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An Examination of Destination and Business Place Identity along the Wild Atlantic Way (Ireland) Tourism Route

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An examination of business and destination place identities along the Wild Atlantic Way (Ireland) road tourism route.

Wild Atlantic Way

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1. Place identity

Lewicka (2011, p.207) 'despite mobility and globalization processes, place continues to be an object of strong attachment'

'The influence place has on identity is seen as a result of a holistic and reciprocal interaction between people and their physical environment; people affect places, and places influence how people see themselves. Aspects of identity linked to place can be described as 'place-identity' (Lappegard, 2008, p.2)

Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013, p.74) say that the branding literature has a 'Static view of identity, which largely describes it as something to be tapped, defined, and manipulated'. Further Massey (1994) argues that there isn't a single place identity.

According to UNWTO (2015) tourism routes involve the integration of marketing and promotion and the development of a common and truly 'shared' brand - 'co-operation at all levels is necessary as the full story of the significance of the route has to be well interpreted by all relevant parties on the routes even if the visitor travels to only one part of the route'



Place identity – the gaps

The focus in the literature is on tourists and to a lesser extent on community (Gu and Ryan, 2007), this research is concerned with tourism businesses and destinations. Place identity has been shown to be important for tourism businesses as it affects their self- efficacy (Haller, Assaker and Lee, 2013) and their strategies (Mottiar, 2016).

In the place branding literature authors such as Hanna and Rowley (2010) identify the importance of stakeholders, but the focus of their discussion is the place brand and how these stakeholders feed into this. This research is focused on the businesses and county councils rather than the place brand.



2. Context – the Wild Atlantic Way

A 2,500 KM coastal driving route along the Irish Western seaboard

‘The Wild Atlantic Way was devised as a new ‘experience’ and ‘destination’ by Fáilte Ireland to present the West Coast of Ireland as a compelling international tourism product of scale and singularity. It is an over-arching brand which individual destinations and businesses can trade collectively with much greater potential visibility and clarity of message in the international marketplace’ (Fáilte Ireland, 2015, p.7)



3. Research questions

- In what way is place identity evident on tourism businesses and destination websites?
- Has the WAW become part of their online place identity?
- Are there singular place identities displayed on these website?



4. Methodology – content analysis

- Explorative research
- Content Analysis: focusing on the presence of certain features
 - how identity is projected through the use of imagery and narratives
- 'In the case of a place, a website can have a significant contribution in its branding communication process. The dominant role of the website is to communicate (inform users about) the place brand identity, which means to pass on relevant information, from the sender's point of view, about the place' (Flores et al., 2006, p. 280).
- 'a single webpage has the purpose of functioning as an attractive shop-window ' (ibid: 281)
- The Homepage can be the most appropriate unit of analysis because many visitors to a Website decide whether they will continue to browse the site on the basis of their first impression of the homepage (Ha & James, 1998)



Methodology – Process

- Counties & main tourism towns/villages along the WAW route
- Destination county level (6) Destination local level (6) and businesses (52)
- Sample: random, but used selection criteria to ensure variety of business types (accommodation, food and beverage, attractions, activities)
- Development of a coding scheme and collection of data and images
- Researcher verifying process



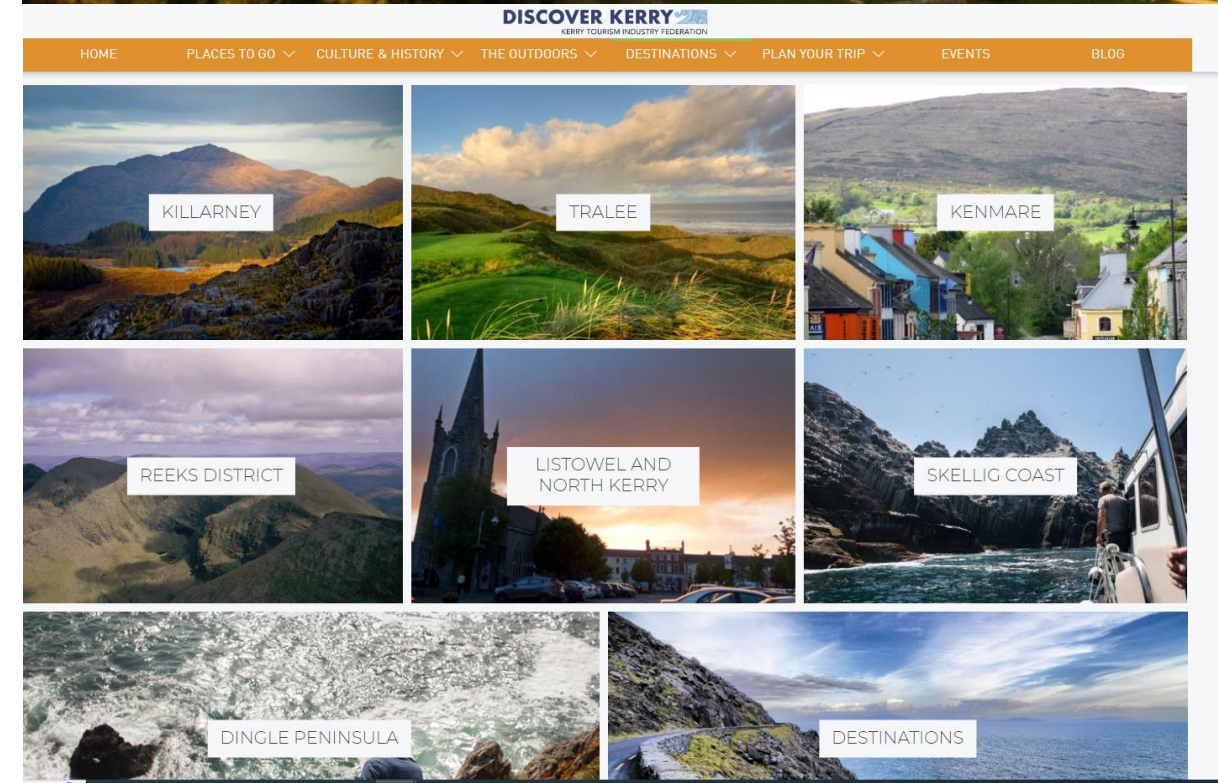
5. Potential Place identities



6.1 Is place identity evident in websites?

Almost all refer to place in some form on their websites


Place is represented in text and in images




Discover Mayo

The jewel of the Wild Atlantic Way, Co Mayo's captivating coastline and hidden landscape - there's so much adventure for you to uncover...


