

# Managing 'Balance' in a Tourism Context



AUDREY GILMORE \*  
DAVID CARSON \*  
MÁRIO ASCENÇÃO \*\*  
LYN FAWCETT \*\*\*

## ABSTRACT

While tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, its development has often been in conflict with maintaining the beauty of a region. Much tourist development is marketing-led and marketing techniques play a major role in attracting tourists to a region. This paper argues that if a tourist region is to exist and be economically viable, it needs to embrace economic and social objectives to achieve growth and market development, and at the same time incorporate environmental perspectives to sustain the unique and attractive qualities of the region. Although this ideal can be accepted at a theoretical level, it is very difficult to achieve in practice. This paper discusses the findings from a comparative study of the recent development of two small regions in Europe with many distinctive similarities: Northern Cyprus and Northern Ireland. The study finds that there are some conflicts between marketing-led tourist development and sustainable maintenance of the natural environment in both the regions.

**Key Words:** Managing tourism; Tourism service dimensions; Northern Ireland; Northern Cyprus.

---

\* *University of Ulster, Jordanstown, Northern Ireland*

\*\* *HAAGA-HELIA, University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

\*\*\* *University of Ulster, Belfast, Northern Ireland*

## INTRODUCTION

For many years now governments and public authorities have been attempting to oversee tourism development within their jurisdictions. Often stringent planning restrictions are imposed in an attempt to 'manage' the extent of tourism-related building development. In the case of established regions, redevelopment is now guided by planning requirements designed to ensure that a region's culture and custom are not undermined. However, the tourism industry is notoriously difficult to manage and coordinate given its fragmented, multi-sectoral and independent nature (Bramwell and Lane, 2000; Fyall and Garrod, 2005; Wilson-Youlden, 2006).

Although tourism is well established in Europe, there are two small regions in Europe that are only now emerging as modern tourist destinations: Northern Cyprus and Northern Ireland. They are both geographically small and relatively remote in the context of mainstream Europe. Both are now trying to develop tourism after experiencing considerable political strife that impacted upon their economic and social well-being. More recently, relative stability has returned to these regions along with a growing confidence that long-term political and social solutions are emerging. In tandem with this stability, foreign tourists have begun to arrive in increasing numbers. More tourists, indeed mass tourism, leads to economic wealth, but too many tourists and too much development threatens to spoil the scenic beauty of the regions they visit (Butler, 1992; Croall, 1997; Drost, 1996; WTO, 2004).

This paper focuses on the examination and comparison of marketing-related tourism activities in Northern Cyprus and Northern Ireland. To investigate how the emerging regions prepare for potential mass tourism, the research focused on the key tourist sites in both regions in terms of their tourism market offerings and how they were managed for long-term environmental, social and economic sustainability.

## MANAGING AND MARKETING TOURISM

Many countries rely on tourism to help improve their economy (Thorsell and Sigaty, 2001; Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Butler, 1992). Consideration of economic, social and environmental initiatives is vital to the long-term sustainable development of tourism



(Brundtland Report, 1987; Witt, 1991; Klemm, 1992; May, 2001) in any economy where tourism is the key to economic growth. Currently world tourism marketing focuses almost exclusively on promoting attractions with much less emphasis on how to manage a region's resources for long-term sustainability.

Economic and social perspectives of tourism focus on encouraging more tourists to visit and to promote the growth of tourist value. The aim is to achieve revenue return, create employment and develop local engagement and interaction with tourists (Witt, 1991). The environmental focus of tourism is at a different end of the spectrum to the economic and social perspectives. The core aim is to protect and to conserve both the culture and the environment (as both are inextricably linked). However, in practice there is often conflict between social and economic perspectives and environmental perspectives of tourism (Li, 2003). For example, the environmental focus is on conservation and protection, often translating into restriction in the use of particular tourist sites, whereas economic and social perspectives are about encouraging more visitors and widening access to facilities and attractions.

Academic discussion (Thorsell and Sigaty, 2001; Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Butler, 1992; Witt, 1991; Klemm, 1992; May, 2001) acknowledges the importance of trying to achieve economic, social and environmental objectives in a tourism region. However in practice, commercial organisations such as tour operators and indeed public bodies responsible for tourism focus on promotion to attract visitors and often pay only peripheral attention to social and environmental issues (Gilmore et al., 2007). On the other hand, environmental related organisations, such as public bodies, government agencies and special interest groups, give emphasis to environmental issues, and pay only peripheral attention to economic and social well-being (Gilmore et al., 2007). Therefore, initiatives to manage tourism in many regions are not balanced. They either focus on conservation and protection *or* revenue generation and social benefits for the region, but not both.

