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Building Co-operation between Tourism and Culture in the West of Ireland

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Redressing regional imbalance is now a key challenge in Ireland. Dublin is the destination of choice for more than two fifths of the market and the number of visitors holidaying outside of the Dublin region has declined significantly between 2003 and 2009. One way of redressing regional imbalance is to harness the tourism potential of the cultural sector. Spread throughout the regions is a wealth of cultural activity and a well developed infrastructure of venues staging vibrant arts activity of international calibre, be it in visual arts, film, literature or the performing arts. This activity engages 2.3 million Irish citizens (66% of the adult population) who participate in the arts annually. Currently, however, this cultural activity is only modestly engaging visitor populations. It is not effectively integrated into the offerings of the tourism sector.

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The tourism literature that has investigated co-operation and networking between firms and stakeholders has predominantly focused on co-operation within the tourism sector. However the nature of the tourism sector means that there are significant linkages between the tourism sectors and others such as retail and the arts. In current difficult economic times the necessity of maximising the economic benefits of international tourists in rural destinations is greater than ever. And yet there are challenges for firms attempting to cross the rubric of distinctive sectors to develop inter-firm relationships.

Galway is a hive of artistic activity but the development of cultural tourism in Galway as a concept, product and brand is hampered by poor connectivity between the tourism and arts sectors. This paper reports on the initial findings of a project which has identified the level and type of collaboration that exists between tourism and arts providers in Galway, the obstacles that need to be overcome and initiatives that will be instigated to foster inter-sectoral relationships. The research involved key informant interviews and a survey across both sectors. The findings are especially relevant for Galway, but they also have implications and are relevant for many rural destinations. From a national and policy perspective the findings should inform discussions on how to harness linkages between these two sectors to encourage the further development of tourism and the arts in the regions around Ireland.

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Building co-operation between Tourism and Culture in the West of Ireland

Paper presented at the 9th Annual Tourism & Hospitality Research in Ireland Conference (THRIC) June 2014

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1. Introduction

The potentially symbiotic relationship between culture and tourism has been acknowledged by both practitioners and academics since at least the late 1970s (Tighe 1986). Recent decades have seen a growing awareness of the importance of arts and culture as attractions and motivators for tourism as well as a growing use of culture as a mechanism for signalling destination distinctiveness. Essentially, culture and tourism have come to be viewed as powerful agents of economic growth and as vehicles for fostering appreciation of regional diversity (Europa Nostra, 2006). This has been the case in Ireland as much as elsewhere. In line with the growth of cultural tourism activity has been a substantial increase in the literature on the topic of cultural tourism. Some of this has examined the role that cultural tourism plays in destination repositioning and urban regeneration. A great deal has focused on the consumption of cultural tourism products and the role that cultural motivations play in driving participation in tourism activity. Relatively little attention, however, has focused to date on questions related to the production of cultural tourism products and experiences. It is this topic that concerns this paper. It asks questions about how products, activities and experiences created and produced in the ‘cultural’ sector become integrated into the workings of tourism production. Specifically it is interested to investigate if, how, and why tourism producers develop co-operative relationships with cultural suppliers to enhance destination supply and attractiveness. It begins by briefly contextualizing recent developments in cultural tourism before going on to review literature on participatory and co-operative approaches to developing tourism destinations. Empirically it draws on the findings of study undertaken in 2012 in two destinations in the West of Ireland: Galway/Connemara and Westport/Clew Bay. Following a discussion of the findings, academic and policy implications are drawn.

2. Cultural tourism

Hughes’ (1987) prediction that strategies for future tourism development might include a tourist product centred on culture has been proven accurate. Internationally, cultural tourism is now an enormously important market segment accounting for some 360 million international trips a year or some 40% of global tourism (OECD, 2009). It is increasingly used as a strategy to restructure economies and to differentiate place through city re-imaging and destination repositioning. Its rise has been further fuelled by a series of factors including the growth of what Pine & Gilmore (1999) have called the experience economy, a development manifest in tourism terms in the evident increased demand for experiential tourism, with mere products and services no longer enough to satisfy the needs of sophisticated and mature consumers. Meanwhile, increasingly affordable and flexible transport options have played a significant role in the advent of multiple annual holiday taking, the rise of short-breaks, and the attendant rise of cities as favoured tourism destinations. While rural places are implicated in tourists’ search for cultural experiences, it is most obvious in cities. As Hoffman, Fainstein, & Judd (2003) have written, urban

destinations are on the rise and culture is the source of urban attraction. Notwithstanding the recent economic downturn, these factors continue to make cultural tourism one of the largest and fastest growing segments of global tourism.

In terms of understanding cultural tourism, much of the literature focuses on aspects related to its consumption. Efforts have been made to conceptualize, *inter alia*, the tourist who engages in cultural tourism, their modes of engagement, underpinning motives and ensuing behaviors (McKercher 2002). Smith's (2009:3) definition of cultural tourism reflects this emphasis in the literature, suggesting that it can be usefully thought of as a 'passive, active and interactive engagement with culture(s) and communities, whereby the visitor gains new experiences of an educational, creative and/or entertaining nature'. Meanwhile, what passes for cultural tourism production remains relatively under researched. Certainly the growth of cultural tourism production and the extremely diverse nature of supply have been noted (Smith, MacLeod & Robertson 2010). Equally, researchers like Hughes (1996) and Smith (2003) have suggested ways of classifying production into sectors like arts tourism, theatre tourism or creative tourism. More recently, Hughes and Allen (2010) have examined how entertainment fits into broader tourism supply, however, they do so from a consumer perspective. Thus, much scope exists for furthering understandings of how production activities normatively associated with cultural producers, be they in performing arts, crafts, festivals, literature, come to be produced, packaged and distributed to visiting tourist audiences. This study approaches this question via the literature on co-operative and participatory approaches to tourism development.

