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The Extent and Role of Domestic Tourism in a Small Island: The Case of the Isle of Man

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents a case concerning micro-domestic tourism on the Isle of Man, British Isles. Despite being a small island, research highlights that considerable domestic tourism occurs (referred to as micro-domestic tourism to reflect the small island size and distinguish from wider British Isles tourism), including daytrips and overnight stays. Participants identified such behaviour as touristic, and distinct from other leisure activities. Qualitative interviews with residents explore the nature of and reasons for micro-domestic tourism within a small island. Breaks from routine, entertaining friends and family, and exploring less well known landscapes, are shown to underpin. Highlighted, is that micro-domestic tourism has a variety of potential benefits, which may counter some of the restrictions typically faced by a small island community. Support for an otherwise ailing tourism industry may help to protect facilities and infrastructure used by the wider community, maintain tourism capacity, and provide atmosphere attractive to foreign visitors.

## **Introduction**

There has been a neglect of domestic tourism by the wider literature. Cortes-Jimenez (2008) describes tourism research as usually restricted to international tourism; “Most studies only analyse international tourism either because of unavailability of data or because of undervaluing domestic tourism” (p 127). Where rare attention is given to domestic tourism, distinctions between macro and micro levels are often not made (e.g. Cooper, 1995). As a result, detailed understanding of and nuances within domestic tourism, may go unremarked, unexplained, and unaddressed. Most domestic tourism research focuses at a national level (although not micro states), and thus relatively little is known about more localised contexts (such as in-state versus national and international; Bonn et al, 2005). One area of exploration is island-to-island tourism, where island inhabitants are shown to pursue diverse tourism activities on a smaller island neighbour (i.e. Malta and Gozo; Boissevain, 1979, Trinidad and Tobago; Weaver, 1998).

The stagnation of many resorts, particularly those of the Mediterranean, hit by changing consumer tastes and new competition (e.g. Malta: Bull and Weed, 1999, Theuma, 2004, Chapman and Speake, 2011), has hastened the search for methods of revitalisation. However, revival strategies in such places have so far overlooked the potential for micro-domestic tourism, or that by island residents within island, in spite of evidence that residents support many activities such as festivals (Tsartas, 1992, Smith, 2003). Instead, focus in post mature resorts remains on international tourism (Baum, 1998, Baum and Hagen, 1999), as is the case for new and expanding destinations, (Buckley, 2002, Slinger-Friedman, 2009).

Consequently, strategies and recommendations outlined in the current literature neglect a significant potential market. They also frequently fail to distinguish between types of tourism according to local perceptions. To illustrate, Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996) suggest islanders see large similarities between domestic and foreign tourists, and that they have

similar positive and negative impacts. Wilson (1997) finds domestic tourists are viewed as having more negative impacts, Boissevain (1979) the opposite. As a result, unrealistic, generic strategies, competing with a global network of destinations for elusive international travellers (Weaver, 1993, Chapman and Speake, 2011), are frequently advised. These may additionally fail to take into account local cultural values and expectations, for example, representing a community to outsiders in a way that it finds patronising, (Saarinen, 2006), or targeting visitor groups whose behaviour may be socially disruptive (Hughes et al, 2010).

This paper aims to address such gaps in the literature, and investigate domestic tourism in a unique context; that of the small island nation. In-depth interviews are conducted with Isle of Man residents, in order to explore the extent, type, and motivations for, local domestic tourism. Recommendations are made in the discussion and conclusion to this paper, drawing links with previous domestic tourism study, and assessing the practical considerations for Isle of Man tourism planners.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Significance and Benefits of Domestic Tourism**

The literature dedicated to domestic tourism is a relatively narrow one. Nonetheless, a strong case is made for the important contribution of this side of tourism to local and national socio-economic success.

Domestic tourism accounts for upwards of four fifths of all tourism flows (Scheyvens, 2002). Even in nations with internationally orientated tourism industries, domestic tourism is demonstrated to be greater in terms both of size, and economic contribution (i.e. New Zealand; Pearce, 1990, Spain and Italy; Cortes-Jimenez, 2008, Italy: Massidda and Etzo (2012: 609). Estimates put the value of the UK domestic tourism industry in 2009 at around £70bn, more than three times the size of international (VisitBritain.org).

Although research focus tends to be on international tourism because of the export income generated (Neto, 2003), a range of benefits emphasise the advantages of domestic tourism also. Domestic tourism is widely acknowledged for inducing a redistribution of national income, from richer, typically metropolitan areas, to poorer, usually rural and isolated ones (Archer, 1978, Pearce, 1990, Sinclair, 1990, Neto, 2003). Hence, domestic tourism can offer opportunities for wealth transfer to, and sustainable development of poor regions, and without having to rely on further expansion of international mass tourism and its associated problems (Secklemann, 2002). Island states face a dilemma of needing economic development to counter trends towards economic stagnation and population decline (Keane, 1992, Andriotis, 2005), yet being particularly vulnerable to the overdevelopment, foreign control and environmental damage that often accompany mass tourism development (Wilkinson, 1987).

Additionally, domestic tourists have been suggested as providing more economic input to local communities, because they tend to use locally owned facilities, reducing leakage rates.

