

Assignment 2: Submission 2

Project - Analysis of a destination (Scotland)

Name: XXXXX

Student ID: XXXXX

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Introduction

The Island of Mull in Scotland (Figure 1) has become a major eco-tourist destination following the success of television program ‘Balamory’ which is shot in the island. The project outlines the experiences of the author during his sojourn in Scotland. This project serves as a guide for tourists who are planning a visit to the island. The map below shows the location of the Isle of Mull and nearby locations.



Figure 1: Map of Scotland (© Microsoft Corp, 2001)

Natural Environment

As observed in the map, Isle of Mull is surrounded by a long and varied coastline. The Gulf Stream moderates the local climate and the island has a pleasant temperature throughout the year. This makes it a destination of choice for tourists during summer months (Mull Holidays, 2008). Due to sparse local population (about 2700) and tough regulations on environmental protection, the beaches and islands have retained their unspoilt nature (Scotland Web site, 2009). This makes it an attraction for tourists looking to escape 'the urban frame'. The numerous islands in the west coast like Erraid and Iona attract tourists mainly because they provide a natural environment for them to engage in fishing activity.

Because of its mountainous core, hills and waterfalls form an important part of the natural environment of the island. According to Beedie and Hudson (2003), these locations provide excitement, stimulation and potential of adventure to the tourists. Adventure sports like hiking and bungee jumping is very popular among the tourists visiting Mount Ben More, the highest peak on island as it satisfies their adventurist streak (Tobermory Government, 2009).

Dense forests, prevalent water sources and temperate climate make Mull an ideal location for various species of animals. The island is a natural habitat for about 250 different species of birds including the famous White-tailed Eagle (Scotland Web site, 2009). Moreover, sighting of Dolphins and Minke Whales during the boat tours are very popular amongst the tourists. Literature suggests that this attraction can be viewed as the tendency of humans to intrude the natural space of the animals. However, this makes the natural environment of Mull a major green or eco-tourist destination.

Local Society

The island's image as a tourist destination got further boost with the popularity of children's programme 'Balamory' (Connell, 2005), which is set in the Island of Mull. During summer months, the tourists can easily outnumber the sparse local population numbering around 2700. Much of the local population resides in the town of Tobermory which is a prominent fishing port in the island. The society can be described as highly mono-cultural with majority of the population living in the town residing there for several generations (Tobermory Government, 2009). Locals were observed to be fluent in Scottish Gaelic, the local language, and English by the author. The influence of local Scottish tradition is evident in the attire of the local population with majority of them wearing tartan patterns in some form (UHI Millenium Institute, 1994). Fishing and ferrying forms an integral part of the local culture as they provide employment to the local youth. This provides an idea of the kind of society which one can expect while visiting the location.

Local History

For tourists interested in the history of the island, the local museum at the Main Street contains an eclectic collection of burial cairns, pottery and knife blades. It provides an insight into the history of the island as the ways of living of the inhabitants of the Bronze Age is clearly depicted in the tools and instruments preserved at the museum. The inhabitants of the Iron Age built prominent forts like Duart Castle and Torosay Castle which reflects its importance in the history of Britain. These castles are important heritage destinations for tourists and form popular picnic spots for the local population.

The monastery on the island of Iona contains valuable information on the early history of religion in the region in the form of manuscripts and wall paintings. Historians believe that St. Columba, a local monk, had an important role to play in bringing Christianity to the mainland Britain during the sixth century when he built the monastery (Scotland Web site, 2009). The vast highlands in the Tobermory are a result of 'highland clearances' of the 18th and 19th century when thousands of locals were forced to leave the island to promote agriculture in the region.

Tobermory has always been a place of interest for the explorers throughout history. This is because, according to historians, a Spanish galleon carrying millions of gold coins sunk near the Tobermory Bay during the sixteenth century (Tobermory Government, 2009). Its establishment as a fishing port during the 19th century made it an attractive tourist destination for the families in the mainland Britain. However, it is only during the last few years that it has developed as an international tourist destination. This required a concerted effort from the local Government and local community.