FEATURED
Meet the Artist Event: Public Art Project for Breaffy
 May 11 05:00 pm - May 11 07:00 pm
[Find out more](#)



Wild Atlantic Way
 Wild Atlantic Mayo, fantastic scenery, a fascinating past, and many secret places to be uncovered Mayo has the longest coastline along the Wild Atlantic Way, from Westport and Achill to Downpatrick Head, the scenery, adventure, and fresh ocean air will cast a spell on you to return again and again.



Croagh Patrick
 The majestic Croagh Patrick, a spiritual mountain that rewards those who ascend to its peak with incredible views of Clew Bay and its 365 islands.



Vibrant Towns and Villages
 The towns and villages of Co Mayo are just waiting to be explored from Newport to Ballina, Westport to Belmullet these places are steeped in a history as rich and deep as the land.



6.2. Is WAW part of the destination identity on websites?

On the landing page WAW isn't part of the up-front identity at county or town level it is instead an offering – things to do, logo

County	LANDING PAGE Logo/Tab or Link /Mention
Kerry	Tab: 'Places To Go' - Kerry WAW
Cork	Link: 'WAW - Enjoy the WAW in Cork'
Mayo	Link: 'Things To Do'
Donegal	Link: 'Local Activities'
Clare	Link: '10 Special Attractions to Discover'
Sligo	Mention: 'Scenic Sligo'
Galway	Mention: WAW: Discover the best that Connemara has to Offer'

Local area	LANDING PAGE Logo/Tab or Link /Mention
Killarney	Logo
Kinsale	Logo & Mention 'Welcome to Kinsale Located at the Start of the WAW'
Westport	Logo
Bundoran	Link: 'WAW in Donegal'
Kilkee	Logo
Clifden/Connemara	Tab: 'See & Do'



6.3 Destinations are incorporating WAW

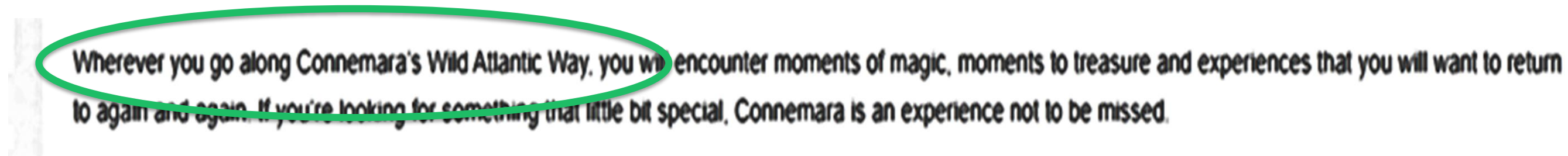
A) Claiming ownership of the WAW

WAW is a 2,500km route but some areas have claimed their own WAW e.g. Kerry WAW, Donegal's Wild Atlantic Way



Top 3 'Must See' Points on the Wild Atlantic Way in Donegal

Also seeing this at the local level: Clifden: 'Connemara's WAW'



6.3b Destinations positioning themselves in terms of the WAW

Central to the WAW:

'The *Jewel* of the Wild Atlantic Way, Co Mayo's captivating coastline and hidden landscape'

Beginning of the WAW:

'Cork is the perfect *beginning* of your adventure',

'Donegal your Wild Atlantic Way starts here'

'Gateway to the Wild Atlantic Way' (Galway)

Welcome to Kinsale 'located at the start of the Wild Atlantic Way'

'Proud to be the first discovery point' (Bundoran)

Distinctive:

'Explore Donegal's *hidden treasures* along the Wild Atlantic Way'

Galway notes that it is the *only city* on the Wild Atlantic Way

Cork says it is the *only county* on both the WAW and the Ancient East routes

Discover Mayo

The jewel of the Wild Atlantic Way, Co Mayo's captivating coastline and hidden landscape - there's so much adventure for you to uncover...