For example, domestic tourists are more likely to use small businesses in different places, rather than be concentrated in a few major resorts, to avoid pre-paid packages, and purchase local products and services (Shackley, 1996, Gossling et al, 2005, Schmallegger et al, 2011). Domestic tourism may be a means for destinations to reduce seasonality, and dependence on few originating markets, or declining markets (Sindiga, 1996).

Suggestions are also made that domestic tourists may be less negatively influenced by poor weather (Jacobsen et al, 2011), or susceptible to changing tastes and fashions (Wheeler, 1993, Urry, 2002), and have more realistic expectations of local attractions (Fennell, 2008). By contrast, “international visitors have higher service image expectations and standards, and they place more importance on environmental factors” (Bonn et al, 2005: 301). Thus, domestic tourists may be attracted to more peripheral destinations, which whilst having inclement weather, often basic infrastructure and access difficulties, also have unique and unspoilt cultural and natural landscapes (Baldacchino, 2006). Moreover, Mykletun and Crotts (2001) note in Bornholm, Denmark, that whilst international arrivals spend more per head, they have far lower propensity to revisit, thus over time, their spending is lower as well as less reliable. This is noteworthy for the Isle of Man, where 40% of domestic (British Isles) visitors have been four times or more, 10% eleven or more (Isle of Man Tourism Survey 2004). Hence, domestic tourists may offer a more stable, reliable, realistic, and less seasonal development option for many resorts, combating the long-term unpredictability of reliance on the international tourism industry (Tapper, 2001, Arremberri, 2005, Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005).

Finally, domestic tourists may be more sensitive to local cultural and natural carrying capacities, due to cultural proximity, shared values and resources (Ryan, 2001, McKerchner and Du Cros, 2002, Smith, 2003). Carr (2002) suggests tourists may indulge in less hedonistic, and potentially problematic, behaviour, domestically than when abroad. Domestic

tourists tend to travel shorter distances, often by rail rather than plane (Fennell, 2008). Travel by nationals within their own country may also promote national unity, pride and integration (Archer, 1978, Sindiga, 1996), and aid conservation of national resources through increasing public knowledge (Nguli, 1986).

These benefits of domestic tourism are especially pertinent to small islands, characterised by fragile cultural and natural landscapes easily eroded through inappropriate tourism and other development (Wilkinson, 1987), a sense of cultural isolation and outsider ignorance (Canavan, 2011b), and restricted economies often highly dependent on tourism as a viable development option (Lim and Cooper, 2009). At the same time, many islands are highly peripheral destinations when compared to mainland competitors (Andriotis, 2005). They are susceptible to changing fashions and external shocks and market changes beyond their control (Richardson and Fluker, 2004). Dependency on a few major originating markets or operators may risk objective, independent decision making (Marwick, 2000, Buckley, 2002), and lead to control of large foreign organisations which tend to increase leakages, and limit multiplier effects, and entrepreneurial activity (Buhalis, 1999, Tapper, 2001). Lastly, the seasonal nature of tourism places many limitations on the industry's ability to provide stable and high quality jobs for local residents (Mathieson and Wall, 1992, Arremberri, 2005). Nevertheless, Archer (1978) suggests that domestic tourism can be disruptive socially and culturally, much in the way international tourism may be, dependent on scale, volume, and regulation.

### **The Context: The Isle of Man**

[figure 1 near here]

A self-governing, but non sovereign state, the Isle of Man's democratically elected parliament has the power to pass legislation that affects the island without outside influence,

albeit indirect political, social and economic influence of the UK are significant. Located in the centre of the Irish Sea, the Isle of Man has an area of 588km<sup>2</sup> and is home to circa 80,000 people, around a third of which live in the capital, Douglas (Isle of Man Digest of Statistics, 2010). Despite its small size, the island is home to a distinctive culture informed by its geographical position, with both Celtic and Norse influences manifest in the Manx Gaelic language, a rich variety of cultural traditions, artistic practises, and sites. The island's natural landscape is equally varied, supporting a diversity of natural habitats, flora and fauna, including internationally significant rare bird populations, such as chough, curlew, and peregrine falcon (Hopson and Lamb, 1995).

Geographically the island is divided centrally, between Douglas and Peel by the Great Glen. The main regions of the island, roughly north, east, south and west, are geographically, economically and culturally distinct. Each has a principal town, all of which have unique flavour in terms of setting, architectural style, and cultural sites.

From the 1890's to the 1960's, the Isle of Man was a major British domestic tourism destination. Visitors chiefly came from the industrialised north of England for their annual holiday, or 'works weeks' when entire factories, even towns, would shut down to give employees a vacation (Rawcliffe, 2009). However, from the mid 1970's onwards, visitor arrivals began to fall, to levels around one third of past levels. The principle reason behind decline has been described as the rise of foreign travel. In 1970 only 1/3 of the UK population had taken a holiday abroad, by 1990 it was over 2/3 (Boniface and Cooper, 2009). Traditional domestic visitor orientated resorts have struggled to compete against foreign competition, particularly as overseas locations tend to be more exotic, fashionable, and climatically stable (Cooper, 1990, 1995, Walton, 2000).