In addition tourism organisations, especially large organisations and public bodies, focus on tourism planning and initiatives, but fail to implement them properly because of a lack of coordination and integration (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2001). This leads to poor, deficient

services and service delivery. Although this problem is well recognised in tourism industry practice, little attention has been offered in the academic literature in relation to how to overcome these complexities and deficiencies.

#### MANAGING INTEGRATION AND COLLABORATION

Interaction and collaboration between organisations and stakeholders in the same industry is important for effective tourism management and planning, especially between global and regional operators, transport companies, intermediaries such as hotels, entertainment facilities, other local services and specific attractions, and where relevant with cross-sector organisations, the government and the voluntary sector. In addition to achieving a more holistic approach to tourism planning and management, they can also achieve synergy in the use of resources. For example, stakeholders at national, regional and local level have the potential to participate in joint advertising, and print and public relations initiatives. In this way organisations with budgets that are often too small individually to have any significant impact on prospective visitors can achieve synergy. Stakeholder involvement and participation help to provide legitimacy and support for the marketing management of tourism services (Henderson, 2000), although it is difficult to achieve in practice as multiple stakeholders often have different agendas and priorities (Jaffe and Nebenzahl, 2001).

To overcome these complexities and deficiencies managers in tourism contexts need to focus on integrative, holistic approaches to tourism service planning and management within their specific industry and regional contexts.

#### TWO EMERGING TOURISM REGIONS

Both Northern Cyprus and Northern Ireland have economies that have been severely damaged by political problems. The political environment has a huge impact on the tourism industry in any region (Altinay et al., 2002; Scott, 1998; Hall, 1994; Clements and Georgiou, 1998), and understandably tourism is very sensitive to political instability. As these regions emerge into the modern world their respective governments are vigorously promoting economic development. One industry that has a large potential for economic growth is tourism.



Both regions possess large areas of scenic beauty, including unspoilt mountains and coastlines. More recently, development in the scenic areas of both economies has been fuelled by a growth in demand for holiday homes as weekend and summer retreats. This demand has resulted in developments of villas and apartments, sometimes replacing existing buildings and sometimes building in greenfield sites.

In very recent times foreign tourists have begun to arrive in ever-increasing numbers. This has occurred because tourists are aware of the return to political stability and because the tourist industry is developing the travel infrastructure to enable them to do so. Both regions now have flight connections from international departure points. In addition, the southern regions of Cyprus and Ireland are established mass tourist destinations, and tourists from these regions are now visiting the northern regions in increasing numbers.

As a consequence of the political conflict, Northern Cyprus is not recognised internationally, so it has been difficult for the region to promote its tourism industry worldwide, particularly in Europe. Currently only Turkey officially recognises the state and therefore it is Northern Cyprus's only opening to the rest of the world (Altinay, 2000). The lack of recognition and the political embargo imposed are the key source of problems regarding the ongoing economic development of the region. It has been difficult to develop transportation links, as aviation agencies cannot gain membership, and air flights are required to touch down in Turkey before going to Northern Cyprus, thus lengthening the flight time. Direct flights would provide more competitive prices with other destinations, such as Spain, Greece and Turkey (Altinay, 2000).

In Northern Ireland there has been a slow and gradual development of tourism in the region over the past years since a peace process began. There is no explicit infrastructural development for tourism, and tourism appears not to be a particular priority in the future development of Northern Ireland. This may be due to the existence of differing perspectives of decision-makers regarding social, economic and environmental issues and are manifested in the different government initiatives and local public and private sector initiatives.

A major question that has yet to be resolved is to what extent tourism development is allowed to progress. The danger of the mistakes of the past in other regions is real. This challenge is best led by tourism planning and marketing activities focused on communication and education programmes aimed at the mass tourist market. Inherent in this local activity is the real need for revenue-generating activities. This is vital for both the long-term and short-term future of tourist regions.

To summarise, a review of the relevant literature reveals that although marketing is practised by many bodies within the tourist industry, balanced tourism marketing taking account of the three perspectives (economic, social and environmental) is very difficult to achieve in practice.