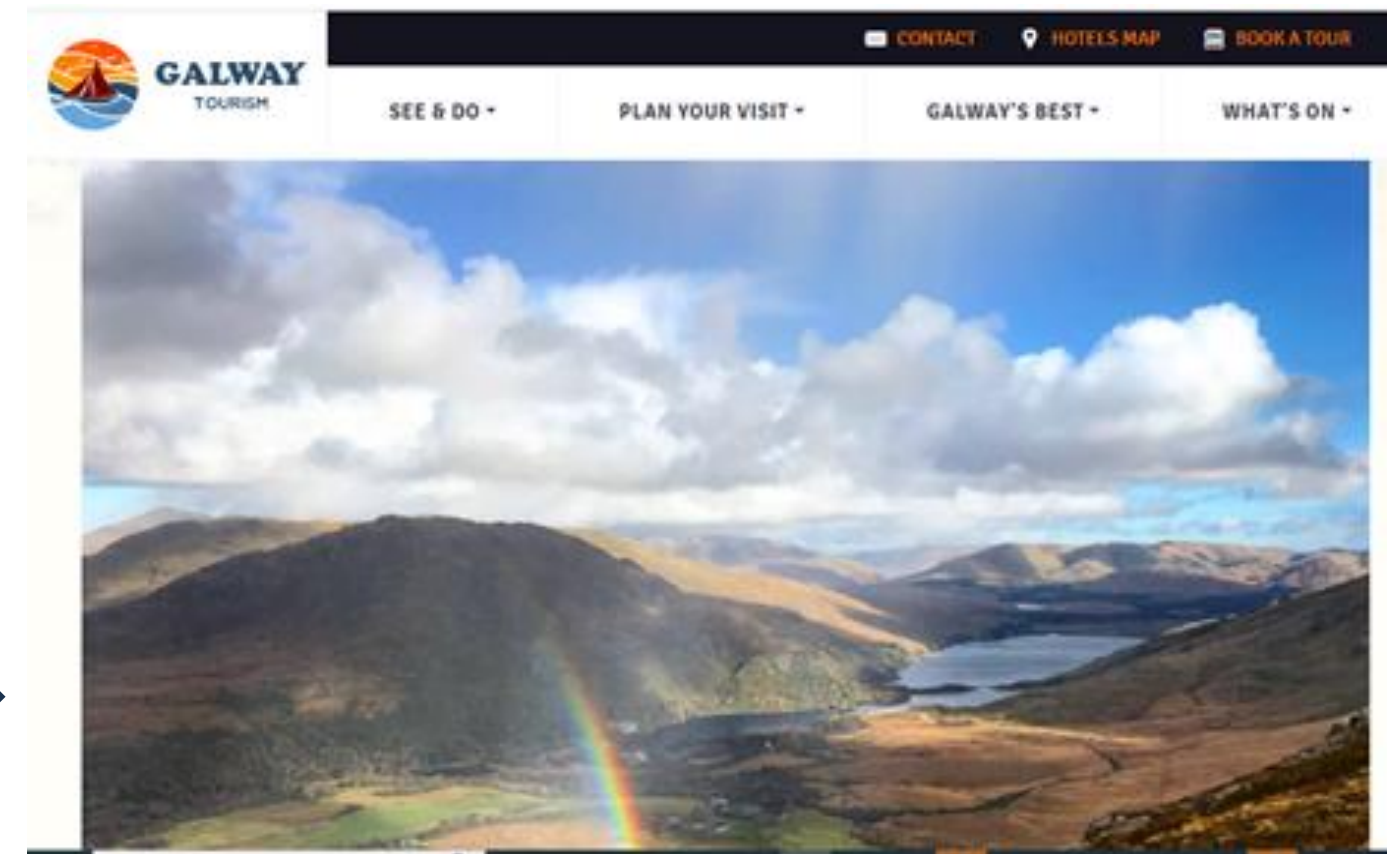
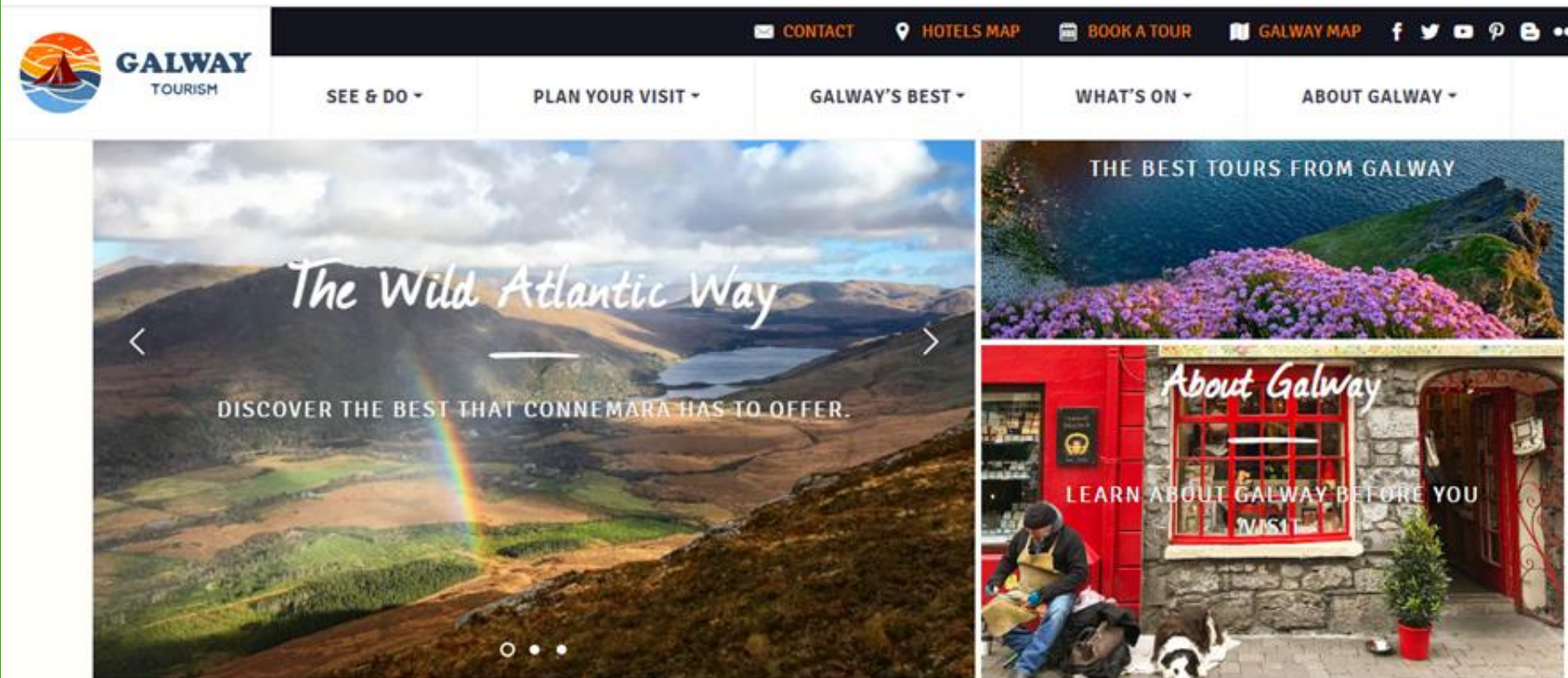


Explore Donegal's hidden treasures along the Wild Atlantic Way.