3. Developing tourism supply through co-operation

Writing about tourism, Butler (1999) argued that there has been a well-established pattern of integration in terms of developing tourism supply, since tourism became a popular activity. However, as noted by Panyik et al (2011) most of the attention in this regard has been in the planning context. This may be the case, but of late, growing attention has been paid to the role that diverse stakeholders within a destination can interact, partner and network to create new products and approaches to developing tourism (Mackellar 2006, Hjalager 2009). By 2000, Toscum was arguing that the participatory approach to tourism development (was) being perceived as the norm (Toscum, 2000). There is a clear consensus of the importance of co-operation in enhancing tourism supply and aiding the sustainability of destinations (Hall, 2004, Kylanen and Mariani, 2012, Beritelli, 2011, Ewen et al 2007). Hall (2004) for example, highlights the potential for co-operative behavior to be a primary economic driver, where community embedded business networks can underpin successful control over a destination's development (Tinsley & Lynch, 2007).

These networks and co-operative practices can be divided into two broad categories: institutionalized networks that have a formal structure, hierarchy and objectives and; non-institutionalized networks that are informal, abstract in nature, complex and to some extent invisible. Formal, contract-based co-operation originates in the institutional and professional contexts in which individuals and organizations operate, and its outcomes relate not just to the results of co-operative activity but also to the governance of relationships established through the course of the co-operative process (Beritelli, 2011). Informal co-operation, in contrast, can be serendipitous, as Ziakas et. al. (2010, 142) explain, there may in fact be 'no awareness by the agencies involved that they operate as a network and instead ... interactions take place based on an understanding of "who can do what" and "who has what"'.

Such networks have a decentralized structure with no single leader and behaviour is linked to personal interests that are built on personal trust (Ziakas & Costa, 2010). While co-operative behaviour within tourism communities tends to distinguish itself less by formal rules and norms and more by autonomous approaches, there may be evidence of both formal and informal co-operative activities (Beritelli, 2011). On the one hand these may be supported by professional acquaintance and institutional/organizational connections, on the other actors may co-operate if they trust and understand each other, sometimes independently from their organizational connection (Beritelli, 2011). The importance of both formal and informal co-operative practices in achieving development objectives is clearly recognized by Johns and Mattson (2005) and Beritelli (2011) amongst others. The significance of co-operation is clearly apparent, but two key questions that are fundamental to an understanding of co-operation; what drives co-operation and what leads to successful co-operation are also addressed in the literature.

3.1 What drives co-operation?

Often, co-operation is driven by a public sector agency. For example, in the case of the Hungarian Rural Tourism Days initiative, Panyik et al (2011) discuss how this ‘event was “top down” initiated by the Hungarian LEADER Centre and resulted in the largest countryside tourism event in Hungary’. The objective of this initiative was to encourage tourism operators to co-operate to offer discounts on a particular day in the off season in order to promote traditional Hungarian customs, attract visitors to remote rural areas and increase tourist numbers in the off season. Similarly, Bhat and Milne (2008) report on the New Zealand Tourism Board’s destination website which necessitated the co-operation and effective establishment of a network of tourism businesses. Studies like this point to the complexity of such arrangements, with important issues being the centrality of certain businesses in the network, the extent of actual co-operation, and the role played by the embedded and informal relationships between businesses. In the case of Gambia the leader is the local business association which, taking a multi stakeholder approach formed ASSET, an umbrella organization, to collaboratively market to niche tourists (Carisle et. al. 2013).

Equally, co-operation can be seen to be driven by the actions of entrepreneurs. A growing literature has examined the motivations of entrepreneurs who engage in co-operation as well as the effects of their co-operative actions. Greve and Salaff (2003) suggest that entrepreneurs create or use established networks in order to develop their access to necessary resources, competencies, opportunities and various kinds of supports. In tourism, the businesses at issue are generally small or medium sized (Mykletun & Gyimóthy, 2010). Entrepreneurs often involve their families in their businesses and motivations can be driven by lifestyle interests (Getz and Carlsen, 2005). All of these factors encourage the likelihood that entrepreneurs will seek to extend their social or business contacts and networks to generate gains for their business. The small and medium-sized nature of most tourism businesses provides what Wanhill (2000) has referred to as the community underpinnings for entrepreneurship and job creation. This links to Bosworth and Farrell’s (2011, p.91) comment about rural entrepreneurs being embedded in their local areas. Acknowledging this, they argue, encourages a move away ‘from a single minded view of profit-driven entrepreneurship’ and brings ‘the important features of networks, community and embeddedness more centrally into our understanding of a tourism entrepreneur’.

3.2 What factors contribute to the successful development of co-operation?

A variety of factors are identified in the literature as being important in terms of initiating and sustaining co-operation. According to Mykletun and Gyimothy (2010) in order for a network or co-operation to succeed certain qualities such as mutual goals, common interests or passion, altruism and mutual trust are required. Jamal & Getz (1995) note factors such as: stakeholder recognition of their interdependence, perception that benefits will accrue to all co-operative partners, utilization of the skills of a strong convener, and possession and monitoring of a strategic plan. While operational and organizational factors are recognized other, more personal characteristics also play a fundamental role. These can include: strong leadership, common identity, vision, honesty and openness, active listening and the ability to adjust to new situations (Selin and Chavez, 1995).