#### THE NATURE OF THE TOURISM SERVICE OFFERING

There are many studies investigating the different perspectives and complexity of tourist requirements (Galani-Moutafi, 2000; Theroux, 1995; Storace, 1996) and the inherent challenges for tourism management. In the interests of maintaining a management perspective regarding issues in a tourist service delivery context this discussion relates to the generic mass market tourists' fundamental requirements. These can be identified from both the services and tourism literatures. The importance of creating an appropriate infrastructure for tourists and ensuring that tourism can be sustainable in terms of environmental, social and economic issues is well recognised in the tourism literature (Smith and Eadington, 1992; Witt, 1991; Gunce, 2003). In addition, the services literature recognises the importance of delivering appropriate services to suit the specific industry context and the importance of providing service facilities (such as accommodation, catering and entertainment), and communication for visitors as part of tourist management (Gilmore, 2003). Both the services and tourism literatures recognise the inherent need for revenue-earning activities and its importance in relation to the achievement of economic, social and environmental goals (Smith and Eadington, 1992; Gilmore, 2003).

From a socio-economic perspective a tourist region needs visitors and revenue from visitors to help contribute to the local economy, to improve social conditions and as an opportunity for locals to



engage with and play host to visitors. From an environmental perspective, adequate facilities need to be available for the numbers of visitors arriving and these visitors need to be managed carefully, so that they do not 'crowd' the local region.

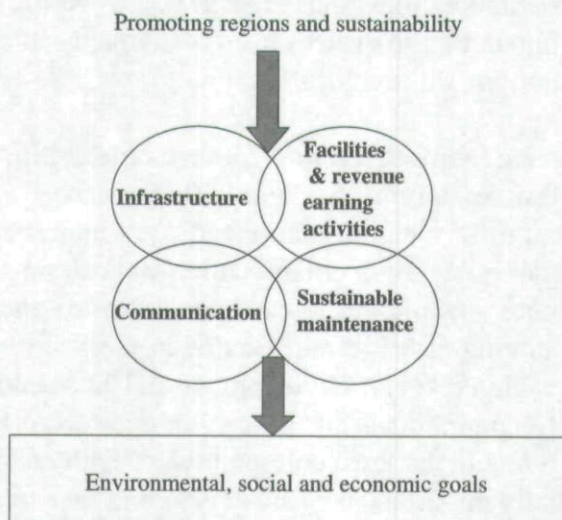
### **Tourism Service Dimensions and Their Contribution to Environmental, Social and Economic Perspectives**

An infrastructure for tourism requires efficient and effective travel and transport services, and accommodation and catering facilities in addition to more specific attractions, site facilities and amenities. Revenue-generating activities are needed in the short term to support a local region's social development and in the long term to provide local economic sustainability. Revenue from tourism can directly contribute to the local community's wealth and sustainability. This is vitally important as many developing tourism regions are remote and have few other sources of wealth (Wheeller, 1991; Smith and Eadington, 1992; Palmer, 2001). Given the scope and range of tourism service products, there is a considerable managerial role implied in coordinating this service delivery.

Communicating to the general public and press within a region or internationally is a large challenge. There can be conflicting messages for visitors of sites. Many tour operators use famous tourist sites to advertise an area (Buckley, 2004). In the case of Northern Ireland, pictures of and reference to the Giant's Causeway have been used to promote tourism for many years. At the other extreme, there can be an inward, product-centred focus of tourism management in some contexts (e.g. some World Heritage Sites and National Parks) where managers are reluctant to recognise the global phenomenon tourism has become, and attention is drawn away from the needs of tourists regarding communication and facilities (Gilmore, 2005). However, on-site communication is of vital importance for tourist management. Tourism sites need to provide guidance signs and directional information to help inform visitors regarding the site's features and the services available.

Sustainable maintenance includes the care of features, exhibits and physical places at key attractions. Such maintenance requires careful management at different levels. For example, adequate service staff or wardens are needed to look after the physical attributes,

**Figure 1: Managing a Tourism Balance**



while written and verbal guidance and communication needs to be provided for visitors so that they behave in a 'sustainable' manner.

Figure 1 brings together the key tourism management issues, by illustrating the need for promoting both attractions and sustainability using the key tourism dimensions of infrastructure, facilities and revenue-earning activities, communication and sustainable maintenance, all of which will contribute to the achievement of environmental, social and economic goals.

### METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to examine and compare two emerging regions of tourism development. The study sought to investigate how the regions are prepared for growing mass tourism in terms of their infrastructure, facilities for tourists, revenue-earning activities, communication and sustainable maintenance.

In addressing these issues, empirical research was carried out by researcher observation studies, extensive record-taking and immersion as tourists in tourist regions, and by in-depth interviews with individuals involved in tourism planning and decision-making.

Observation studies using a detailed observation protocol were carried out along with photographic evidence of key aspects of the



tourist attractions, services available and other aspects relating to sustainable tourism service management. Notes were taken to elaborate on the photographic evidence in addition to the completion of detailed observation documents. These data were substantiated with information gleaned from content analysis of tourism brochures and official reports regarding tourism sites available from different tourism and marketing bodies.

