Exploring the Role of Irish Local Authorities in Tourism Development: A Senior Management Perspective on Tourism Development in Cork County Council

Monica Moisuc
Cork Institute of Technology

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Exploring the Role of Irish Local Authorities in Tourism Development: A Senior Management Perspective on Tourism Development in Cork County Council

Monica Moisuc

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
MA by Research

Tourism and Hospitality Department
Cork Institute of Technology

Research Supervisors
Ms. Breda Hickey, Prof. Margaret Linehan

Submitted to Cork Institute of Technology

May 2018
The author hereby declares that, except where duly acknowledged, this thesis is entirely her own work and has not been submitted for any other degree in any University or Institute of Technology.

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Research Supervisors

Mrs. Breda Hickey____________________________________

Prof. Margaret Linehan______________________________
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List of Abbreviations

AILG Association of Irish Local Government
CARDI Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland
CCMA City and County Management Association
CPMR Committee for Public Management Research
CSO Central Statistics Office
DMO Destination Management Organisation
DOE Department of Environment
DTTAS Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
EIIS Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme
EPA Environmental Protection Agency
EPRS European Parliamentary Research Service
EU European Union
GDP Gross Domestic Product
ITIC Irish Tourist Industry Confederation
LCDC Local Community Development Committee
LECP Local Economic and Community Plan
LEO Local Enterprise Office
LGMA Local Government Management Agency
LUT Land Use and Transport
NITB Northern Ireland Tourism Board
OCP Official Community Plan
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRSI Pay Related Social Insurance
RTA Regional Tourism Authorities
SMTE Small and Medium Tourism Enterprise
UNWTO United Nations World Tourism Organisation
VAT Value-Added Tax
WTO World Trade Organisation
WTTC World Travel and Tourism Council
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Abstract

In an Irish context, the government's engagement in tourism and its role in developing the sector is acknowledged across most Irish government publications. However, despite efforts made to highlight the major role of the government in tourism, the number of studies that seek to understand how Irish local governments are engaging in tourism is limited. In an attempt to fill this knowledge gap, this study brings a new contribution to the current relevant literature by exploring the role of the government in developing tourism within a local Irish context.

Using a qualitative case-study approach, the particular entity under investigation is Cork County Council. The research aims to provide an understanding of how the local authority engages in tourism, by examining its functions and responsibilities in relation to tourism development. It is argued that local government has a direct, unique and critical role in developing tourism and the author examines the specific manner in which this role is enacted and performed in Cork County. The study's central objective calls for in-depth insights from Cork County Council's tourism representatives on the role of the local authority in tourism development.

The findings report that the function and role of Cork County Council in terms of tourism development is currently evolving, while the analysis of data highlights current challenges, strategies and collaborations for tourism development in Cork County Council. The study reveals five main functional areas for tourism development for the local authority. Specifically, the author draws attention to local government's engagement in tourism development in areas such as product development, economic and community development, marketing and promotion, planning and policy and sustainable tourism development. The findings bring additions to the current literature in each of these areas, and develops important insights of practical significance to policy makers on tourism development. From an Irish context, the research represents a new contribution to an under-investigated subject.

In summary, this study extends the current understanding of the role of the local government in tourism development and concludes by suggesting practical implications for Cork County Council in addressing tourism development and providing a foundation for further research.
Chapter One: Introduction
1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction and the background of the research study. The Irish government's engagement in tourism and its role in the development of the sector, both at a national and local level, are discussed and elaborated on. The chapter further outlines the rationale for the study, the main research aims and objectives, followed by an overview of the research methodology employed. This chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis.

1.1 Rationale for Research

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) (2014), notes that over time, Ireland's tourism performance experienced periods of growth and decline, where wider political and economic trends significantly influenced overseas visitor numbers in each decade. The period of growth which had occurred from 2002-2007 turned into a sharp decline from 2008, being fuelled by the worldwide economic crisis as well as by national competitiveness issues. As a response to the economic crisis in 2011, the Irish government placed tourism at the centre of its economic recovery plan. The state supported the sector with various measures and the tourism industry’s recovery has been assisted by several welcome government actions including the introduction and retention of the reduced 9% VAT rate for hospitality activities, jobs initiative measures, PRSI, investment support, EIIS, visa reform, innovative initiatives such as The Gathering, The Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East, The Dublin Discovery Trail, marketing support, the 0% air travel tax and the March 2015 publication of the Tourism Policy which includes ambitious long-term targets. (Irish Hotels Federation, 2015).