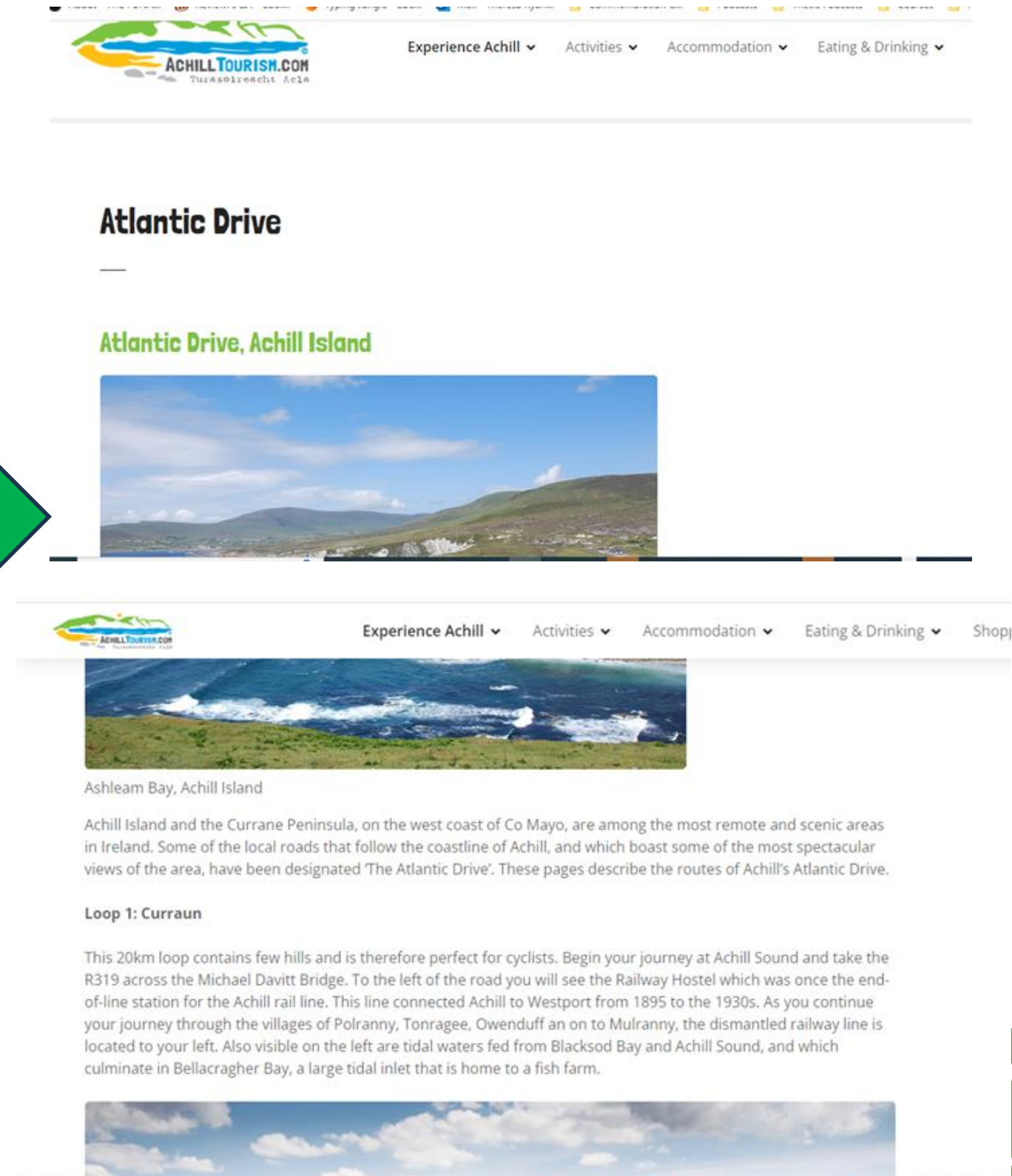
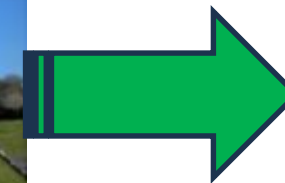
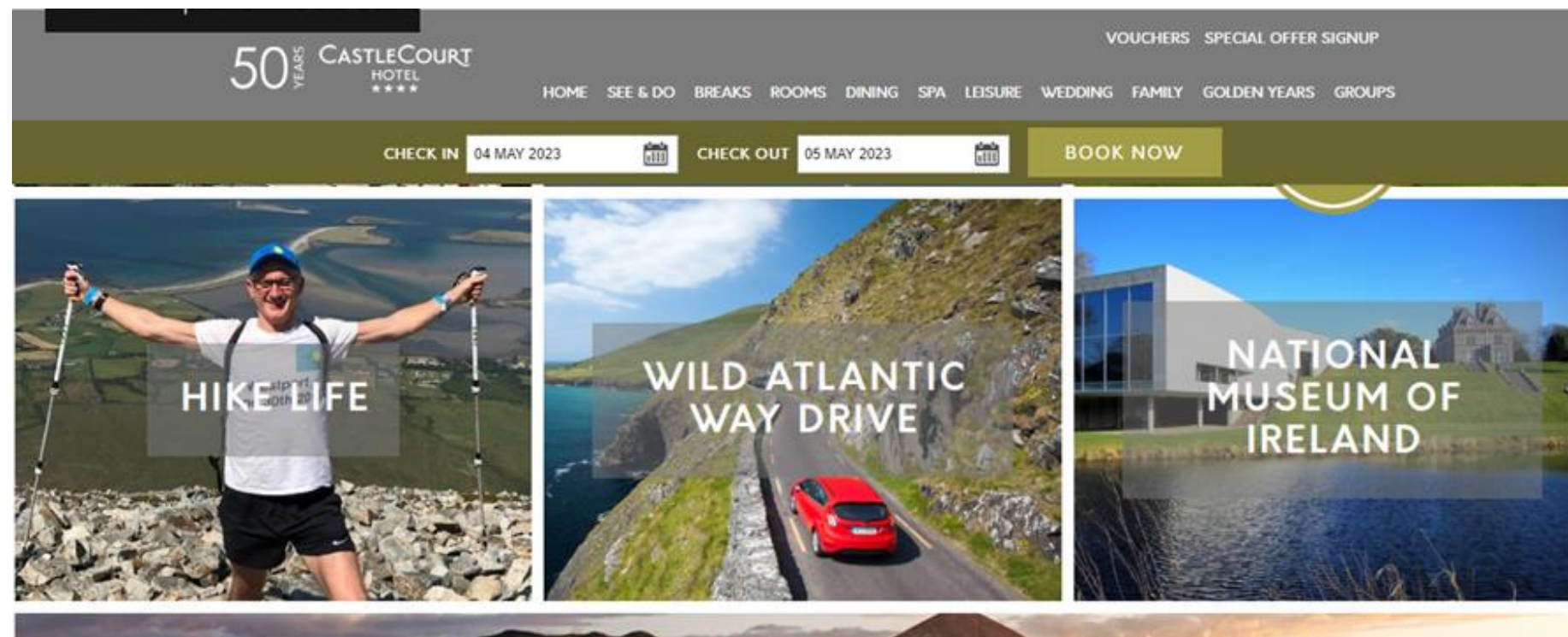
Out at the very edge of Europe, the Wild Atlantic Way stretches for 2,500 km (1,500 miles) along Ireland's western seaboard from Malin Head in Co. Donegal to Kinsale in Co. Cork.