In relation to each specific tourist region, observations were used to gather data regarding infrastructure, facilities and revenue-earning activities, communication and sustainable maintenance. The sites visited in Northern Cyprus were Kyrenia Castle, St. Hilarion Castle, Bellapais Abbey, Othello Tower and the Salamis ruins. The sites visited in Northern Ireland were the Giant's Causeway and Causeway coast, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, Fermanagh lakelands and the Mourne Mountains. The sites chosen had scenic, geological and/or historic and cultural interest. The cities within the regions were not included in the study as these were difficult to compare. In Northern Ireland, Belfast and Derry have become increasingly sophisticated in promoting themselves to tourists. In Northern Cyprus, the main cities of Lefkosa (Nicosia) and Gazimagusa (Famagusta) are divided by the border separating north from south and in parts are reminiscent of a war zone, rather than a tourist attraction.

In addition, eight in-depth interviews were carried out with key decision-makers (four in each region). These were managers from public bodies such as government departments and agencies with specific responsibilities for tourism within the region and specific sites. These discussions focused on the nature and extent of social, economic and environmental priorities within the region and how these were manifested in tourism plans and activities.

Observations and interviews were carried out during a one-week visit to Northern Cyprus in March 2005 that included visits to the key tourist attractions within the region. The observations of tourism in Northern Ireland were carried out from May to July 2005. These were carried out by a team of four researchers in each region independently and followed by extensive data recording. The data collection and analysis approach incorporated several recommended guidelines for theory construction through qualitative

research (Belk et al., 1988; Thompson et al., 1989; Zeithaml et al., 1993). At the conclusion of site observations the researchers discussed their impressions about the key themes at each site to identify the emerging issues and findings for verification in subsequent observations. This practice is known as 'memoing' and is seminally documented in Belk et al.'s study (1988: 450).

The analysis focused on the overall tourism offerings regarding infrastructure, facilities and revenue-earning activities, communication and sustainable maintenance, and how these impacted upon environmental, social and economic perspectives. For example,

- Infrastructure was analysed according to the extent of transport options, choice and availability for visitors and overall capacity for tourists and its overall effect on environmental, social and economic needs.
- Facilities were evaluated according to the range and extent of facilities in terms of tangible offerings, style of operations to suit different customer needs and overall impact upon environmental, social and economic needs. Potential for revenue-earning activities were evaluated by looking at the opportunities to attract revenue from tourism activities and sites such as accommodation, food and entertainment and from site entrance fees.
- Communication was analysed according to the range and variety of formal and informal communication offered to visitors. For example, leaflets, brochures and maps provided for the region, directional signage and evidence of interactive guidance by staff at key sites.
- Sustainable maintenance was evaluated according to how well-maintained the features, exhibits and paths were, taking into account evidence of the extent of erosion, neglect, litter or graffiti, and the overall effect on environmental, social and economic needs.

#### EVALUATION OF TOURISM SERVICE MANAGEMENT IN BOTH DEVELOPING REGIONS

In both regions, the respective governments are vigorously promoting economic development. Indeed both governments have recently been involved in creating a number of 'masterplans' for development



through tourism. Each region's tourism activity is described using the evaluation criteria described in the methodology section, followed by a comparison of the two regions.

### **Northern Cyprus Tourism**

In Northern Cyprus the government is actively encouraging development of the region through tourism. In-depth interviews with key people in the government agencies responsible for tourism indicated that tourism has been accepted at government level to be a most important activity and is fundamental to the development and future prosperity of the state. The Ministry of Economy and Tourism is responsible for tourism promotion and marketing. During interviews with key people within this department, it emerged that they have created a tourism masterplan for the region. The plan involves increasing the overall impact of tourism in Northern Cyprus. For example, increasing the bed capacity within the region, increasing the number of employees in the tourist sector, increasing revenues, increasing the share of foreign tourists, increasing the length of stay, entering foreign markets, promoting group tourism, and introducing incentives for local and foreign investments and for regional tourism activities. The directors and managers interviewed indicated that the masterplan provided their template for tourism development. They did not have any comment on the development of apartments and casinos that were not part of the overall masterplan and were beyond their remit.

### *Infrastructure*

There is a developing infrastructure for tourism, including a new airport terminal and new dual carriageways from the airport and new roads along the coastline. Also, the roads over the mountains to the coastal resort of Girne (Kyrenia), the main northern tourist town, are currently being enhanced.