The particular failure of the Isle of Man to adapt to and counter such changes has been documented, capturing the lack of investment in infrastructure and innovation, with only

belated moves to diversify markets, and an overreliance on a traditional, increasingly dated image that does not appeal to international, high end, or niche visitors (Cooper and Jackson, 1989, Cooper, 1995, Baum, 1998, Rawcliffe, 2009). The Isle of Man can clearly be seen to have reached a stagnation phase across key tourism indicators, including visitor arrivals, overall and per head visitor spending, which have all remained stagnant over the past decade despite initiatives to revitalise the industry. Total Bedspaces have fallen by over a third in this period. Today, tourism is only the sixth biggest sector of the island economy, creating around 5% of GDP and 14% of jobs. Offshore finance and related industry now accounts for the bulk of local economic activity; 23% of jobs, and 36% of GDP (Isle of Man Digest of Statistics 2010).

Around 96% of tourists continue to be from within the British Isles, circa 92% UK and 4% Ireland (Isle of Man Tourism Survey, 2004). At this point it is worth noting that Isle of Man residents view the island as a culturally, ethnically, and politically distinct part of the British Isles, a nation in its own right. Thus in one sense, all arrivals on the Isle of Man are foreign. At the same time, regarding the close ties between the island, the constituent parts of the UK, and Ireland, visitors from within the British Isles are considered domestic (British Isles is referred to, and not simply the UK, as the Isle of Man would consider ties to both communities to be equally close). Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996) discuss similar in Samnos, Greece, where residents distinguish between Greek and foreign visitors to an extent, yet also view them as having much in common, with all arrivals distinct from local islanders. In this study, micro-domestic is used to refer to tourist activity undertaken by island residents within island to distinguish from these, and to reflect the narrow geographic confines of such activity. The characteristics and definition of this micro-domestic tourism are discussed in the research findings and discussion sections of this paper.

## **Methodology**

The findings presented in this paper are part of the results from a larger ongoing study investigating tourism in the Isle of Man. Data were drawn from 21 in depth interviews conducted between May 2010 and September 2011. The aim was to speak to a range of Isle of Man residents, of varying length and location of residence, to obtain opinions and perspectives on tourism in the island, and present findings both within local context and participants own words (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), and wider social specific context (Milner and Mezias, 1996). The sampling process used a combination of purposive sampling and snowballing, with new interviewees recruited based on recommendations from other participants (as with Schmallegger et al, 2011). Some network sampling was used, in that a number of respondents were known personally to the researcher to some extent, although this was not the primary reason for recruiting.

Interviews were semi structured, following a broad discussion guide as per general literature recommendations (Flick, 2002, McGivern, 2006). The guide included questions about island tourism in general. In addition, a number of questions specifically sought to investigate, if any, patterns, motivations for, and types of micro-domestic tourism; that is travel for touristic purposes within the island, by island permanent residents.

All interviews were audio-taped and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. As no new patterns emerged, no further interviews were arranged. NVIVO computer software was used to assist data coding and analysis. A number of initial themes were identified from interviews that evolved over the research process and were further refined at the analysis stage. These were related to descriptions of the extent and type of micro-domestic tourism on the Isle of Man, and the motivations for pursuing such tourism.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Extent of Isle of Man Micro-Domestic Tourism**

Research first sought to explore the extent and type of micro-domestic tourism activities on the Isle of Man. Interviews found that these tended to fall into day-trips and related activities, or overnight stays. Of those interviewed, all described daytrip related activity, and eleven had stayed at least one night on island for purposes of tourism in the last three years.

Overnight stays were in a variety of accommodation types: motor-homes (3 interviewees), camped in tents (5 interviewees), and those who stayed in paid accommodations, (5 interviewees). Of this latter group, two had rented cottages on the Calf of Man, an uninhabited island and bird observatory to the south of the Isle of Man, two had stayed in hotels close to Douglas for celebration related reasons (wedding and New Year), and one in a guesthouse in Ramsey. Participants camping in tents had stayed in a variety of places, both official campsites, and wild camping on beaches or wilderness areas, and motor-home users stayed in approved roadside locations. In addition, one participant owned a second home, used for the purpose of personal holidaying, as well as being rented out as tourist accommodation.

Motor-home users and those staying in paid accommodation tended to be older (40+), and staying as couples. Four campers were in late teens or twenties and single, camping alone or with friends, whilst one was older and did so with their children. Motor-home users tended to have had the most overnight stays in the past three years, (9stays), and to have stayed for longest duration (2nights), (other than the holiday home owner), followed by campers (3stays, 1night), and those in other accommodations (1stay, 1night).

Regards day trips, all participants self-defined having been on what may be considered tourist type day breaks. For example, using phrases such as ‘going on holiday’, ‘road trip’

and 'being a tourist' and providing examples of such behaviour. These all involved a number of common factors, largely shared with overnights. Namely, travelling longer distances, typically to the other end of the island, for the pursuit of communal leisure opportunities in less well known surroundings, and to visit specific attractions and places associated with tourism. Thus a typical day trip was described by one respondent:

*"A typical day out would be; go to Peel, walk around the castle, museum, up the hill, do the shops... there is the Leece Museum... and then have an ice cream at (x). It doesn't matter about the weather. If it is nice the children might go swimming off the pier ... Then on the way back we'd probably call in at Tynwald Mills for the women to have a look around... cafe. Oh and we might stop at a glen either going or coming back to have a walk."*

14 respondents said they took 'three or four' of these day trips per year, 3 answered 'five or more', 2 'one or two', and 1 'most weekends' (1 did not answer).