The Local Community in collaboration with the local Government has taken various initiatives to promote sustainable tourism on the island. The Mull and Iona Community Trust (MICT) has raised funds to promote recycling and protect wildlife in the island (MICT, 2009). These initiatives have helped the island to protect its unspoilt nature and have given the place a distinct identity in the minds of the tourists.

Motivation for Tourists

To understand the motivation of tourists to visit the Isle of Mull, it is important to correctly identify the purpose of the visit. On interacting with various local tourists, the author asserts that the likely purpose of visit of a majority of tourists is to be close to the nature and experience the

unspoilt beauty of the island. Literature suggests that the travel to such destination can be viewed as a response to what is lacking in their lives, yet which is highly desirable (Dann, 1981, p. 189).

The tourists can be seen as being alienated in their lifestyle. The reason why people want to be close to the nature is because they lack it in their urban lifestyle. This is the primary motivation of the tourists visiting Isle of Mull.

An important push factor for the tourists is the rapid urbanization of the cities in the mainland.

The city-dwellers seek to take holiday far from the crowded cities so that they can dwell in the natural environment that Isle of Mull provides. With the rise of smaller families and higher disposable income of the families, the desire to travel has increased amongst the tourists.

However, lack of time can be an important barrier to demand as the Isle does not have an airport and the tourists have to take ferrying service to reach various uninhabited islands.

The Isle of Mull has acquired an image of possessing scenic natural environment in beaches, mountains, waterfalls and forests. This image has received a boost due to the impact of media, for example, impact of television programme 'Balamory' (Connell, 2005). This helps it in attracting tourists looking to spend time away from crowded cities. Another important factor is the geographical proximity to the British Mainland which is culturally similar to the Isle of Mull. The Islands are well connected by mainland Britain through regular ferrying services. These two factors combine to create a strong pull factor for the tourists to this destination (Ross, 1994).

Tourist Activities

Even though ecotourism is the primary purpose of the tourists visiting Isle of Mull, the natural environment provides numerous choices to the tourists in the kinds of activities they can engage in. Tourists interested in the heritage of the local culture prefer to visit the Mull Museum or the

Duart and Torosay Castles. Tourists looking for relaxation may just relax at one of the scenic beaches at West Coast or do fishing in an uninhabited island during summer months. People with adventurous bent of mind may indulge in experiencing the diverse wildlife that the island provides. Moreover, they can do mountaineering or trekking on Mount Ben More, the highest peak on the island. There are some tourists who prefer to stay with the local people to gain an understanding of the local Scottish culture. Thus, tourists to the Isle of Mull have a wide variety of activities to engage themselves.

Impact on Local Culture

The local population at Isle of Mull share a Scottish culture which has not changed much in the last century despite modernizing pressures. According to the Social Impact theory, tourism can effect changes in communities or individual's lifestyle and values of life. This is observed in the local culture. Traditionally, the locals were very proud of their Scottish culture and never used to speak any language other than Scottish Gaelic or English. However, as the town receives a significant number of tourists from France, many locals especially those in ferrying services have learnt functional French (Mull Holidays, 2008) which was unthinkable even a few decades ago. Moreover, there are a number of French restaurants in the town of Tobermory.

The primary economic impact of the tourism has been that locals have not succumbed to the modernizing pressures and have preserved their local identity. With the tourism industry providing ample employment opportunities to the youth, many of them prefer to remain back in Mull rather than moving to the cities for better life (Tobermory Government, 2009). This has helped in continuation of the local culture which in turn promotes tourism.

The environmental impact of tourism is difficult to measure in short term. However, limited data suggests that as strict Government regulations and local community work towards the objective of sustainable development, the environmental impact of tourism has been minimal (MICT, 2009). For example, regulation has banned use of plastic in islands and there is an emphasis on recycling waste to foster sustainable development of the island. Thus, tourism has not only encouraged cross-cultural communication, it has also helped in preserving the local culture.