[→ Click here to find out more](#)

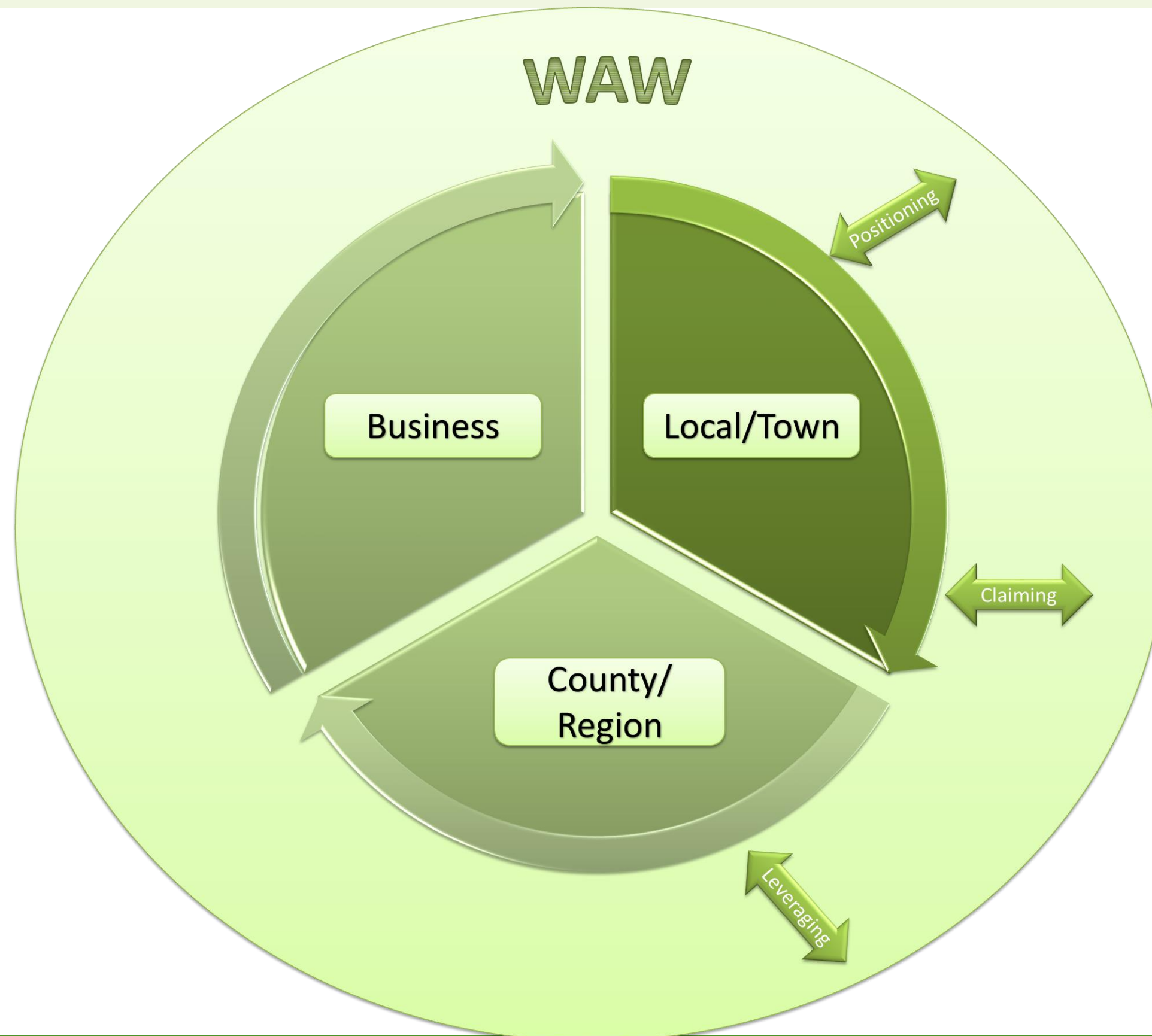
6.3c Destinations Leveraging the WAW



Destinations Leveraging the WAW



Place identity in destinations: complex relationships



6.4 What about tourism businesses? Is WAW part of the place identity on tourism business websites?

62% (31/52) of business do not mention WAW at all or have any links to activities to do on WAW