Leisure activities differed little between day and overnight visitors. Common to all these experiences was a desire for entertainment for a prolonged period of time, at least a full day. Tourist activities, such as visiting an attraction, took longer than general leisure activities, and were usually described as combined with other pursuits. These included hiking and walking (18 respondents), visiting small shops and cafes (14), wildlife watching (9), and swimming (5). Attractions were important, particularly the beach, cultural-historic and natural sites. Frequent comment on having an ice cream, playing on the beach, and visiting shops and attractions, illustrated the traditional holiday orientation of local tourism. Tourist activities were also communal, with all respondents describing partaking with other people. An important aspect of this was the sharing of memories, places and experiences with others,

described by 7 respondents. Other activities not considered touristic, such as going bird watching, tended to take less time, be pursued exclusively, and solitary.

*“Me and the girlies go for a day out (to Port Erin) each year... Play football on the beach, have ice creams on the prom, wind the windows down and check out the hotties!”*

*“I always take visitors from across to Peel... walk up the hill, go to the castle, have an ice cream.”*

*“It is nice to go down south with the grandchildren and make it a full day out. You can go to the castle, take them to see the trains... we always stop for an ice cream, even if it's raining.”*

*“If you want a full day out then go to Castletown and Port Erin. Round the castle and on the beach, up to the tower, maybe have an ice cream, and then off to the Sound to see the seals and have a cup of tea. Lovely!”*

As the previous quotes also show, Peel and Port Erin were popular destinations because of their perceived resort qualities, and this image was an important part of feeling like a tourist. Interviewees appreciated the towns' holiday atmosphere, with people often on the beach in contrast to the deserted coasts elsewhere. Such activity is known to be important in small islands, with recognition that young people in particular appreciate the atmosphere tourists generate (Duffield and Long, 1981, Marjavaara, 2007, Canavan, 2011a). As such, day trippers mainly described locations considered touristic, due to influences such as marketing, site layout, atmosphere, and visitor numbers. By comparison, Ramsey was mentioned as a day trip destination by only two interviewees, and was dismissed by two more as not offering

such an experience. Overnighters however were more willing to travel to, or sought out, more isolated and less well known places.

*“The Sound is really nice... I like that there are always a lot of people there enjoying the setting... It (the island) can get lonely; it’s nice to share it with people.”*

*“Peel definitely (for a day out). It is a really traditional seaside sort of place.”*

*“Everyone seems to go to Peel don’t they? There are always people out having a good time, having ice-creams. It is always busy, even in winter.”*

*“We get a few coaches of old people in the summer who stop to use the toilet at the swimming pool and that is about it. Ramsey doesn’t do enough to make people want to stay.”*

*“It (Ramsey) is a nice place for a day out; you have the park and harbour area which is pretty, but I think a lot of people don’t come because it doesn’t have the image of a holiday sort of place. It is just somewhere for shopping; like a smaller Douglas... a bit run down and derelict.”*

The infrequency of visits to either north or south was an important part of being considered touristic activity. For this reason, no interviewees mentioned daytrips to Douglas in the context of tourism, perhaps because visits to the capital are more frequent and usually associated with shopping, commercial, or government related duties. Although a small island, public transport connections between north and south can be disjointed, with the overall journey taking up to two hours. Car journeys, although faster, are restricted by small roads. Visitation patterns tended to be north to south and vice versa. Travel in this way is infrequent and associated with more special occasions. Infrequency of travel also appeared to reinforce a

sense of distinction between island regions, adding to the sense of going somewhere different.

*“I haven’t been to Castletown in about six years!”*

*“It seems silly. When I first came here people said they only went to Port Erin once a year and I didn’t believe them, but now I am like that too. It gets like it is a big effort.”*

*“Going down south for a holiday; it’s like going to a different country!”*

*“I find it quite strange when I go down there actually; you know it, but you don’t either. It is a bit like being in someone else’s house.”*

*“It is surprisingly different down there... Like it doesn’t seem like it is the same island.”*

*“The south feels much more touristy... well maybe it is just it feels like that to me because I’m coming from the north. Maybe they come to Ramsey and feel like they are on holiday!”*

Lastly, questions were asked regards the estimated spend and spending habits of residents when they travelled or stayed locally. Campers spent the least, closely followed by motor-home users, as their accommodation was free, they tended to cook for themselves on site with food brought from home, and were interested in visiting wilderness areas rather than paid for attractions and shopping facilities.

*“I don’t think it costs anything to be honest; that is kind of the point. I haven’t got any money, so this is a cheap holiday.”*

Budget concerns were discussed by thirteen, chiefly younger and family residents as influencing their decision to travel locally, although in all cases this seemed a secondary

consideration. Respondents estimated that they probably spent in the region of £5 - £35 per person per day during a day trip, although not all interviewees were able to give an estimate, saying that typical amount varied too widely, and depended on the destination, or motivation for a trip.