In the past two years, a good road system has been created in the key areas that have tourism potential, particularly around Girne and the northern coastline. The roads between the airport and main towns and the coastal road in the east have been enhanced. Accessibility from the airport is within thirty minutes to Girne and one hour drive to more remote areas. Although there has been major

expenditure for upgrading the road system, there is very poor and confusing signposting from the airport to the main tourist regions. Public transport exists in the form of 'Dolmus' mini-buses between the capital, Lefkosa, and Girne (the main tourist region).

Currently most infrastructure investments in Northern Cyprus are financed by Turkey, including the building of highways, electricity plants and water supply. Many old, historical properties have been refurbished by new residents, but much of this is not compatible with local style and tradition.

### *Facilities and Revenue-Earning Activities*

In-depth interviews with government decision-makers indicated that government support for building development focuses on hotels rather than apartments. However, development of the road infrastructure has led the way for the apparently random development of apartments and villas along the coastal routes. In particular villa and apartment development is evident in the main coastal regions and in an extended coastal strip around and beyond Girne. These are built by property developers, many of whom are using an international, global marketing initiative to sell these properties to tourists as second homes.

Along with the development of resort-type hotels, villas and apartments, casinos are in construction. There appears to be little building control throughout, consequently construction companies continue to build apartments in seemingly haphazard ways and sometimes isolated areas.

The main revenue-earning activities include facilities such as restaurants and entertainment (especially casinos). These are found in the main tourist regions, such as Girne and in surrounding coastal locations. Historic and cultural sites are found throughout the region, the majority of these do not have tourist facilities (other than toilets), although they do charge a small entrance fee.

### *Communication*

Useful information and communication for tourists is very sparse and inconsistent. Brochures are distributed at the airport to all arriving tourists. These brochures illustrate the key tourist areas very professionally. The messages focus on tourist facilities and on selling



apartment properties in the region. All printed materials are of a good quality. However, this material is mostly funded by property developers and so the nature of the content regarding tourist communication is limited. There are no messages about the sustainability of the region or how tourists should behave in relation to the environment. Within the region and at key sites there is no interactive guidance or proactive management of visitors.

### *Sustainable Maintenance*

Northern Cyprus has a number of sites that have historical, cultural and unique attractions for tourists: Kyrenia Castle, St. Hillarion Castle, Bellapais Abbey, Othello Tower and the Salamis ruins. These are all operated by the Department of Antiquities and Museums. A small entrance fee is charged to visit the site; this money is used by the department for the upkeep of the sites. Although these sites are of historical and cultural interest, some maintenance activities have been carried out in a rather unsympathetic manner, and because of the limited management of the sites and services offered, they do not offer a very inspiring tourist experience. The key observations at all of these sites are outlined below:

- There are no displays, interpretation or interaction of any kind, no proactive guidance of any kind and no supervision of visitors.
- There is evidence of neglect, litter (on most sites), lack of maintenance and in some sites there is little attempt to preserve and protect original site features.
- Barriers in and around the sites are made from scaffold pole safety barriers that are not sympathetic to the style and age of the sites. Also any recent facings and paths are unsympathetic to the age and architectural style of the buildings.

### **Northern Ireland Tourism**

There has been a slow and gradual development of tourism in Northern Ireland over the past ten years. However, there is evidence of differing perspectives regarding economic, social and environmental issues from different government initiatives. For example, a number of 'masterplans' (*Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site Management Plan for UNESCO* (Environment

and Heritage Service, 2005); *Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Masterplan 2004–13* (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, 2004)) have been produced for regions within Northern Ireland in the past few years. Each of these has subtle and sometimes significantly different perspectives, particularly in relation to environmental and economic issues. However, the predominant focus of these plans is on environmental protection with opportunities for economic development within specific tourist regions being suppressed.

### *Infrastructure*

There is no explicit infrastructural development for tourism, and tourism is not specifically planned to be part of the future development of Northern Ireland's economy. Although a number of 'masterplans' have been created by various government departments, the majority of themes presented in these focus on environmental issues.

The road system in Northern Ireland is good but because of the growth in traffic in recent years more dual carriageways to key tourist sites are needed. Signage for main routes is very good but is less so for key historical, geological and cultural tourist sites. Signage directing visitors to the tourist areas and key sites is poor from both airports and seaports. Different government departments are involved in signs for tourist sites, and signage is poorly coordinated in some areas.

### *Facilities and Revenue-Earning Activities*

In key tourist areas such as the north coast, south and west of the region, villas and apartments are being built by local, private developers. In the main, the indigenous population purchase these as second homes. Although the number of hotels recently built or in construction in Northern Ireland has increased substantially over the past ten years, growth in hotel accommodation remains limited in the actual tourist regions. Overall, there is insufficient hotel accommodation in the major coastal tourist regions. There are planning restrictions in many of these areas.