Typology

- 1.No place identity
- 2.Personal place identity
- 3.Business and locality identity
- 4.Multiple place identities



6.4.1 No place identity

No mention of place at all

Bank House Bundoran

Home | Offers | Rooms | Book a Room | The Bank Bar

From €45 per person per Night

[Book a room](#)

Tripadvisor
Bank House & Bar
Tripadvisor Traveller Rating: 4.5 (124 reviews)
Tripadvisor Ranking: #1 of 17 B&Bs in Bundoran

Recent Traveller Reviews:
"Amazing service from Micheal"
"Bundoran 10...."
"Great!"
"Family trip"
"Great location"

[Read reviews](#) | [Write a review](#)

The Bank House
4,476 followers
[Follow Page](#) | [Share](#)

NEVINS Newfield Inn
BAR • RESTAURANT • B&B
Hearty Food, Fine Ale, Comfort & Welcome

HOME | BAR & RESTAURANT | B&B | FUNCTION ROOM | INFO | CONTACT

Welcome to
NEVINS INN

Nevins a family run business and is one of the oldest premises in the area and was established in the early 1800's.

[CONTACT US](#)



6.4.2 Personal place identity

Description of business, history and owners very connected to place.

'We are a crew of surfers who are stoked to live in Bundoran, the Surf Capital of Ireland, and our lives revolve around the ocean and the waves' (Bundaoran Surf Co).

HOME SURF&STAY SURF SCHOOL SURF LODGE ACTIVITIES GROUPS EVENTS ABOUT N

We are a bunch of committed surfers who love living in Bundoran. Some of us teach surf lessons all the time, some of us work in the shop, and some of us are mostly in the office. Some of us even do a little bit of everything, from teaching surfing to the shop to cleaning the rooms and anything else that needs doing. We look forward to meeting you when you come to Bundoran Surf Co and hope you enjoy being part of the experience.

Pete
Pete surfed all over the world and settled in Bundoran with his family many years ago. Pete is the co owner of Surf Co, having set it up in 2005 with Aidan. Pete can be spotted anywhere in Surf Co – shop, office, on the beach.

Aidan
Aidan is the co owner of Surf Co, having set it up with Pete in 2005. Aidan mostly works in the office and the shop and he lives locally with his family.

Andrea
Andrea is Pete's partner and has been part of Surf Co since day one. Andrea works in the shop and looks after merchandising and display. She is now teaching her own kids to surf.

Josh
Josh is from New Zealand but has called Bundoran home for more than 10 years now. Josh has been working in Surf Co for many years and does a bit of everything but you will mostly find him in the shop.

Ger
Hailing from Strabane, Ger keeps the bookings right and is also a mean Barista in Foam next door to Surf Co. Hands down, the best ever surfer to come from Strabane.

Anthony
Senior instructor at Surf Co and self professed best ever surfer to come from Cavan. Anthony prides himself on teaching people to surf and many people request him time and again.

Aaron
From just over the border in Sligo, Aaron is also an accomplished musician and surfer. Aaron works in the office and shop.



6.4.2 Personal place identity

'Sarah has been working as a front of house Manager in 4 stars hotels around the west of Ireland and will now bring her level of expertise, at home for the pleasure of our guests. Mulranny House Bed & Breakfast was established in 1923 by Martin Hanley Senior. It has been in the same family ever since. The house has positioned itself as a landmark in Mulranny from the beginning'

Mulranny House Bed & Breakfast offers a superb level of accommodation

Located in the village of Mulranny, County Mayo, Mulranny House B&B boast amazing views of Clew Bay and Croagh Patrick. Situated in the heart of the Great Western Greenway, it is the perfect base to explore Westport & Achill Island. We are only a short drive from one of the most iconic highlights of the Wild Atlantic Way, Keem Bay.

All of our bedrooms have sea views and have their own private entrance.

BOOK NOW

Sarah & Nick, Your Hosts: Sarah & Nick have both been working for years in the Hospitality Industry. With years of experience, we can confidently offer our guests the highest quality of service at all times. Nick has trained in France and, since moving to Mayo, has worked in some of the finest establishments in the area. He was recently awarded "Ireland's best sommelier" by the highly acclaimed Food & Wine Magazine. Sarah has been working as a front of house Manager in 4 stars hotels around the west of Ireland and will now bring her level of expertise, at home for the pleasure of our guests.

History: Mulranny House Bed & Breakfast was established in 1923 by Martin Hanley Senior. It has been in the same family ever since. The house has positioned itself as a landmark in Mulranny from the beginning. Housing the Garda Station and the Post Office for a number of years, Mulranny House, formerly known as Achling Guesthouse, first traded as a Bed & Breakfast in the 1950's until recent times. Sarah & Nick have recently extended and renovated the family home to the highest of standards. They are now ready to welcome you to continue the story...



6.4.3 Business and locality identity.

Dual identity of business and locality are important for these businesses

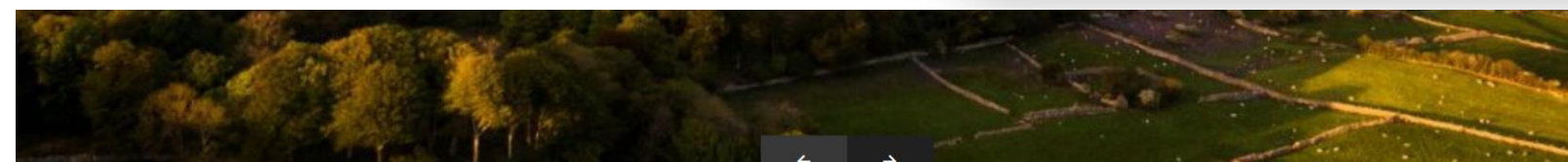
WELCOME TO THE RIVERSIDE HOTEL

5 Star Service | 3 Star Price

The Riverside Hotel is a modern 3 star hotel in Sligo and one of the most popular hotels in the area! Located in the heart of Sligo town, The Riverside Hotel offers spacious and stylish en-suite rooms with free WIFI. Sligo bus and train stations are within a 10-minute walk.

