

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: 19 Business and Management Studies
Title of case study: Informing Social Tourism Policy and Practice
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>A body of research undertaken by McCabe in partnership with a Charity, the Family Holiday Association, has informed the development of policy and practice and raised awareness of issues concerning the inclusion of disadvantaged people in leisure travel. The research informed policy debate in an all-party parliamentary report and subsequently, Visit England's domestic tourism strategy. The work led to changes in the charity's practices, leading to new systems, services and underpinned a fundraising campaign. The research ultimately enhanced the Charity's capacity to influence and develop productive partnerships with UK and European policy makers.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Social tourism concerns the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in leisure travel. This idea is widely endorsed in continental Europe as a welfare measure yet, within the UK tourism industry, it was unknown and absent in policy. Up until 2008, the emphasis in the UK amongst academics was on tourists' behaviour as opposed to non-participation. Consequently, there was a dearth of knowledge about tourism's effect on health, well-being and family life. This prompted McCabe to research, in partnership with the Family Holiday Association, the benefits of holiday participation, in particular the reasons why disadvantaged people need a holiday, how families benefit from financial support for a holiday, the effects of a holiday on well-being and links between holidays and educational outcomes for children. For the first time, research linked tourism to theories of social exclusion and subjective well-being.</p> <p>In 2007 a consortium, comprising the Charity, the Youth Hostel Association (England and Wales) and UNISON Welfare, funded McCabe to produce an evaluation study (3.i.). The research comprised an analysis of 600 applications for funding support. It highlighted a range of situational and environmental, personal and social/relational factors that determined the need for a holiday. The study's findings and subsequent follow up surveys and focus groups revealed that a holiday led to improvements in happiness and optimism, reductions in stress and anxiety, and increased quality family time leading to positive memories for children and families (3.1.). These research findings coupled with a major government initiative to develop measures of national well-being then prompted the research team to undertake a literature review and pilot study on the links between holiday participation and subjective well-being in 2009-10. The pilot study included a survey which found that holidays led to improvements in quality of life. The research also made theoretical links between social tourism and subjective well-being (3.2).</p> <p>In 2010, McCabe and the charity received funding for a two-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership (3.ii.). The research included a significant study on the effects of social tourism on subjective well-being (SWB) (3.3). The study developed a holistic measure of subjective well-being that incorporated validated scales of key aspects of well-being. It comprised a two stage survey (before and after a holiday) that measured any changes in SWB scores. It also determined any directly attributable changes in well-being as a result of the holiday. The research revealed that social tourists' levels of SWB improved after a holiday and that significant improvements in key domains of well-being, including social and eudaemonic aspects (including family relationships, optimism, resilience, time spent with family) were attributable to the holiday. The study also compared social tourists with the general population, and found social tourists had significantly lower levels of well-being.</p> <p>The partnership also developed smaller research projects including the role of holidays as contexts for experiential learning (3.4). This study, undertaken with primary and secondary school pupils, learning mentors, parents and welfare agents, assessed the types of learning styles and experiential learning contexts that were relevant to social tourism experiences. It found that certain types of holidays were conducive to knowledge acquisition and skills and learning style development through decision making, confidence, relaxation and quality family time.</p>

Key Researchers:

Dr Scott McCabe, Associate Professor. in Tourism Management/Marketing, University of Nottingham since March 2007 (Lecturer from March 2007- July 2010)

3. References to the research

1. McCabe, S. 2009. Who needs a holiday? Evaluating social tourism, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(4), 667-688. (ABS 4*) (Listed in REF 2). doi:10.1016/j.annals.2009.06.005 <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/01607383/36>
2. McCabe, S., Li, C. & Joldersma, T. 2010. Understanding the benefits of Social tourism, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(6), 761-773. (ABS 2*) DOI: 10.1002/jtr.791 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jtr.791/pdf>
3. McCabe, S. & Johnson, S. (2013) The Happiness Factor in Tourism: Holidays, subjective well-being and social tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 41 (1), 42-65. (ABS 4*) (Listed in REF 2).doi.10.1016/j.annals.2012.12.001 <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160738312001612>
4. Bos, L., McCabe, S. & Johnson, S. (2013) Learning Never Goes on Holiday: An Exploration of Social Tourism as a Context for Experiential Learning. *Current Issues in Tourism*. (ABS 2*) DOI: 10.1080/13683500.2013.790878. (also available on request)