Revenue-generating facilities such as restaurants, coffee shops and pubs are found in the main tourist regions, particularly in small



towns around the coast. Entertainment is also found in the main sea-side resorts and cities. However, the key historic and cultural sites throughout the region have limited tourist facilities in terms of retailing and catering options.

### *Communication*

There are many brochures published about Northern Ireland by the various organisations involved in tourism (both public and private). These brochures predominantly focus on promoting specific regions and sites. Some have information about safety at key sites (often overemphasising the dangers of walking near coastal regions or mountains rather than promoting the features of the site). However, at key tourist sites there is little marketing-led communication of any kind to stimulate visitor interest in the site and virtually no information on preservation and conservation.

### *Sustainable Maintenance*

Northern Ireland has a number of sites that have historical, cultural and unique attractions for tourists. These include the Giant's Causeway, Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, the walled city of Derry, the Mourne Mountains and the Fermanagh lakeland areas. At some sites there are interpretative displays and visitor centres. However, these sites are not proactively managed from a marketing-led viewpoint, and visitors are not guided or directed in terms of the sustainability of the environment. For example, at the Giant's Causeway there is relatively poor site maintenance, with evidence of path erosion and deterioration, neglect (mud and litter) and vandalism (graffiti and chipping) on the stones.

Entrance to most of these tourist sites is either free or there is a small fee, depending on ownership and the time of year. The fees charged do not necessarily go towards the upkeep of the specific site.

## **Comparisons between the Two Regions**

### *Infrastructure*

The Northern Cyprus government has a mindset for developing tourism, whereas Northern Ireland administrators do not seem to be

so focused. The government in Northern Cyprus is encouraging development of the region through tourism and the infrastructure is being created. In this region tourism would seem to be central to a major economic thrust. In Northern Ireland there is little explicit infrastructural development for tourism, and tourism does not appear to be the leading industry, or planned explicitly as part of the future development of the economy.

In Northern Ireland, tourism information centres are better organised than those in Northern Cyprus where there is a wider range of information and more understanding of tourist needs. Signage to key regions and sites is more thorough. Cross-border access is easier and not so reminiscent of political discord on the island, as in Northern Cyprus, where parts of the two key cities, Lefkosa (Nicosia) and Gazimagosa (Famagusta) still look like war zones.

Overall transport infrastructure is good in both the regions. However, signage and directions for visitors are poor in Northern Cyprus. In Northern Ireland single carriageway roads from Belfast and the Derry region to the main tourist sites are congested during most of the summer season, but roads are gradually being upgraded. Overall Northern Ireland is better prepared than Northern Cyprus for mass tourism in terms of its infrastructure and road system. However, visitor management at most key tourist sites is poor or non-existent.

#### *Facilities and Revenue-Earning Activities*

Tourist accommodation is developing much more quickly in Northern Cyprus than that in Northern Ireland, but it seems to be out of control in the main tourist areas. Accommodation infrastructure in Northern Ireland is relatively poor (with the exception of Belfast) and developing slowly in terms of hotel development at key tourist sites.

Both regions are poor at providing opportunities for visitors to spend money and stay longer at sites. Overall there are few marketing opportunities, facilities or services available to enhance the visitor experience and length of stay at key tourist sites. However, Northern Cyprus's growing range of hotel and apartment accommodation in the north and the east (promoted to visitors and people



outside Cyprus) and casinos will contribute to revenue-earning activities.

### *Communication*

The overall marketing messages contained in the literature of Northern Cyprus tourism material are much more professional, and more focused on the key sites and holiday property for sale than those of Northern Ireland's marketing material.

Northern Ireland tourist sites are more culturally sophisticated in how they relate to tourists; locals and people in the tourism industry have more experience of tourism, and even in the remote parts of the country people are more experienced in communicating with tourists. This is not the case in Northern Cyprus.

### *Sustainable Maintenance*

At key sites in both the regions there is evidence of a lack of maintenance: for example, graffiti, litter and broken features. Many of these emphasise that although tourism decision-makers may have all the three perspectives (economic, social and environmental) in mind, in practice different priorities occur. In Northern Ireland the managers of tourist sites focus on superficial conservation only. Providing facilities for visitors or revenue-earning activities come as a poor second priority. For example, the site manager of one of Northern Ireland's most visited sites said that, 'my only job is only to conserve the environment'. This illustrates the emphasis at many sites (in Northern Ireland) where conservationists are part of the management and often social and economic goals are neglected. In Northern Cyprus, although the government is focused on sustainable tourism it is not in control of the recent building expansion by property developers. The managers in the Ministry of Economy and Tourism talk about sustainable tourism but recognise that in this region economic perspectives may take priority over social and environmental goals at this time. Currently their focus is on 'increasing numbers of visitors and revenues'.