The property overlooks the Garavogue River and many rooms have stunning river views. Breakfast is available and Ripples (located in the conservatory) serve a variety of breakfast and lunch dishes. Along with many delicious lunch and dinner options available from The Mill Bar and Restuarant.

A convenient place to stay to explore the idyllic County Sligo region, whether just the two of you, with family or with friends or on business. And so convenient to get to - just 2½ hours' drive from Dublin and Belfast, 2 hours from Galway and an hour from Donegal... not to mention just 50 minutes drive from Knock Airport with flights from London and across the UK, from Spain, Portugal and The Canaries.



DISCOVER SLIGO TOWN DISCOVER SLIGO COUNTY

DISCOVER SLIGO

Perched on the edge of the picturesque Garavogue River, we are perfectly located for sightseeing the historic and cultural area, playing golf, a spot of fishing or pursuing some fantastic outdoor activities, discovering the Atlantic coast, enjoying a little retail therapy, or exploring the town's restaurants, bars and vibrant nightlife.

DISCOVER SLIGO TOWN

DISCOVER SLIGO COUNTY

Things to Do in Sligo - Town & County

Sligo Tourism is a valuable source of Tourism Information for Sligo Town.

<https://sligotourism.ie/>



6.4.3 Business and locality identity.

'The Diamond Rocks Cafe is a family run business and is located on the cliff walk in Kilkee. The cliff walk (a three mile loop from outside the cafe's door, around the cliffs and down Dunlickey Road) has stunning and spectacular scenery. The views from Look Out Hill on a clear day are of the Aran Islands to the North, Kerry to the South and Loop Head to the West. Views of George's Head, the Pollock Holes, Duggerna Rocks and the Diamond Rocks are some of the sights to take in. When Russell Crowe visited the cafe in 2007, he said that "it's the best cliff walk in the world"! While the Cliffs of Moher are stunning, the cliffs at Kilkee are breathtaking, more accessible and free of charge. The views are amazing and second to none. The cafe is a great meeting place for either walkers, swimmers or just a lovely place for a catch-up. The food is sourced locally and children and families are a great part of our clientele'.

THE DIAMOND ROCKS CAFE

Testimonials

[Home](#) [About](#) [Food & Drink](#) [Functions](#) [Kilkee](#) [Gallery](#) [Contact](#)



FRESH & TASTY QUALITY FOOD IN SPECTACULAR SURROUNDINGS!

The Diamond Rocks Cafe is a family run business and is located on the cliff walk in Kilkee. The cliff walk (a three mile loop from outside the cafe's door, around the cliffs and down Dunlickey Road) has stunning and spectacular scenery. The views from Look Out Hill on a clear day are of the Aran Islands to the North, Kerry to the South and Loop Head to the West. Views of George's Head, the Pollock Holes, Duggerna Rocks and the Diamond Rocks are some of the sights to take in. When Russell Crowe visited the cafe in 2007, he said that "it's the best cliff walk in the world"! While the Cliffs of Moher are stunning, the cliffs at Kilkee are breathtaking, more accessible and free of charge. The views are amazing and second to none. The cafe is a great meeting place for either walkers, swimmers or just a lovely place for a catch-up. The food is sourced locally and children and families are a great part of our clientele. The cafe has a very busy atmosphere and the staff are friendly, courteous and helpful.



6.4 Multiple place identities

In these examples we see a layering of different place identities, the business, the local, the county and WAW

WELCOME TO MULRANNY
PARK HOTEL

Located Near Westport, Mayo



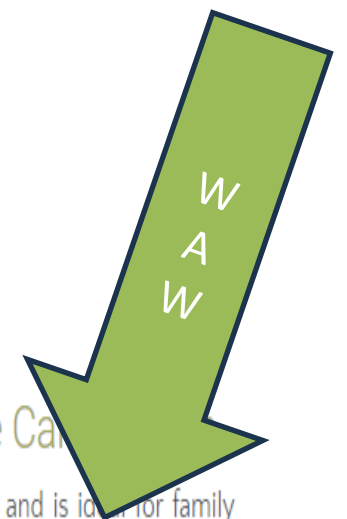
✓ Best Rate Guarantee ✓ Free WiFi ✓ No Booking Fees ✓ Free Car

The 4* star **Mulranny Park Hotel** is perched on a unique site overlooking Clew Bay & Croagh Patrick Mountain beyond. We are located on the **Great Western Greenway** in the most scenic section of the route and the perfect cycling and walking holiday base. We are only a few steps away from the sand and sea of the beautiful **Mulranny Beach** which has

The magic of **Mulranny Park Hotel** is that you don't even have to leave the grounds to achieve the relaxation you've been looking for. Submerge yourself in the **20-metre**

Mulranny Park Hotel is absolutely delighted to be voted as one of the Top 50 Best places to stay in Ireland for 2019. The Fab 50 is the Irish independent annual list of the best places

Mulranny Park Hotel's Gourmet Greenway has been announced a finalist for an Irish Tourism Industry Award in the category of Best Atlantic Way Tourism Experience. The Gourmet Greenway is a food trail devised by **Mulranny Park**

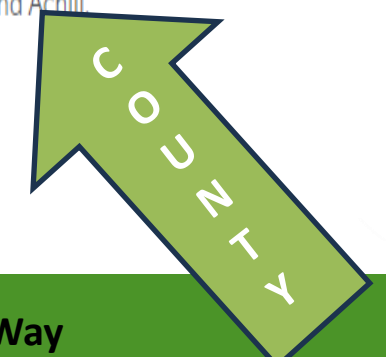


been awarded the coveted blue flag and is ideal for family breaks. Uniquely located on the **Wild Atlantic Way**, this is the ideal base for walking, cycling and as a wedding venue or just a relaxing break and a proven place as one of the best wedding hotels in Ireland.

swimming pool and enjoy the jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, plunge pool and fully equipped gymnasium.

to stay in Ireland. We are very proud to be listed under the fab four stars and family hotels.