Grant Awards

- I. Grant awarded to Dr Scott McCabe. "Evaluating the stated needs for support for holidays". The social tourism working party consortium (Family Holiday Association, YHA (England and Wales), Unison Welfare, The Family Fund). May-November 2007. Value: £12 627.
- II. Grant awarded to Dr Scott McCabe and the Family holiday Association. Knowledge Transfer Partnership (TSB/ESRC). 1st November 2010 – 31st October 2012. Value: £137, 468.

4. Details of the impact

A body of work has informed the development of policy and practice and raised awareness of issues concerning the inclusion of disadvantaged people in leisure travel.

Informing policy

During 2009 to 2013 research findings were disseminated widely in the form of research papers, presentations and key note speeches, briefing papers, reports and press releases to policy professionals, government officials and practitioners in the tourism industry.

The Charity drew upon research evidence to provide a rationale for establishing the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Social Tourism (5.a.) in June 2011. The research continues to inform work of the APPG, as MP Paul Maynard notes:

"Since our group's formation, the work...has proved an invaluable resource – both in furthering the group's understanding of social tourism and promoting its economic and social benefits to wider political audiences. Indeed, your [McCabe's] expert advisory role and written evidence to our Parliamentary inquiry into social tourism crucially informed our report "Giving Britain a Break" – allowing us to map out for political stakeholders for the first time, the considerable social and well-being benefits of social tourism in the UK and Europe and to make recommendations to the Government to explore and build on this potential and incorporate social tourism policies in national tourism strategies." (5.b.)

Indeed, the APPG and the Charity have commenced the development of pilot initiatives with local authorities (including Blackpool, York and Kent) to determine the economic impacts of social tourism on tourism destination economies. The aim is to involve the public sector in social tourism for the first time in the UK (5.b.).

Furthermore, the Charity has used the research to inform policymaker's understanding of the issues and to drive forward the agenda for social tourism in the Scottish Parliament. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP) in May 2013 tabled a debate on the benefits that social tourism could bring to Scottish individuals, economy and society which drew upon research findings. In particular the role that social tourism played in increasing quality of family life and well-being for disadvantaged members of society was recorded in the transcript of the debate:

"I was particularly struck by research that was done by the University of Nottingham's business school, involving work by...McCabe and...Johnson on quality of life and social wellbeing. It was interesting to read the numbers that they came up with, which showed measurable improvements in family life, social life, family time and wellbeing, which are hugely important areas in which Governments struggle to bring about improvements. For the self-selecting group of people whom we really want to help, we can see a model that is at least financially neutral from the Government's point of view. Surely that is something that we all want to support." (5.j.)

The charity also utilised KTP research to establish new partnerships and networks including Visit England (VE) (5.e.). According to the Charity's Director, McDonald:

"The research has...enabled us to work more effectively with the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Tourism... and has pulled in more and more partners, as exemplified by our developing relationship with Visit England." (5.i.).

A case was subsequently made to include social tourism in Visit England's strategy to promote the domestic tourism economy (5.c.). The research (3.2, 3.3, 3.4) formed the basis for a number of case studies which have been published on the VE website, together with a report from the conference (5.d., 5.h. respectively), launched to coincide with 'English Tourism Week' in March 2013. Phil Evans, Head of Strategy at Visit England (VE), notes that:

"The work [research] has assisted with filling a knowledge gap in various aspects of this important and largely untapped aspect of the visitor economy.... [it] has enabled case studies to be built up which Visit England has used to inform policy development to support domestic tourism growth in resorts....We are continuing to refer to these case studies to support the Seaside Resorts Action Plan (part of the Strategic Framework for Tourism (2010-20))." (5.e.)