As is evident in the factors discussed above and in the earlier discussion about motives to co-operate the social context in which this business action is undertaken needs to be acknowledged. As Czernek (2013: 99) notes ‘the willingness to co-operate is determined not only by economic factors and a simple calculation of costs and benefits (although it is essential, especially at the beginning to start co-operation)’ it seems to be that ‘social and cultural determinants’ are also fundamental to its success. Of particular significance is the fact that co-operation according to Nee (1998: 87) is ‘produced spontaneously in the course of social interactions in networks of personal relations’. Therefore co-operative behaviour between ‘... groups in tourism destinations is an interpersonal business’ that does not necessarily follow ‘rational’ principles but rather is an interpersonal business (Beritelli, 2011: 623). As such, fundamental to its success is the recognition and encouragement of the development of these interpersonal factors. Czernek for example, argues that in promoting co-operative initiatives, policymakers need to go beyond economic growth and activity and pay special attention to these ‘qualitative factors, particularly those improving human and social capital’ (2013: 100).

3.3 Expanding tourism supply through co-operation with other sectors

The foregoing discussions make it clear that the issue of co-operation is well established within the tourism literature. However, the focus is almost entirely on tourism firms co-operating with each other. This does not capture the full complexity of how tourism products, experiences and destinations are produced. In reality, many tourism firms co-operate with other non-tourism firms in order to supply a product or service. In some sub-sectors of tourism, cultural tourism being a case in point, co-operation of some shape or form is a necessity. Yet researchers have been slow to specifically investigate co-operative activity involving tourism firms interacting with firms/agencies/actors in other productive sectors. It is the cross-sectoral nature of co-operation that concerns this paper. Focusing on the co-operative interactions between tourism firms and others engaged in culture-related activities, and based on research undertaken in two areas in the west of Ireland the key questions that the research seeks to address are: to what extent do tourism firms engage in cross-sectoral co-operation with arts and culture entities? What factors motivate them to participate in such co-operation? What types of co-operation do they engage in? Are there barriers to co-operation and how might these be overcome?

4. Methods

The paper draws on research that explored cross-sectoral co-operation between the tourism and cultural sectors in the Galway/Connemara and Westport/Clew Bay regions in the west of Ireland. The choice of areas for study was purposeful (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), with both areas being recognised as key tourism areas in a national context. The west of Ireland, is recognised as ‘an iconic region of Ireland, due to the perception of the rugged Atlantic Coast, the wilds of Connemara, the culture and heritage of the islands and the attractions of Galway’ (West Tourism Development Plan, 2008-2010) and the areas of Galway/Connemara and Westport/Clew Bay are major destinations within this region. In addition, the region has a vibrant, well established and well recognised cultural sector encompassing a range of activities including theatre, crafts, visual arts, film, performing arts and arts festivals. In a context where developing cultural tourism has become a key pillar of Irish tourism policy (Fáilte Ireland, 2007), there is a strong policy drive to develop the synergies between the two sectors. Notwithstanding the wealth of tourism and cultural activity in the region, the development of cultural tourism as a concept, product and brand has been hampered by poor connectivity between the two sectors.

A mixed methods research approach, involving in-depth interviews and an online survey, was administered in the tourism and arts and culture sectors during 2012. This paper draws on the findings that relate to the tourism firms and agencies studied: a database of some 25 in-depth, key informant interviews and 75 survey responses. Interview respondents were selected using both purposeful and snowball sampling to identify relevant individuals, enabling the researchers to locate information rich key informants (Patton, 2002). They included representatives from both public and private sectors working in a range of tourism fields. The interviews were loosely structured, enabling the respondents to speak freely, providing an opportunity to gain an understanding of their perceptions regarding the research issues. Designed as ‘guided conversations’ (Johns & Lee-Ross, 1998), they were undertaken in a manner that enabled the researchers to steer the respondents around specific topic areas, in whatever order seemed appropriate at the time. The interviews were taped and typically lasted between 60 – 90 minutes. They were subsequently transcribed and thematically coded.

The survey was targeted at practitioners active in the tourism sector, comprising predominantly of SMEs many of whom were micro firms and operations. Fáilte Ireland made their relevant databases available and circulated the survey on behalf of the researchers. This process was not without flaws and because the survey was distributed via Fáilte Ireland, it was difficult to gauge the total population surveyed. However, the survey resulted in 75 complete and valid responses from a broad range of tourism respondents.

5. Findings

Cognizant of the growing importance of cultural tourism and of co-operative activities that transcend sectoral boundaries in achieving its development, this research focuses on understanding the extent to which tourism firms currently engage in cross-sectoral co-operation with arts and culture entities. Identifying the factors that motivate tourism operators to participate in cross-sectoral co-operation and also understanding what types of co-operation they engage in are also explored. In addition, the barriers to co-operation and how they might be overcome are central to the research. The research is mindful of the fact that cultural tourism can only ensue when the two sectors interact and focuses on enhancing

an understanding of these key areas with the express intention of determining how cross-sectoral co-operation can be done more effectively than at present.

5.1 Do tourism firms engage in cross sectoral co-operation with arts and culture entities?

Almost 70% of the tourism firms studied engaged in co-operation generally, but just 43% said that they ‘currently work or co-operate with individuals or organisations in the arts and/or arts and culture sector’. As figure 5.1 shows, this cross-sectoral co-operation took a variety of forms but tended to be more commonly an occasional activity rather than something that is engaged in frequently.