There is clear evidence of unsustainable activity in Northern Cyprus. It is in danger of overdevelopment around the Girne area in the north and in the coastal region in the east, particularly

in relation to apartments and villas. The unsustainable activity in Northern Ireland exists in terms of not managing tourist sites proactively and instead allowing tourists to wander (either by car or on foot) undirected and unattended. This occurs because although the site managers have conservation as their priority, they are not hands-on managers and do not interact with visitors.

In both these developing tourist regions there is no clear tourism policy designed to balance economic, social and environmental well-being. Although a tourism infrastructure is being created (especially in Northern Cyprus) that will inherently improve sustainable development, there are many tourism management issues that are not being addressed. In particular, there is little evidence of managing visitors and the on-site visitors' experience more proactively. In both regions there would appear to be little consideration given to the provision of revenue-earning services and how to keep visitors within a region for longer periods and so increase the overall contribution to the local economy.

#### DISCUSSION: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

Tourism is a very important industry for many developing regions. However, if tourism is to exist and be economically viable, it needs to address economic, social and environmental objectives in order to achieve growth and market development while sustaining the unique and attractive qualities of a region. The tourist dimensions highlighted in Figure 1 provide a framework and starting point for tourist managers trying to plan and manage tourism in an evolving region.

The comparison between these two developing regions using the framework model highlights some significant issues in relation to sustainable tourism marketing. Although the tourism literature advocates the importance of economic, social and environmental perspectives, in practice tourism marketing and management activities are unbalanced and inconsistent. A tourist region is promoted to the mass market, with both off-region and within-region promotional activities designed to stimulate



increased numbers of tourists. Such activity is unbalanced as it neglects promoting and ensuring protection and sustainability of the natural and environmental phenomenon, through appropriate communication and educational messages. On the other hand, the key employment activities in tourism markets are important given the contribution tourism can make to the economic and social well-being of an area. In some cases, these are in danger of being suppressed by an unbalanced focus on environmental objectives; for example, some overpowering special interest environmental groups can override any economic objectives in particular regions.

In addition, within regions (and on site), activity is fragmented. Although the tourism governing bodies such as local government departments and agencies may create plans that seek to address the economic, social and environmental well-being of a region, many plans are not put into practice. There appears to be considerable difficulty in the implementation of plans. In practice, there is little evidence of communication between the governing and planning bodies and the managers who operate the tourist sites. Therefore, the overall plans for a region may not have any real impact on the ground.

### CONCLUSION

Currently both the regions are engaged in unbalanced tourism development that requires reflection and action from the key players involved in the development of tourism in Northern Ireland and Northern Cyprus. In particular, key tourism dimensions need to be delivered in a balanced way at each specific site and in so doing manage the needs of visitors in a sustainable manner. While much of the tourism development in terms of increased infrastructure and facilities are attracting significant numbers of new tourists, tourism decision-makers need to be aware of the longer-term impact of this growth and ensure that mechanisms are set in place to ensure sustainability, socially, environmentally and economically. In particular a clearer focus on more sophisticated planning and implementation of the integrated tourism offering in terms of infrastructure, facilities and revenue-earning activities, communication and sustainable

management needs to be achieved. Communication messages and marketing techniques need to be considered in the context of short- and long-term sustainable maintenance that will contribute to an overall balance of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the regions.

#### REFERENCES

- Altinay, L. (2000) 'Possible Impacts of a Federal Solution to the Cyprus Problem on the Tourism Industry of North Cyprus', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 295–309.
- Altinay, L., Altinay, M. and Bicak, H.A. (2002) 'Political Scenarios: The Future of the North Cyprus Tourism Industry', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 176–182.
- Belk, R.W., Sherry, J.E. and Wallendorf, M. (1988) 'A Naturalistic Enquiry into Buyer and Seller Behaviour at a Swap Meet', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, March, pp. 449–470.
- Bramwell, B. and Lane, B. (1993) 'Sustainable Tourism: An Evolving Global Approach', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 1, No. 1 pp. 155–165.
- Bramwell, B. and Lane, B. (2000) *Tourism Collaboration and Partnerships: Politics, Practice and Sustainability*, Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Brundtland Report (1987) (WCED) *World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Buckley, R. (2004) 'The Effects of World Heritage Listing on Tourism to Australian National Parks', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 70–84.
- Butler, R. (1992) 'Alternative Tourism: The Thin Edge of the Wedge', in V. Smith and W. Eadington (eds), *Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Clements, M.A. and Georgiou, A. (1998) 'The Impact of Political Instability on a Fragile Tourist Product', *Tourism Management*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 283–288.