Accommodation

Accommodation at a destination contributes to the experience of tourists. However, in author's opinions the demand for accommodation for tourists far exceeds the supply at Isle of Mull currently. Regular hotels and holiday apartments are available for families looking for a relaxed environment. However, they are very expensive and are suitable for tourists looking for a short stay at Mull. Backpackers or tourists, who visit Mull to experience its local Scottish culture and thus stay for longer durations, look towards cheap student hostels in Tobermory or the monastery in Iona. The rates in these hostels start from \$10 a night and are ideal for such tourists. Many locals also keep the backpackers in their homes as paying guests or even for free on a reciprocal basis (Tobermory Government, 2009). People who visit Mull for trekking experience prefer to prepare their own camps in the forests to experience the natural surroundings that the Island has to offer. Thus, the choice of accommodation varies according to the requirements and budget of the tourists.

Transportation Facilities

Travel to, from and within a destination is an important part of the tourist's experience. At Isle of Mull, the islands are well connected to the mainland by ferrying services. There are regular ferry links from the mainland to the island and also between various islands (Mull Holidays, 2008). However, flight services are only available for private jets as the landing strip near Salen is not suitable for bigger aircrafts. Once the tourists are in the island, there are regular bus services which connect every tourist location from Tobermory to Calgary and Craignure. Alternatively, the tourists can hire a local cab service or bike if they want to travel on their own (Scotland Web site, 2009). Moreover, there is a railway service 'Isle of Mull railways' which runs from Craignure to Torosay Castle and which supplements the regular bus services. The mode of transportation availed by the tourists depend on their requirements. For example, Backpackers prefer to use the bike as this gives them the freedom to explore at their own pace. Thus, the tourists can decide on the various modes of transportation available to them.

Local Food

While travelling in Isle of Mull, tourists also get to experience the local gastronomic culture which is very important for a gourmet. The traditional Scottish cuisine is slightly different from British cuisine in the fact that it is not spicy. Due to presence of temperate climate and long coastline, the island is ideally placed to grow fruits and engage in fishing. Thus, fruits and seafood form an integral part of the local cuisine. Food critiques view the crabs and lobsters available in the Isle of Mull as one of the best available (Edinburgh University, 2009). Moreover, the water available for consumption is of high quality and potable. The local people take pride in growing their own food and are hospitable enough to invite the tourists to their family meals

(Scotland Web site, 2009). The traditional Scottish cuisine can be experienced by visiting local families only. The food served by the local restaurants caters to the tastes of a wider tourist base and thus does not capture the essence of local gastronomic culture. An exception in this case is the Ninth Wave Restaurant at Fionnphort which is successful at replicating the local cuisine in its menu.

Brochure for Promotion

The following brochure has been developed to promote Isle of Mull as a tourist destination. The brochure relies on the pull factor of the Isle of Mull to attract the tourists by projecting the rich local culture and pristine beauty of the island.



Figure 2: Brochure for Promotion

Conclusion

The purpose of this project is to provide an understanding of Isle of Mull to the potential tourists. Made famous by the popular television show 'Balamory', the island has acquired a reputation for eco-tourist destination. The natural environment containing uninhabited islands, waterfalls, mountains and dense forests provide the tourists with an ideal location to break free from their crowded city life. The accommodation and food provides a unique taste of traditional Scottish culture. The tourists can engage in various activities like fishing, camping, and mountaineering or enjoy a relaxed environment lying at the beaches. However, the increase in number of tourists has placed a strain on local Scottish population for modernizing their culture and infrastructure to sustain the tourism industry. The local Government and the local community have joined hands together to take up this matter. There is a need to balance ecological sustainability and infrastructure requirements so that the destination does not lose its unique identity. This will sustain the fledgling tourism industry as well as tourists visit to experience the local culture which provides it a unique identity.

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