Informing practice

Research findings, on Social Tourism as a Context for Experiential Learning (3.4), stimulated debate leading to the development of a new Charity product, 'Family Learning Adventures'. The APPG report (5.a.), in October 2011, highlighted the benefits of holidays to disadvantaged children (3.4.) and issues concerning the exclusionary effects of seasonality and pricing structure in the UK tourism industry. This in turn, stimulated debate amongst policy makers and the tourism industry (5.a.; 5.f.; 5.g.), attracting attention from the news media. The Charity used this as a platform to commence engaging with schools and new partners such as the Children's University to connect social tourism practice and tourism policy with educational policy for the first time (5.a. and 5.i.) Designed to incorporate experiential learning outcomes into family holidays, the new product enables the charity to work effectively with schools to promote access to tourism for disadvantaged young people.

The research on well-being benefits was used by the charity to form the basis for a fundraising campaign (3.3). As McDonald notes,:

"The research study undertaken on subjective well-being improvements was also incorporated into the charity's fundraising activities. The 'Holidays Matter' theme and research findings were used... to develop a short film, and report which are also available on our website. The research...has provided an important boost to all our fundraising activities" (5.i.).

The research fed into the redesign and re-organisation of the charity's monitoring and evidence-based programme work during Autumn 2011 – Spring 2012, which resulted in a reduction in administrative expenditure now enabling the Charity to allocate more resources to increase the number of holidays for families in need (5.i.). An online database of literature on social tourism was developed as part of the KTP project and is now hosted on the charity website. It provides a resource for students, academics and members of the international tourism community such as International Social Tourism Organisation. It is, as John McDonald, Director of the Charity, states "... [a] fully searchable ... Knowledge Bank [and] a valuable new tool for both the charity and the wider community involved in social tourism."

Finally, the research has provided the evidence base necessary for the Charity to increase awareness of social tourism within the UK and beyond. In so doing, the Charity has raised its profile and strengthened relationships within tourism and travel necessary to continue its important work. New partnerships with HF Holidays and Kuoni (a luxury travel brand not normally associated with social tourism) have been formed and existing collaborations with companies such as TUI Travel PLC have continued. As a result, the Charity has been able to secure support to increase the provision of holiday support for disadvantaged families despite a challenging general fundraising environment (5.i.).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- a) All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Tourism (2011). Giving Britain a break: inquiry into the social and economic benefits of social tourism, London.
TSO. http://appgonsocialtourism.nationbuilder.com/giving_britain_a_break_report_launched
- b) Corroborative letter from MP Paul Maynard
- c) VisitEngland integrate social tourism into strategy:
<http://b2b.visitbritain.org/ntop/newslettermail.aspx?cultureInfo=&cid=55731&subscheduleid=1323&act=serverlink>
- d) VE host case studies from the 'Holiday's Matter' conference on their website
<http://www.visitengland.org/strategicframework/casestudies/>

(NOTE: at the time of submission, the Visit England website was being re-branded, and hence this URL may be inactive after November 2013, and the case studies under a different section of the website.)
- e) Corroborative letter from Phil Evans, Head of Strategy, VE
- f) Travel Weekly Round Table event:
<http://issuu.com/familyholidayassociation/docs/120726travelweeklystroundtable/3?e=0>
- g) Research gains media coverage:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/may/03/school-children-charity-holidays#start-of-comments>
<http://money.uk.msn.com/news/money-news/family-holidays-could-boost-economy>
- h) Charity develops strategic capacity for integrating research into policy, fundraising and practice: 'Holidays Matter – The Evidence, the Impact, the Future' conference report: available on the charity website on 16/03/13)
- i) Corroborative letter from John McDonald, Director of the Family Holiday Association.
- j) Scottish Parliament - Scotland Official Report Social Tourism - Members' Business Debate Date: 01.05.13. The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): Debate on motion S4M-05625, in the name of John Mason, on social tourism.