- Croall, J. (1997) *Preserve or Destroy: Tourism and the Environment*, London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (2004) *Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Masterplan 2004–13*, available at: <<http://www.detini.gov.uk/cgi-bin/downdoc?id=448>> [Accessed 17 June 2008].
- Drost, A. (1996) 'Developing Sustainable Tourism for World Heritage Sites', *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 479–484.
- Environment and Heritage Service (2005) *Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site Management Plan for UNESCO*, Environment and Heritage Service, National Trust, Moyle District Council, available at: <[http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/whs\\_final\\_draft\\_man\\_plan.pdf](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/whs_final_draft_man_plan.pdf)> [Accessed 17 June 2008].
- Fyall, A. and Garrod, B. (2005) *Tourism Marketing: A Collaborative Approach*, Clevedon: Channel View Publications.
- Galani-Moutafi, V. (2000) 'The Self and the Other: Traveller, Ethnographer, Tourist', *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 203–224.
- Gilmore, A. (2003) *Services Marketing and Management*, London: Sage Publications.
- Gilmore, A. (2005) 'Marketing Management for Services: The Importance of "Balance"', in A.M. Fuglseth and I.A. Kleppe (eds), *Anthology for Kjell Gronhaug in Celebration of His 70th Birthday*, Bergen, Norway: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS.
- Gilmore, A., Carson, D. and Ascencio, M. (2007) 'Sustainable Tourism Marketing at a World Heritage Site', *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, Vol. 15, May–June, pp. 131–142.
- Gunce, E. (2003) 'Tourism and Local Attitudes in Girne, Northern Cyprus', *Cities*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 181–195.
- Hall, C.M. (1994) *Tourism and Politics: Policy, Power, and Place*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Henderson, J.C. (2000) 'Selling Places: The New Asia–Singapore Brand', *Journal of Tourism Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 36–44.

- Jaffe, E.D. and Nebenzahl, I.D. (2001) *National Image and Competitive Advantage: The Theory and Practice of Country-of-Origin Effect*, Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Klemm, M. (1992) 'Sustainable Tourism Development: Languedoc-Roussillon Thirty Years On', *Tourism Management*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 169–180.
- Li, Y. (2003) 'Heritage Tourism: The Contradictions between Conservation and Change', *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 247–261.
- May, V. (1991) 'Tourism, Environment and Development: Values, Sustainability and Stewardship', *Tourism Management*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 112–118.
- Palmer, A. (2001) *Principles of Services Marketing*, London: McGraw-Hill.
- Scott, R. (1988) 'Managing Crisis in Tourism: A Study of Fiji', *Travel and Tourism Analyst*, Vol. 6, pp. 57–71.
- Smith, V. and Eadington, W. (1992) *Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd.
- Storace, P. (1996) *Dinner with Persephone*, New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Theroux, P. (1995) *The Pillars of Hercules: A Grand Tour of the Mediterranean*, London: Penguin.
- Thompson, C.J., Locander, W.B. and Pollio, H.R. (1989) 'Putting Customer Experience Back into Customer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential Phenomenology', *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 16, September, pp. 133–146.
- Thorsell, J. and Sigaty, T. (2001) 'Human Use in World Heritage Natural Sites: A Global Inventory', *Tourism Recreation Research*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 85–101.
- Wheeller, B. (1991) 'Tourism's Troubled Times: Responsible Tourism Is Not the Answer', *Tourism Management*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 91–96.
- Wilson-Youlden, L. (2006) 'Review of Fyall, A. and Garrod, B. (2005) *Tourism Marketing: A Collaborative Approach*. Channel View Publications: Clevedon', in *The Marketing Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 103–105.



- Witt, S.F. (1991) 'Tourism in Cyprus: Balancing the Benefits and Costs', *Tourism Management*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 37-45.
- WTO (2004) *Tourism Congestion Management at Natural and Cultural Sites: A Guide Book*, Madrid: World Tourism Organisation.
- Zeithaml, V.A., Berry, L.L. and Parasuraman, A. (1993) 'The Nature and Determinants of Customer Expectations of Service', *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 1-12.

Copyright of *Irish Journal of Management* is the property of *Irish Journal of Management* and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.