nostalgia, or a re-appreciation of surroundings sometimes taken for granted.

Findings thus confirm literature which demonstrates the diverse and community wide economic, environmental and social benefits of hosting tourism, and relevance of impacts in a small island context (i.e. Brown, 1998; Keane, 1992; Wilkinson, 1989). Yet, they also highlight the persistence of these benefits and positive stakeholder attitudes towards tourism, even long after the industry has declined, as in this case. Hence tourism may be seen as more than just a short-term route to development, and one which may inevitably outstay its brief welcome. Rather than being a short-term and destructive industry, research in the Isle of Man illustrates potential to contribute to local landscape diversity, cultural connections and overall economic, social and environmental creativity.

Conversely, a reduction in tourists had created a sense of loss for many, and concern was expressed regards continuing decline of the industry. Comment was on the closure of facilities, demolition of traditional architecture, lessened atmosphere and reduced distinctiveness. Additionally, for almost all participants, tourism decline was associated with a growing sense of peripherality, as the island was seen as increasingly isolated from, and irrelevant to, the wider UK. Increasing ignorance about, and negative stereotypes of, the island, was widely felt to result.

Therefore, a contribution of this study is to reveal that tourism decline can lead to a sense of lost attractiveness of place. This is in terms of the economic, social and cultural changes wrought. Traditional roles, crafts, facilities and architectural landscapes were disrupted for instance. Commented on was a sense of loss originating from the closure of facilities, reduced atmosphere

and reduced distinctiveness of local identity. This is also in terms of a widely held perception of rejection by, and increased isolation from, the outside world. Concern was consequently expressed for perceived continuing decline of the industry.

Attention is thus called to the importance of destination management across stages of tourism development; in particular, the post-maturity period. Hence, planners may bear in mind the importance of maintaining a successful tourism sector and adopt some of the many strategies outlined in the literature for combating decline (i.e. Aitchison & Evans, 2003; Baum, 1998; Cooper, 1995), or revitalising destinations which have previously stagnated (Bull & Weed, 1999; Scherrer Alonso, & Sheridan, 2009; Sedmak & Mihalič, 2008; Theuma, 2004). Likewise, strategies which seek to more sustainably manage tourism de-growth and decline (i.e. Canavan, 2014) may counter some of the negative effects of tourism decline, ease the transition to a post-tourism economy, preserve environments, and potentially even revive the industry: if not immediately, then in future when trends towards nostalgic tourism might for example, offer potential.

## 6. Conclusion

The Isle of Man has provided a unique case to investigate attitudes towards a tourism industry in decline. This paper has explored and presented the perceptions of stakeholders in the Isle of Man. Findings depict in residents' own words perceptions of a tourism industry in long-term stagnation.

Research has identified the unique, diverse and persistent benefits of the tourism industry perceived by local stakeholders despite long-term decline. Interviewing revealed the great affection for tourism in the Isle of Man amongst island stakeholders. This was based upon the perceived economic, environmental and social contributions of the industry. In each case, tourism is viewed as having a significant and positive impact, with few negative side effects. Widespread support for tourism translated into a common desire for further investment in and expansion, in order to further benefit. As a result of decline meanwhile, there was a widespread sense of economic, environmental and particularly sociocultural loss, and increased isolation. Together, these served to undermine local identity, and make the island a less attractive or viable place to inhabit.

The Isle of Man therefore serves as a warning of the many challenges faced by post-mature destinations, and underlines the need for investment in best managing what is likely to be a challenging transition.

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