Younger and older respondents tended to spend the most individually, with the former shopping and snacking, and the latter dining out. Families spent less per person, often conscious of budgets, one reason for a local trip as well as the logistical ease. For instance, they rarely ate out as a group, tending to have brought own food with them and extra cakes or sweets on the day. Yet costs of entrance to attractions for a family meant they often spent more overall, and they travelled the most frequently for day trips. Spending on attractions, food and drink, transport, and local shopping, were discussed. To illustrate, food and drink might be a picnic supplemented with local baked goods or ice creams bought fresh on the day, an evening meal in a restaurant, or most likely a light meal in a cafe.

*“Well entrance (to attraction) is five pounds per person for a start, average, nothing is cheap to go to on the island; it is always about five to ten pounds for a ticket. And then you probably want to get drinks and a bite or something.”*

*“I probably didn’t think I spent all that much really, but to be honest, when you look at the petrol and everything, going to a cafe, maybe buying a few bits for the children, it all adds up... I’d think we must spend about thirty pounds (for a day out for four).”*

### **Motivations for domestic tourism**

A number of influences motivated participants to undertake domestic tourism.

As previously highlighted, communality was an important aspect of touristic behaviour. Interviewees described a need to entertain others as well as themselves, such as children or

overseas guests. The enjoyment of sharing experiences with others was described by 9 participants. Social opportunities motivated many to stay overnight. Romance was important to those in paid accommodations, with 3 respondents describing getting away for time alone as a couple. Motor-home users talked about the convivial atmosphere of campsites, making friends, sharing food, and meeting new people, including from abroad, particularly during motorbike festivals. Two participants who had stayed on the Calf of Man twice, and intended to again, did so because they travelled with a group of friends who had a good time together. These, and two campers, described hedonistic behaviour associated with staying overnight with friends, such as sexual activity, drinking, and smoking marijuana, with a perception of being 'away from the rules'. Social factors were clearly something that many interviewees looked forward to when planning future breaks on island.

*“Oh my God we all got so drunk... x and y got together and it was so funny. We had the best time.”*

*“You meet all sorts of interesting people... This one couple we got to know during (motorbike festival). Well now they come over for it and stay with us at our house, and we have been and stayed with them in the Netherlands.”*

*“It just like really brings you like together. Like, it is away from parents and everybody else, and so you can like really get to know each other.”*

Important to all interviewees was a drive to do something different, namely visiting somewhere unusual, and doing unusual things. These changes were usually modest, eating ice-cream on the seafront for instance, but were a break from the everyday and mundane.

*“Sometimes I just think; ‘oh why don’t we have lunch in the campervan?’ and so we might. It’s just trying to have a little fun.”*

Such breaks in routine were described positively. A majority of interviewees discussed how they provided entertainment, relaxation, and gained new experiences from. Escapism from habit and routine, but also restrictions of social obligation were described by five female participants. This escapism may be particularly important on a small island, which are often characterised as socially claustrophobic (Wilkinson, 1987, Marjavaara, 2007, Royle, 2008). Several respondents discussed claustrophobia in always visiting the same shops, meeting the same people, and following the same routines in local towns.

*“You get tired of doing the same thing don’t you? So I just sometimes decide to run down for the bus and go out, you know, before they can come in for their coffee. That way I can’t do anything... I don’t have to worry about them coming in and wanting feeding.”*

*“It’s so nice to go in the shops and just be able to browse... You can just space out. Here I am looking through the window to see if anyone I know is at the till.”*

*“...but now I have friends who’ve moved there and I’m worried I’ll bump into them. They are probably up here at the same time thinking the same thing!”*

Related to the desire to do something different, was a desire to explore the island, particularly areas individuals had less frequent access to. This was described by a majority of day trippers and all overnight interviewees. For example, those staying on the Calf of Man detailed a desire to experience the wildlife and inaccessible landscapes of the island, in a way which

relatively few people had. For campers, their activity gave them access to enjoy tranquillity, romance, isolation, and time to appreciate the natural beauty of their surroundings.

*“You can get really close to the wildlife. There was this hen harrier just sat on fence post about twenty feet away from my mum. I don’t know if it’s because they’re not used to seeing people. It’s really good if you are into that sort of thing; wildlife.”*

*“I’ve camped a few times on the beach at Cornaa... there’s not many people who can have done that and it makes you feel more connected with the place. You can go back and it is more special, like it is yours.”*

*“It is the best thing (camping on the beach), with a fire, couple of beers. Nobody is about, just you and the stars and the sound of the waves... the light is beautiful... it is like seriously good.”*

*“Half an hour and are away from everything; it’s great.”*

For those staying overnight, the ability to be in an unfamiliar place for longer emerged as important to their decision to stay. All paid accommodation and motor-home users, discussed the advantage of being able to stay in a place for longer, and hence get to know more intimately than a day out would allow. This included being in a location at all times of day, including early morning and evening when day visitors have had to depart, and had the further advantage of allowing to explore more, and at a leisurely pace.

*“You can relax, it is a proper holiday and don’t have to do anything, can just enjoy being in the town.”*

*“You don’t have to worry about taking sandwiches or finding somewhere to eat.”*

*“We go all over. It’s the best way to see a place; to stay in it, and then you get to know it at all times of the day, not just the afternoon... Can pace yourself.”*

Exploring the island appeared to have had positive impacts on many interviewees.