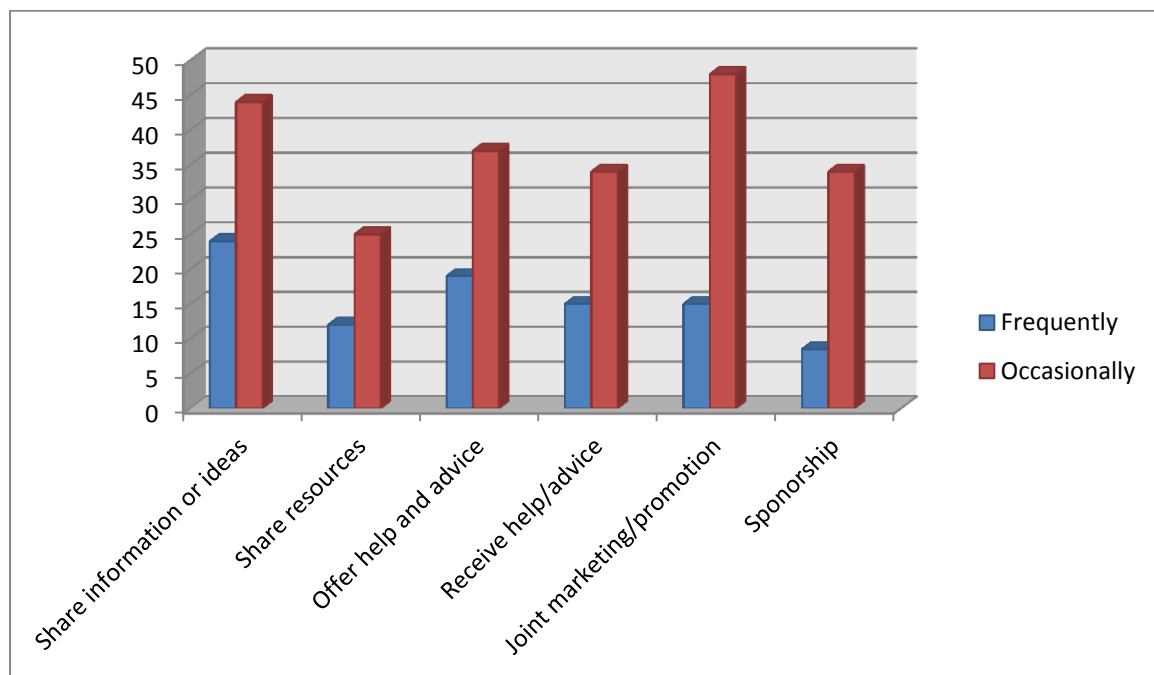


Figure 5.1: Types of cross-sector co-operation

N = 56

The types of co-operation reported stemmed largely from personal interest, knowledge and connections which individuals involved in one sector have with the other sector. Thus it was informal in nature. As one key informant explained, a lot of these connections would be ‘personal’, while another clarified how ‘... a very close working relationship’ and the fact that they ‘know {them} very well’ underpin the kind of co-operative activity they engage in. While collaboration was found to have emerged from both reactive responses and proactive approaches, it can also be seen to have come about almost by accident as a result of modest, individual activities, or gradually emerging as an idea or circumstances transpire. Thus, the findings suggest that modest efforts ‘on the ground’ that encourage dialogue, build connections and develop small scale co-operative initiatives can be scaled upwards as activities snowball and grow, gradually involving more people and resulting in more frequent co-operation. This was particularly evident in the case of the Artists Initiative that has developed along the Great Western Greenway, a recently developed walking and cycling trail built along a disused coastal railway line (it was developed by a local artist and a hotel that

together began to stage exhibitions of local artists' work). This initiative, as one key informant explained '*... fell into place really... it was basically an idea that sprang from one exhibition ... and I thought why not have the exhibition along the Greenway itself. So I did and it went incredibly well so I approached the hotel and asked them if they would be interested ... and they were*'.

Specifically, the types of informal co-operation identified were classified under six headings as illustrated in Figure 1 above. Joint marketing/promotion and sharing information/ideas were the two most frequently cited. The former included: making accommodation or food & beverage referrals; providing 'what's on' information; bundling theatre/performance/visit/entertainment tickets with accommodation; recommending itineraries; selling tickets on behalf of another supplier; displaying promotional materials. The latter covered activities like sharing expertise about such issues as health and safety, fund-raising and dealing with public agencies. Respondents spoke of a range of co-operative activities that included sharing physical spaces (e.g. hosting an art exhibition in a hotel lobby), purchasing services (e.g. employing local creative producers to create marketing material, engaging local musicians to perform in visitor attractions) and in-kind sponsorship (providing accommodation /catering for visiting artists at discounted rates). Some examples of more formalised types of arrangements when people have come together to bundle their products into a package which is then sold to the tourist were identified. The development of walking holidays in Clifden was one such example. Even though such types of co-operation are more formalised, they do not involve contracts or strategic alliances and instead still rely on social norms and trust to ensure that such arrangements occur and benefit all.

5.2 What are the motives for cross-sectoral co-operation?

It is interesting to investigate what factors motivated the cross-sectoral co-operation identified (Figure 5.2). For tourism respondents, increasing visitor numbers was the most important reason (81%), while raising profile was also important (63%). More surprising, perhaps, is the fact that 75% of tourism respondents said that they engage in cross-co-operative activity because it helps the development of their local area. Survey respondents explained that '*the more we help each other the more people we attract to our area, and ... if this can help the wider community then all the better*'. As one survey respondent put it, '*more integration between arts and culture, arts and tourism could bring more tourists to the West of Ireland*' while another explained that they believed it to be '*beneficial to our country and specifically our town to work together*'

This awareness of the broader impact of co-operation was also apparent in the key informant interviews where Galway respondents spoke of co-operation as a '*kind of promotion of Galway as an area*'; recognising that they are '*all together in it ... and whatever they're doing is good for the city*'. Closely related to the strong emphasis on working together to benefit the local area is the related concern to strengthen the area's brand, image and reputation, as one key informant explained, '*we see it as being an experience . What we do is we promote the experience of the city ... As a collective we can, and the advantage to us is we bring people in, we give them reasons to come*' . In Westport, respondents spoke of '*a realisation ... that everybody has to really work together*'; that '*it's not down to one segment or one sector ... trying to promote the town that everybody works together ... (that) is the*

secret'. There is a clear realisation that working together promotes the area and also the experience for the tourist.