Hotel, in association with several Mayo food producers, to showcase the wonderful artisan food in the vicinities of **Mulranny, Newport, Westport and Achill**.



6.4 Multiple place identities

Bay View Hotel Kilkee

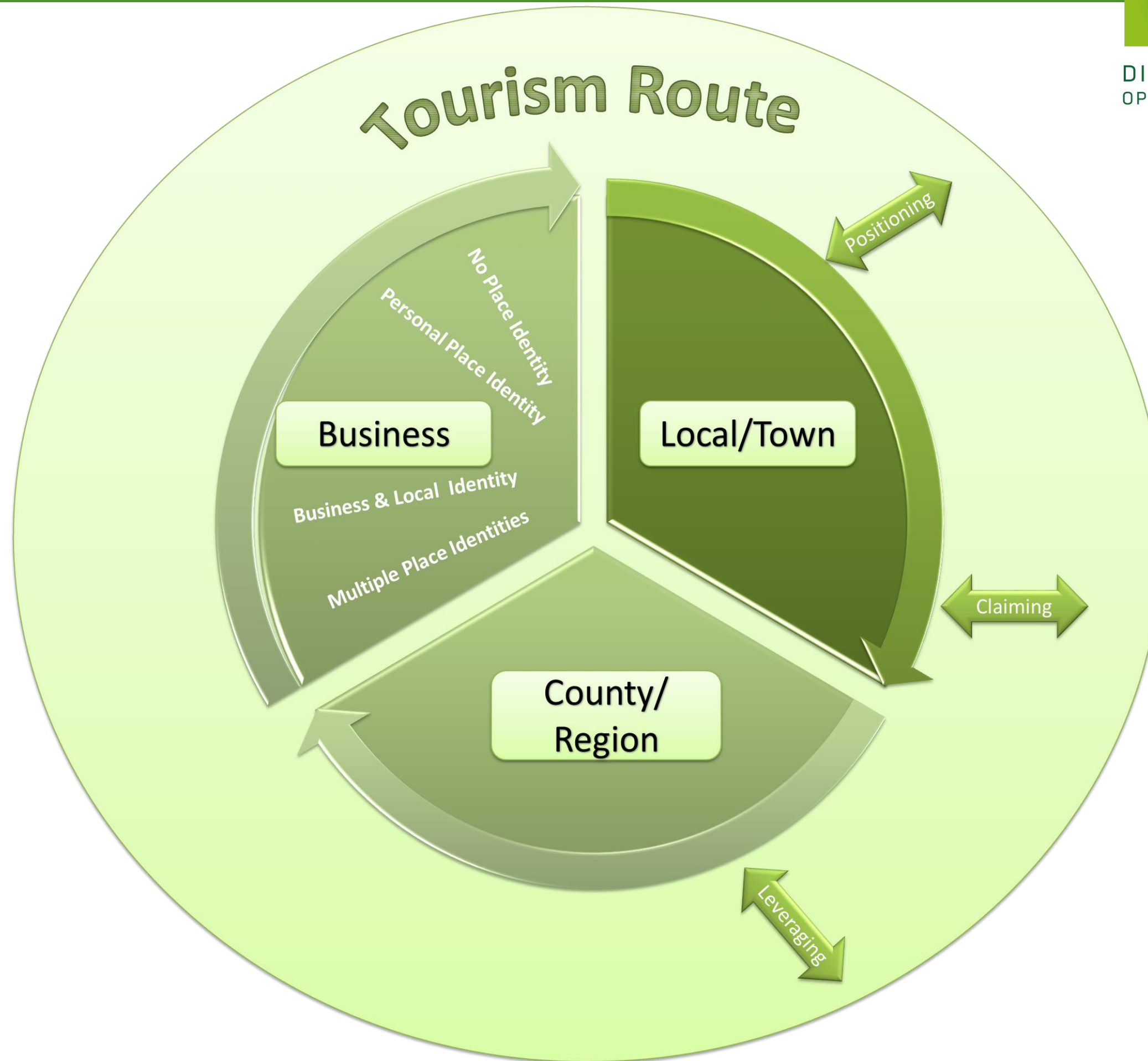
Award winning family run hotel on the Wild Atlantic Way

With breathtaking views of the Atlantic and set against the backdrop of the Wild Atlantic Way in Co. Clare, The Bay View hotel has been run by the Hickie Family since 1883. Whether you are here to explore the Wild Atlantic Way, Loop Head or just look to unwind with a few days away a genuinely warm and friendly Irish welcome awaits you on arrival.

[Book Now](#)



**Towards a model
of business
and destination
place identities
on tourism
routes**



Analysis

Destination identity is more focussed on the county and incorporates WAW more clearly than the tourism businesses do.

Massey (1994) and Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) note place identity is not static this research shows further that it is not singular and multiple identities can be evident.

It also shows that while WAW is clearly evident on the destination websites it is primarily in terms of an add on of things to do. Destinations then leverage, position themselves or take ownership of it so we argue that it is different to other components of their identity.

Different types of place identities have been highlighted among tourism businesses

Clear implications for the route tourism development of WAW

- Place identity is an important element
- This is not permeating through the destinations and businesses' identity which may have implications for the WAW brand and tourists
- Potential for lots of future research





Thank You!

Ziene Mottiar and Theresa Ryan, School
of Tourism and Hospitality
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