Knowledge gained from domestic tourism was widely discussed. This included facts and information presented at cultural-historic sites such as the castles, and more general appreciation of the islands diverse landscapes. Participants described surprise at things found out, related facts or recommendations learnt, and three articulated how exploration and learning made them feel more connected with the island. In addition, experiencing the positive sides of the island, sharing it with others, helped to confirm local civic pride. At the same time as experiencing less usual aspects of the island, such as more vibrant atmosphere, helped to challenge some of the more negative preconceptions, for instance that the island is too quiet.

*“I haven’t (camped) in ages. Now I really want to. I think you forget to appreciate what we have sometimes... It is about being reminded of it.”*

*“I think that if you live and work here then maybe you, you stop looking at your surroundings if you know what I mean. You start to see it the same way and you don’t get out there and enjoy it.”*

*“I didn’t even know what the (Laxey) wheel was for which is embarrassing. But now I do.”*

*“I’m glad I actually went and did it (visited Calf of Man). I’d always meant to... You sort of feel like you ought to know what’s there if you live here.”*

*“When you realise what we have in terms of the wildlife, yeah, I mean it really makes you realise just what we have. I mean we have (birdlife) as good as anywhere, and it is just here. So yeah, I think it (local tourism) makes you appreciate the island more.”*

Finally, good weather was described by eight interviewees as either a motivational factor for going out on a trip, or at least a prerequisite for travel. Due to living locally, residents may decide to postpone a planned trip when the weather is poor, or on the spur of the moment decide to go out if it is sunny. Six interviewees stated the island had little to do in such weather. Nevertheless, other respondents described going out regardless.

*“We don’t really have much in the way of indoor attractions, so if it is raining then that isn’t much good. (But) if the weather is nice I can’t think of much else better than being on the island.”*

*“Oh it was lovely (the weather) so I just got up and said to (x) let’s go out.”*

*“Another good thing (about camping on island) is that you don’t have to get there and find you are sat in a pool of mud with water seeping into everything all weekend... You can just go when it is nice, and come home if it isn’t.”*

*“As long as it’s not too bad I don’t think it matters. You can always wrap up and dodge the showers... is better than just staying in all the time.”*

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Domestic Tourism on the Isle of Man**

A unique contribution of this study is to raise awareness of the incidence of micro-domestic tourism in a small island, where limited size is not a barrier to significant touristic activity. Journeys by residents tended to be relatively short, circa 15-30km, yet landscape variety, infrequency of travel, travel times and expense, and embedded nature of many residents in a local area, satisfies definitions whereby domestic tourism involves travel outside of the normal place of residence to other areas within the country (Burkart and Medlik, 1981). All interviewees described some form of local tourism activity, including half who had stayed overnight in a variety of accommodations.

This study also helps to describe the nature of this micro-domestic tourism, building on the definitions and actions of local inhabitants. Micro-domestic tourism is viewed by participants as a social activity involving certain attractions and activities, notably traditional seaside resort orientated. These are situated in locations that are scenically attractive and less accessible, hence visited less frequently, and involve the pursuit of communal leisure opportunities over longer periods of time, usually a full day or more. Findings were largely the same for all interviewees, although day trippers tended to focus more on cultural and urban attractions, and overnight visitors, particularly campers, more on natural and rural ones. As such, day trippers tended to appreciate busy, atmospheric locations, and overnight visitors isolated, tranquil places, with romantic or hedonistic possibilities.

It is clear from research that accessibility and landscape variety are underlying conditions for domestic tourism activity in the Isle of Man. Despite small size, the landscape diversity, dispersal of population centres, and relatively long journey times of the island, all enable such escapism and contrasts to exist. Interviewees tended to travel in a pattern north to south, and

vice versa, to more distant and judged distinct parts of the island. The towns of the south and west coasts were additionally popular because of their touristic atmosphere. Journeys from one side of the island to another were relatively infrequent, and hence are more likely to be reserved for special occasions, leisure purposes, and a full day out involving multiple activities. Travel to the capital Douglas by contrast was only mentioned by two tourists, who had stayed in local hotels. Despite the many attractions of the town, visiting the local museums or shops was not considered tourist activity. This appears to be because travel to Douglas is easier, more frequent, and associated with commuting for employment, official business, and shopping for everyday items, hence not considered unusual. Such findings suggest that micro-domestic tourists do prefer to visit more out of the way places, as per Archer (1978), perhaps because key towns and major cultural sites are already well known and no longer novel. Moreover, the beaches, mountains, and small towns of the island, may have more hedonic and social meanings to residents, than more utilitarian areas and facilities (Snepenger et al, 2007). Findings additionally illustrate, that as with international tourists, environmental conservation is central to an areas touristic attractiveness (Mihalic, 2000, Sedmak and Mihalic, 2008).

Research concurs with extant literature on tourist motivations, notably the socio-psychological desire to escape from mundane environments, relax, enhance kinship relationships and facilitate social interaction (Crompton, 1979, 1981). Both positive escapism; that concerned with learning and broadening minds, and negative escapism; seeking fun, pleasure, and getting away from responsibilities and stress (Fodness, 1994), were identified. For example, enthusiasm for exploring new areas, or simply wanting a day out without the interference of social obligations. Hence, micro-domestic tourism on the Isle of Man is recognisable as such, in that it fits with understandings of tourist behaviour. As Jaakson (1986) notes, escapism, relaxation, and proximity to nature underlie second home

tourism, even when the second home may be within visual range of the first. Small scale does not mean tourism activity, and the motivations to undertake such activity, are nonexistent.