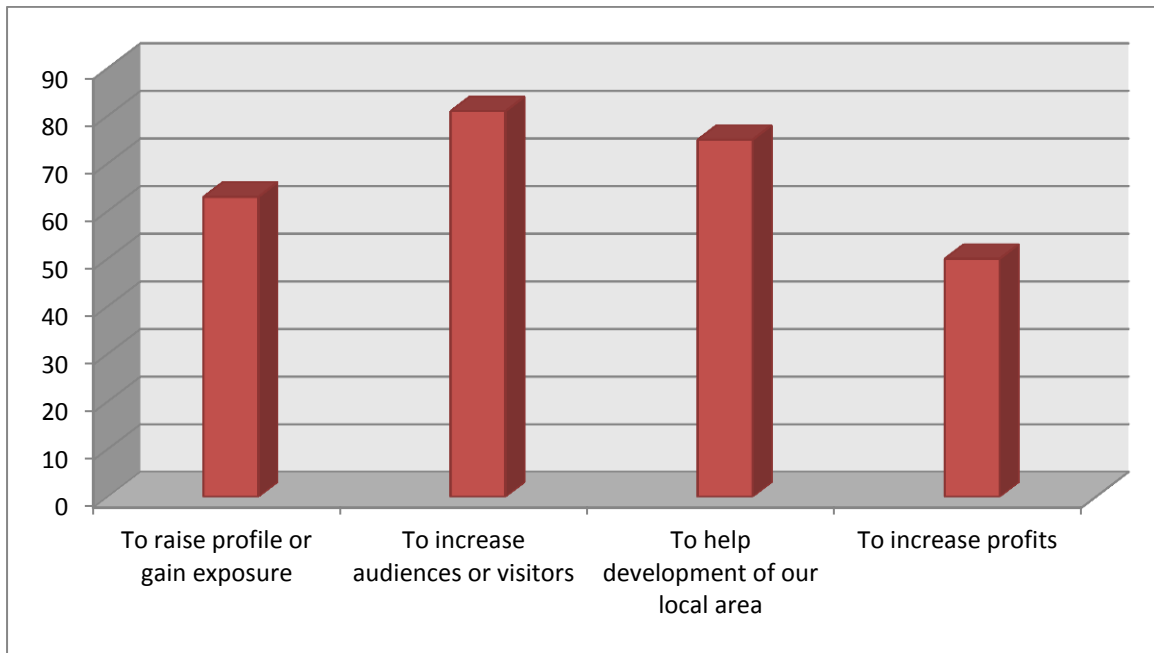


Figure 5.2: Reasons for working with individuals or organisations in the arts & culture sector N = 53

The potential benefits that can accrue when individuals, organisations and businesses begin working together across both tourism, and arts and culture were readily acknowledged in some of the key informant interviews. Here, one respondent explained that because of co-operation *‘the business comes to town and everybody will get a spin-off of it and that’s the way it has to work’*, another also acknowledged the broad impact of cross-sectoral co-operation explaining that *‘everybody pulls together to further the town really’*. While others clarified how they would be happy to promote any business as *‘the more you have to offer in a place, the better it is overall’*.

5.3 Are there barriers to co-operation and how might these be overcome?

It was clear from both the key informant interviews and survey data that tourism firms recognise that working with cultural producers differs quite substantially from working with other tourism operators and that working effectively with cultural producers requires overcoming certain challenges. Respondents were asked whether they perceived any barriers to co-operation and 61% believed that some exist. Foremost among the barriers identified were: a lack of awareness of opportunities to co-operate, not knowing anyone in the cultural sector; and not knowing how to set about co-operating (Figure 5.3). In this context, it is not surprising that a certain degree of scepticism was identified, and among the tourism respondents, there was a sense that the tourism sector was quite different to the cultural

sector. This difference was founded in the first instance in what might be described as value orientation. While tourism firms were confident of the strong business acumen and commercial focus that underpinned their modus operandi, they sometimes believed this to be lacking among cultural producers. Thus respondents commented that people involved in the arts are *'not necessarily business people ... the business side is just not what they are into ... they see it as an unnecessary tack on to their actual job of providing an art experience'*. The data contain much descriptive commentary on the *'artistic temperament'*, *'heads in the clouds'* and *'quirkiness'* of those in the cultural sector. One key informant expressed the view that *'these guys are artists, I mean they are never going to make money you know, they're just arty people'*.

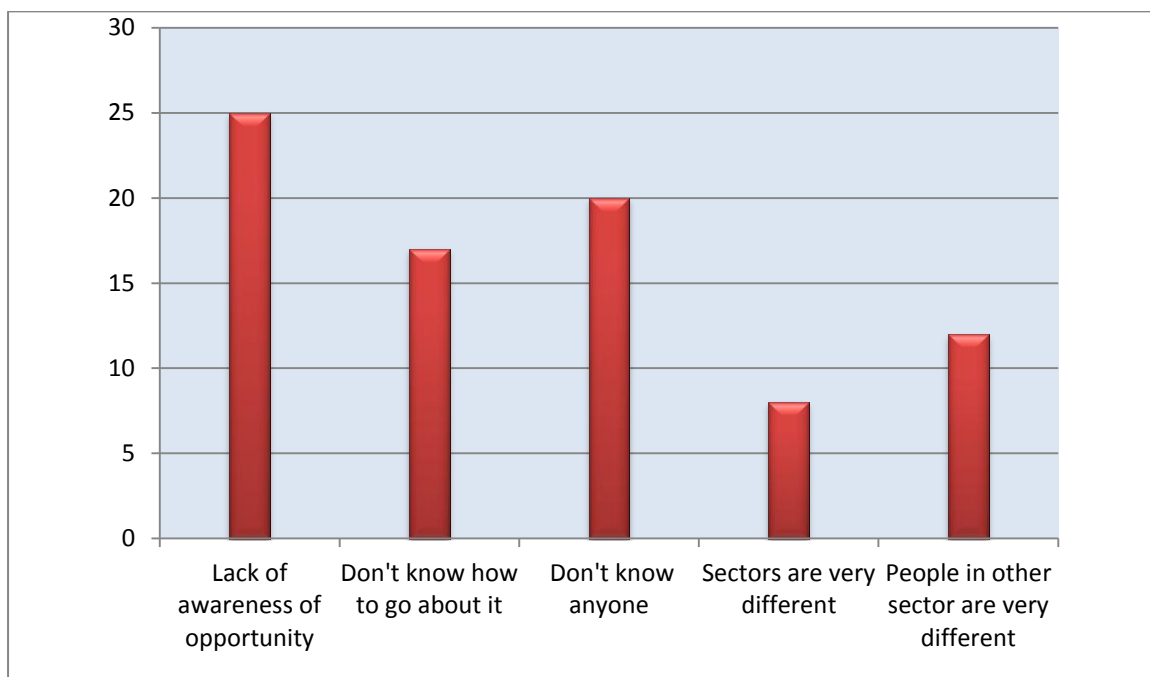


Figure 5.3: Barriers to Cross-Sectoral Co-Operation

N = 75

Differences went beyond commercial matters to the nature of working practices in the two sectors. These differences are manifold and are shaped by factors which range from the nature of the creative process to the financial uncertainties that characterise the arts and culture sector on the one hand and the tight time-lines, packaged, and sometimes reductionist nature of tourism activity on the other. Several very practical examples of these differences came through in the research. Referring to the need for the tourism sector to adopt a sizeable lead-in time to marketing their services, one participant spoke about how tourism actors need to know what the 'product' is in order to sell/promote it, while arts and culture actors may be simply unable to pre-define what the creative form will be, given the need to wait and see what it turns out to be. Other respondents highlighted operational issues from the perspective of offering visitor experiences. For example, while craft producers may be happy for tourists to come and visit their workshop (and purchase their crafts), tourist opening hours must be scheduled such that they do not disrupt the working routine of the crafts person concerned. This can be difficult for tourism providers who may believe that viable tourism offerings must operate on a highly scheduled, routinised basis.

Notwithstanding these barriers, the findings revealed that attitudes to both the prospect and experience of cross-sectoral co-operation are very positive. The survey findings show that 75% of tourism respondents are very open to greater levels of co-operation between the sectors. As one key informant explained *'I'd be delighted to support anything to do with arts and culture, or arts, or music'*. This positivity was also reflected in the survey findings, as respondents claimed *'if something were to happen to promote the closer co-operation of tourism and arts businesses in the West I would feel it would be of huge benefit ... to my business'*. This is clearly an important finding that augurs well for future development. Key interviewees were positively disposed towards the idea of co-operation and readily identified a range of benefits for each sector. Some respondents clarified that they *'wanted to develop relationships with other local businesses so we could create a symbiotic relationship in which we are all going for the same goal'* while another claimed that they *'believe that the different sectors can prove to be mutually beneficial to each other's success'*.

The general positivity to the idea of further co-operation with the cultural sector was further manifest in the diverse range of suggestions that tourism respondents made as to how barriers to cooperation might be overcome and levels of co-operation increased (Figure 5.4). In some of these suggestions, respondents saw their firms having key roles to play in e.g. more joint promotion & marketing initiatives and more networking opportunities. In others, respondents clearly saw the need for other stakeholders, most notably local authorities, public tourism agencies and industry associations to proactively promote co-operative practices by providing forms of encouragement, incentives, funding, mentoring and support. The role that such agencies have to play in shaping a common goal or vision for bringing the two sectors together and in advocating and encouraging leadership in the area was further recognised by tourism respondents.