Finally, there was a clear desire to explore the diversity and contrasts of the island, both to experience in itself, and also to get to know the island as a whole. Many participants commented on their greater knowledge of, and appreciation for, the island as a result of local tourism, which for some included an increased sense of belonging. Adams (1998) suggests that Indonesian domestic tourists seek to explore a deeper understanding about their own national identity in this way. Hence, research on the Isle of Man agrees with judgements that domestic tourism can be associated with deepening collective identity and understanding (Archer, 1978), rather than the more individualistic associations of international tourism (Wheeler, 1993, Adams, 1998). Although socio-psychological factors were the most common motivation, as described, cultural factors were thus shown to exist also. Crompton (1979) refers to this as where the emphasis is on the destination itself as a place of novelty, interaction and learning, rather than a function through which needs, such as escapism, can be satisfied. As with Klenosky (2002), both push factors, relating to needs and wants of the traveller, and pull factors, or features of the destination itself, motivated Isle of Man micro-domestic tourists.

### **Implications of findings**

Findings demonstrate that micro-domestic tourism occurs on the Isle of Man, including a large daytrip market, residents staying overnight in a variety of types of accommodation, and with considerable associated economic input into the local economy as a result. This input was through described spending on visiting attractions, transport use, shopping and eating out, as well as some accommodation spend. Although local figures are not available, only from the narrow survey sample, a day trip was estimated by interviewees to involve spending

of a rough average of £15 per person. Assuming a majority of the island's residents, say 50,000, partake in similar activity at least three times each year, and micro-domestic tourism spend would be around £2.25million per annum. This is a highly speculative suggestion that would need quantitative verification. It nonetheless draws attention to the contribution of micro-domestic activity.

Whilst this type of tourist spend represents purely a recycling of money in the local economy, and does not address the foreign exchange gap import-dependent small islands typically experience (Ioannides, 1995, Ayres, 2000), it is an input which may help to maintain the overall viability of the Isle of Man tourism sector, which itself is an export industry. Spending was largely at small, locally owned enterprises, helping to support these. Residents spend on tourism may moreover represent a redistribution of wealth from core to peripheral areas, for example the capital to outlying towns and rural regions, and from those working in the financial industries, to those employed in tourism and hospitality sectors. Lastly, day trips and overnight breaks were only somewhat weather-dependent, potentially extending the tourist season. Thus, tourism planners may be able to use domestic tourism for sustainable development of the industry.

As of yet, little recognition exists of the role micro-domestic tourism may play in local area success. Nonetheless it appears that such tourism may offer a realistic development, maintenance, or revitalisation strategy, for locations which, like the Isle of Man, have tourism industries in persistent decline. For instance, local tourists are likely to contribute to overall touristic atmosphere, making a location more appealing to foreign visitors (Canavan, 2011b), and provide support for an otherwise ailing tourism industry, enabling it to maintain key infrastructure and facilities. As Crouch and Ritchie (1999) identify: "Foreign demand thrives more readily when domestic tourism is established" (p. 141). One reason may be the development of 'tourism culture' (Sindiga, 1996) whereby residents are more involved with

the industry, promoting entrepreneurship, and contributing to positive host-visitor interactions. In turn, social, cultural, and natural benefits, brought by the industry, are more likely to be maintained, and thus avoid the potential for negative consequences caused by industry decline (Agarwal and Brunt, 2006, Rouan et al, 2010), rapid shifts to other industries which may distort traditional landscapes (Hampton and Christensen, 2007, Canavan, 2011b), or environmental damage as a consequence of overdependence on international arrivals (Ioannides, 1995, Ayres, 2000).

Moreover, micro-domestic tourism provides relevant economic, social and cultural benefits in a small island, where these are otherwise typically restricted (Hall and Boyd, 2005). To illustrate, entertainment and social opportunities supplied may be particularly welcomed by young residents, who were indeed enthusiastic interviewees, and counter trends for outward migration of youth in small islands (Keane, 1992, Marjavaara, 2007).

Additionally, a strong domestic tourism industry may suggest a sense of ownership by residents of their locale. Isle of Man research demonstrates interviewees felt stimulated by, and interested in, their surrounding environments, and are thus motivated to explore further. In contrast, some research suggests that island residents may feel such landscapes have been overwhelmed by foreign visitor volumes (Theuma, 2004, Van der Duim and Lengkeek, 2004), fallen under the control of private business and landowners (Buhalis, 1999), or been damaged by the industry serving them, causing loss of traditional roles, values and ways of life, natural resources, wildlife, privacy, and local distinctiveness (Tsartas, 1992, Boissevain, 1996, Rouan et al, 2010). Hence ability and desire to participate in tourism activity becomes restricted. Furthermore, accessing infrastructure or attractions may not be possible, due to price barriers, political policy, and private land access (Weaver, 1993, Sindiga, 1996), frequently generating resentment and tensions between hosts and guests as a result (e.g. Sanchez and Adams, 2008). A vibrant micro-domestic tourism industry therefore is a sign of

unspoilt landscapes accessible to locals, providing social interest, leisure opportunities, supporting community infrastructure and industry, and ultimately, contributing to social cohesion and civic pride. Indeed this may help explain the highly positive attitudes of Isle of Man residents towards the industry recorded by Canavan (2011b). In turn, such local support for the industry is likely to improve its competitiveness, due to the influence residents have over visitor experiences (Simmons, 1994, Go and Govers, 2000, Ritchie and Inkari, 2006). Hence, domestic tourism activity may provide insight into destination, economic, and societal, wellbeing, competitiveness, and sustainability.