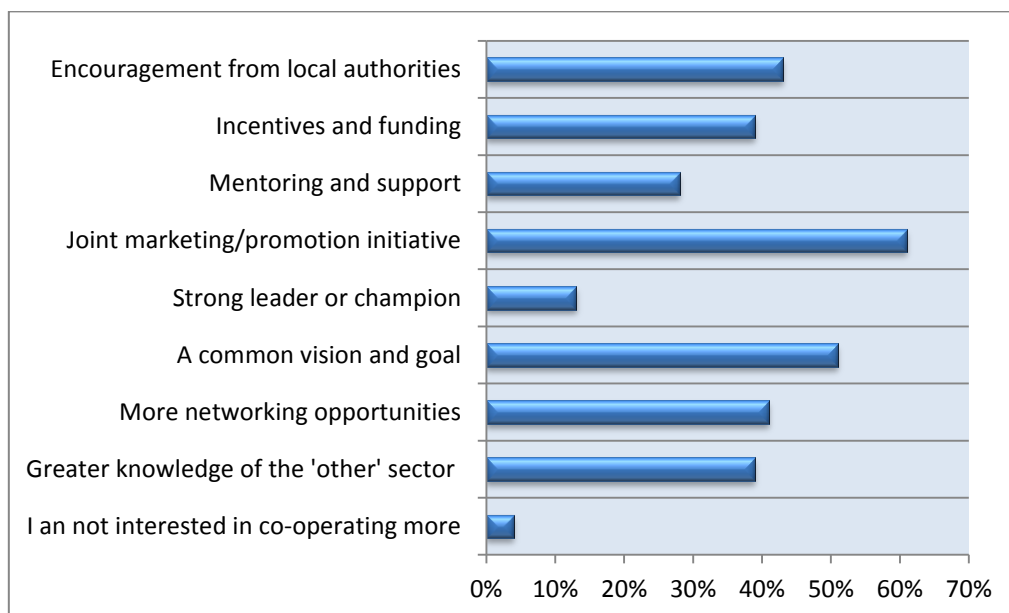


Figure 5.4 How cross-sectoral co-operation might be increased N=75

6. Discussion

In the first instance, the study's findings clearly show that the tourism firms studied appreciate the value of cooperating with other firms in their own sector and regard it to be a sound business practice. They show that while cross-sectoral cooperation with individuals, firms and organizations in the broad area of cultural production was less common, for the 43% of the survey sample actively engaged in cross-sectoral cooperation, the symbiotic relationship between tourism and culture is acknowledged and valued. The types of cooperation engaged in were found to involve largely informal, occasional activities that relied on personal knowledge, networks and associations. Overall, the findings clearly show that for a whole series of reasons, tourism firms have much to gain by aligning their activities more closely with cultural producers. Yet, not all tourism firms are engaging in cross-sectoral cooperation. In terms of practice and policy, this is a key issue in need of redress. This study's findings contribute in a number of ways. They firstly identify a range of barriers to cooperation, perceived or real, that need to be overcome as well as some suggestions as to how these might be overcome. All of the latter advocated initiating some form of dialogue / engagement / networking in the apparent belief that cooperative engagement would develop from that initial communication. Based on this, it would seem then that the key question is how to stimulate engagement between actors in the two sectors. In this context, the study's findings shed some light on this critical question of what drives / stimulates / motivates co-operation.

An important driver is clearly the individual entrepreneur. The tourism entrepreneurs studied engage in co-operation because of the benefits that they believe will accrue, and because of the benefits that they believe will be generated for the destination more broadly. The findings show that tourism firms were most likely to initiate cooperative activities because they increased visitor numbers. Thus, for example, one hotel began exhibiting art as a way of attracting customers. Over time, this proved to function as an attraction in itself and the hotel developed the idea significantly such that now the hotel atrium is used as a space in which art and crafts are displayed on a monthly rotating basis. Similarly in Kylemore Abbey, one of Connemara's main tourist attractions, management began to engage local musicians as part of their showcasing / promotional activities. The approval that this generated inspired them to introduce musical performances into their routine tourist offering as a means of enhancing the visitor experience and of providing an indoor alternative to the largely outdoor experience offered there. These examples show the snowball effect that small examples of co-operation can have. As such examples are noted by the broader community it may be that they encourage others to think about cooperating thus helping cooperative practices to become normalized.

The findings further show that tourism entrepreneurs were likely to initiate cooperative activities because they perceive it to be a means of advancing the development of their local area. This came through very strongly in both the survey and interview findings in respect of several of the research topics. Some of the stated reasons for the openness to future co-operation identified, for example, include '*[I] believe in co-operation for mutual benefit and the greater good*', '*it is good for the area*' '*arts and culture are integral parts of tourism*' and '*sectors are intertwined and [there are] clear interdependencies – it makes sense*'. In line with extant research, the study found that personal and professional relations and

networking were key drivers of co-operation. The firms studied were predominantly SMEs and the locations in which they were operating were small town or rural in nature and this may be significant: as discussed above, the small-scale nature of these areas makes personal contact easier. These findings support Wanhill's (2000) ideas about the community underpinnings of entrepreneurial activity and they equally reinforce Bosworth and Farrelly's (2011) comment about the extent to which rural entrepreneurs are embedded in their local areas and Czernek's (2013) observation that social and cultural determinants can often be as important as economic factors. In fact, the findings broaden our understanding of embeddedness as what is shown is not only that small tourism and cultural entities are tied to the place in which they are located but that they are acutely aware of this and take this into account when making decisions about engaging in cooperation.

Much of the literature focuses on businesses being motivated to engage in cooperation in order to leverage greater access to resources, markets, supports or profits and so the focus is on how cooperation can bring benefits to the firm. However, what this research has highlighted is that these are not the only motivations. Czernek (2013) differentiates between exogenous and endogenous factors that explain differing levels of cooperation in tourist regions and this is relevant here. What this study has identified is that as well as being motivated by endogenous considerations such as profits and increased visitor numbers these businesses are also motivated by the desire to benefit the local area. This consideration could be considered exogenous as there may be no direct impact on the business. So is this an altruistic, corporate responsibility type of action? The answer is of course different for different businesses. For some, there is recognition that improving the destination will have a positive effect on their business. For others, this recognition may be less definite, yet there is an awareness of how the development of both the destination and the business is entwined, and so the objective of improving the destination becomes like an internal objective of the individual tourism business.

The study further found that public agencies like tourism development boards and regional development organisations have an important role to play in fostering co-operative activity. Literature such as Panyik (et al (2011) and Bhat and Milne (2008) highlight the important role of public bodies in initiating and developing co-operation and this role is evident in the study area with projects such as Blaiseadh Gaeltachta which was initiated by Fáilte Ireland as a classification/labelling system to allow B&Bs to indicate to tourists that they can provide a Gaeltacht and Irish language experience. The Crafts Council of Ireland's initiation of a crafts trail in 2011 was another example identified. It established a model trail which enabled visitors to see skilled crafts people at work in their studios and purchase their crafts. It has subsequently been widely implemented across the country including in the study area.

What is also important to note, however, is the fact that while public agencies can encourage cooperation and in some cases develop projects to encourage it, some of the most successful examples of cooperation identified were ones where individuals, businesses, or communities see the value in these initiatives and drive them forward. A good example of this is the Great Western Greenway in the Westport/Clew Bay area: here, combined public leadership at national and county level led to the development of the Greenway trail itself, but it is the work of local businesses, artists and community groups working in tandem that has built upon the initiative and realized further tourism initiatives including the Gourmet Greenway, the Greenway artists Initiative, the Greenway Sculpture and Greenway Adventures. Several public agency key informants interviewed reported running networking events in other areas

with no long-term impact after the event was over. Thus, while it is clear that public agencies have an important role to play in fostering cooperative activity, these findings suggest that the attitude and disposition but equally as important is of members of the community and businesses and it is only if they think that this is a worthwhile effort that real and sustainable cooperation will emerge.

As discussed in the literature, there are a wide range of factors associated with successful co-operation. This study has highlighted two factors which have led to the successful development of cross sectoral co-operation in these areas; a shared goal and the important role of a leader. Mykletun and Gyimothy (2010) have outlined the importance of 'mutual goals, common interest or passion' in underpinning effective cooperation. In this study, a key commonly shared interest was a commitment to the development of the local area. This emerged as a key shared goal binding those who co-operate together. Multiple respondents spoke of this shared goal. One respondent explained that they co-operated because they *'wanted to develop relationships with other local businesses so we could create a symbiotic relationship in which we are all going for the same goal'*. Another stated *'what we do is promote the experience of the city. As a collective we can, and the advantage to us is we bring people in, we give them reasons to come'*. This finding raises important questions about how such shared goals can be developed. Are some places and communities more likely to be able to develop mutual goals or is this something that can be 'created'? How can the difficulties of creating shared visions and goals between different sectors be overcome?

In this regard, the important role that leaders can play in terms of encouraging co-operation emerged strongly in the findings. Both key informants and survey respondents referred to the need for *'strong leadership'*, *'someone with a big vision who can bring arts, crafts and tourism together'* (Survey Respondents), while key informants noted the need for *'a culture and arts Tsar ... who will hold clout with them ... someone that can pull the thing together'* noting how *'you need a leader and if you have that leader you have no problem'*. Numerous key informants spoke of how leadership, from an individual champion or a strong Town Council, combined with a *'long term vision'* was important to successful co-operation. One commented how in Westport a strong Town Council is *'brilliant'* as it provides *'leadership'* to the area. Others referred to the influence of one individual in developing the Clifden Arts Festival noting how *'... one man, one individual who pulled the whole thing together ...'* while another spoke of the respect that people in the area have for this individual and how he is *'the cog in the wheel, he's the axle, and then everyone comes around him'* and how because he is so well respected for his work and the fact that *'everybody gets treated the same, so ... the entire community gets behind it'*. The type of person who either naturally plays the role of leader or is appointed leader is key, especially when cross sectoral cooperation is at issue. It must be someone who can straddle the two sectors in terms of their understanding and perhaps also in terms of their interest or passion for both activities. In the case of cultural tourism, it is likely that such a person may come from the tourism sector but have a keen interest in culture, but equally the leader could come from the arts and culture side but have connections and perhaps experience in the tourism sector. The most fundamental factor will be that there is a sense among those in both sectors that this person has the interests of the town or area at heart rather than being more aligned with one sector over the other and that it is someone that much of the community will work with.

7. Conclusion

A wealth of data has emerged from this study but for the purposes of this paper, the key findings are those that advance understandings of what drives or encourages cooperation between cultural and tourism providers and what factors explain the successful development of such relations. Increasingly tourism has been highlighted as an experiential service (Richards, 2010). Tourists are attracted to places for the experience they can gain there and their evaluation of destinations is determined by the experience of their visit. This focus on experience requires us to adjust our research lens when evaluating tourism provision. It is not about the tourist attractions that are available, or the accommodation stock that exists in the place or even the events that are offered, it is a combination of all of these things that creates the tourist experience. As tourists seek experience they are often seeking something that is not provided by the tourist sector alone; they are attracted for example by cultural or historical sites, shows or events or opportunities to learn new skills.

In spite of the fact that tourists examine places in terms of the experiences that they can offer much of our understanding about tourism products is focused on individual products and individual firms. The focus of this paper is on cultural tourism. For this product, or experience, to be offered necessitates co-operation between the tourism and arts and culture sector. While the tourism literature provides insights about co-operation generally the focus is on co-operation between tourism firms, this paper deals with the important issue of cross-sectoral co-operation. As destinations seek to diversify and re-invent themselves to make themselves sustainable they are increasingly looking at what new products and experiences can be offered and this necessitates a cross-sectoral approach. This paper has shown that such cross-sectoral co-operation is not without its challenges, but that it can be fostered and often a foundation for this is the common desire by participants to ensure that their area remains attractive for tourists. As such tourism businesses are moving away from focusing on just their own business activity and in so doing they are looking at their business and local area through a slightly different prism, and this prism is much more like the one used by the tourist when deciding where to visit. From a policy perspective this finding is important as strategies to encourage co-operation should be based on the principal that this is something that is good for the area or destination, as it is then more likely to be supported. It is the combined tourism and cultural offerings of a tourist destination that matter most to cultural tourists, and co-operation between tourism and arts and culture providers is the only way to satisfy this demand.

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