These being the case, when assessing the success or competitiveness of island destinations (e.g. Mihalic, 2000, Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto, 2005, Croes, 2011), micro-domestic tourism needs to be taken into account. At present this is not so. What is more, future Isle of Man government tourism strategy need to recognise, respond to, and exploit the potential of micro-domestic tourism. Research has shown the micro-domestic tourism market exists and has many relevant benefits. Yet this position, role, and potential have been largely overlooked.

Failure to recognise that micro-domestic tourism is a vibrant local industry is symptomatic of a wider disregard of the tourism sector, to focus on offshore finance, with questionable social and environmental consequences (Hampton and Christensen, 2007, Canavan, 2011a). For example, under-appreciating the social and entertainment opportunities residents gain from local tourism (Canavan, 2011b). Meanwhile, feasibility of attracting international visitors to places such as the Isle of Man, is questioned, due to the similarity of tourist destination's attraction strategies (Chapman and Speake, 2011), and competition from new destinations, or those attempting to renew (Du Cros, 2001). The inability of the Isle of Man to compete for foreign arrivals despite twenty years of different strategies (Cooper, 1990,

Canavan, 2011b) demonstrates this. At best, a tourism strategy which fails to consider the micro-domestic market is likely to limit the potential for mutual support with international tourism (as per Crouch and Ritchie, 1999). At worst, it may isolate residents, fail to identify a location's strengths, under-exploit potential support for facilities, attractions, atmosphere, businesses and infrastructure, and hasten overall tourism industry decline.

Practical recommendations include a need for tourism practitioners to acknowledge the importance of micro-domestic tourism. This may be particularly so in small islands, peripheral locations and post maturity resorts, which can harness to overcome some of the challenges faced, such as providing social opportunities and activities for local residents. On the Isle of Man this requires government and private sector recognition of local tourism trends and patterns, involving research and public consultation. With this necessary change in mindset, strategies seeking to maximise the potential of local tourism can be developed. For example, targeting niche groups who share resident's enthusiasm for traditional seaside activities and unspoilt landscapes. Residents may be used to provide atmosphere, word of mouth marketing, act as hosts, and generally share their knowledge and enthusiasm to promote the island and facilitate positive visit experiences for foreign arrivals.

At a local level, locations such as Ramsey may be able to emulate those like Port Erin, which were popular amongst interviewees, in order to attract more micro-domestic tourism. Bonn et al (2005) describe tailoring destination atmospherics for such purpose. Doing so would support local businesses, help redistribute wealth to less economically successful parts of the island, and diversify local economies. Low cost measures, such as providing information boards emphasising local history and mapping access to less well known attractions, would help to foster the sense of tourist atmosphere important to participants, facilitate touristic activity, and meet a desire amongst residents for exploration and knowledge broadening. Protection of cultural and natural heritage is also essential, with

micro-domestic tourism clearly rooted in the diversity and quality of these (as per Massidda and Etzo, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Peron (2004) describes islands as worlds in miniature. This article demonstrates that they correspondingly host domestic tourism in miniature. Attention is brought to both the existence, and potential benefits of such local tourism. These benefits may facilitate economic competitiveness, social, cultural and natural wellbeing, and sustainability of the overall tourism industry. As such, micro-domestic tourism activity ought to be considered when assessing the competitiveness of destinations and formulating strategy documents.

Due to the small sample size involved, generalizability of the findings is limited. Moreover the lack of homogeneity between small islands may limit findings to a case by case basis (Milne, 1992). Further research is needed in comparable and contrasting small islands to the Isle of Man. For instance, those within archipelagos or adjacent to mainland areas, located in both warm and cold water zones, and with international tourism industries at different lifecycle stages, in order to better understand the extent of and conditions for such micro level domestic tourism. Quantitative research with larger samples would meanwhile help to better assess the scale and contribution of this type of tourism.

This paper makes a first step in developing such an understanding. This has both practical implications for the sustainable management of tourism in small island locations, and for contributing to theoretical understanding of domestic tourism itself. Island tourism practitioners ought to be aware of a local demand for tourism products, and accordingly harness this demand to support the industry during the low season, in less developed local regions, and potentially during periods of industry stagnation. It should also be borne in mind the demand amongst residents in such places for touristic activities, a further consideration

when managing wider industry replacement or decline (Canavan, 2011b). Theorists meanwhile, may recognise that different levels of and definitions of domestic tourism exist. Islands, which often have a unique and at times insular identity, may view all outsiders as foreign, with cultural implications therefore regards managing development. Lastly, just because an island is a small geographical area, does not preclude the motivations for or occurrence of micro-domestic tourism by local residents. Landscape diversity, limited transport infrastructure, and strong local identity, with national and regional characteristics, all make tourism activity possible in a confined space.

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**Figure 1: Isle of Man Local and Regional Map**