All these measures led to significant increases in inbound visitor numbers and as a result, tourism started delivering major economic benefits. For example, in 2013, tourism was responsible for overseas earnings of €3.3 billion, while the total tourism revenue for the economy was estimated at around €5.7 billion (DTTAS, 2015). Since then, the Irish economy has stabilised and the tourism sector is now thriving, representing one of the most significant drivers of economic recovery at both national and regional levels. Therefore, tourism is now arguably one of most important and successful economic sectors, which aided by the national government plan, had a significant role to play in Ireland's economic renewal (Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC), 2013).

The Irish government's engagement in tourism and its role in the development of the sector is acknowledged across most Irish government publications (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). Building on the experience of the Irish tourism sector over the past couple of years, recent reports argue
that the government and its agencies can play a useful role in guiding policy, marketing, planning and in delivering programmes that act to enhance tourism performance (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). For example, Fáilte Ireland (2014), states that, by intervening in tourism, the government aims to maximise the wide-ranging economic and social benefits of the sector, by promoting Ireland, supporting enterprises and jobs and providing an attractive, competitive overall offering for tourists. Furthermore, DTTAS (2014), describes the overall role of the state in setting tourism policy at a national level, and notes the existence of various stakeholders such as agencies, government departments and partners for the Irish tourism sector:

*The National Tourism Division sets national tourism policy, providing the strategic direction required to support the growth of a competitive and sustainable tourism industry, through the development, implementation and influencing of a range of policy actions and programmes by the Tourism Department, its Agencies and other Government Departments, in consultation with industry partners* (DTTAS.ie, 2014 p. 2).

Hall (2000), for example, notes that the government helps shape the economic framework for the tourism industry, provides the infrastructure and educational requirements for tourism, establishes the regulatory environment in which business operates and takes an active role in promotion and marketing.

The distinct but related processes of tourism policy formulation and tourism planning have also been subject of considerable attention from a variety of perspectives (Veal, 2002; Hall, 1994). Hall (1994), identifies that all governments, local or national, have a policy for tourism, whether it represents an active involvement, an individualised approach or somewhere in between. Veal (2002), also notes that, in this context, such involvement comprises governmental bodies at national, state and regional levels and such entities also include a range of agencies allied to or working on behalf of government.

As a general trend, however, Smith (1989), points out that *government agencies at every level from the international down to small towns have adopted a progressively more active role in the use of tourism as an economic development tool* (p. 27). Smith's statement is particularly relevant in Ireland's case where the government recently used and promoted tourism as a tool for economic recovery.
As previously mentioned, in response to the Irish economic crisis, at national level, the Irish state supported tourism through guiding policy, marketing, planning and by delivering programmes that acted to enhance tourism performance. Yet, it is important to note that sub-national governance in Ireland does not operate independently of national government and changes in national policy and priorities are rapidly reflected at local level (MacCarthaigh, 2012 p. 4).

According to DTTAS (2014), many Irish local authorities have long recognised the important contribution of tourism to their local areas. They provide infrastructure and environmental management that is essential for a fully-functioning economy like the provision of roads, and the provision of recreation and amenity facilities, with consequent benefits for both locals and visitors. More directly, local authorities are active in many aspects of tourism, such as the organisation and funding of events, and the development of public tourism infrastructure.

Similarly, the relevant literature recognises that local and regional governments have also a significant role to play in tourism, given the influence that their functions, such as land-use planning and policy development, have on the tourism sector (Connell et al., 2009). As the third tier of public sector tourism management, the local government level is often where tourism business interactions occur and decisions regarding tourism policy are made (Nodder et al, 2003). Finally, local and regional governments tend to have the most direct involvement in tourism, through funding and operating tourism activities, events, and attractions (Connell et al., 2009).

In an Irish context the government's engagement in tourism and its role in developing the sector is acknowledged across most Irish government publications. However, only few scholars attempt to understand the role of the Irish state in tourism development. Mottiar (2016), for example, provides an investigation into the role on national tourism policy as a motivator for social entrepreneurial activity in Ireland, while Clancy (2009), focuses on examining Ireland's national tourism development and national identity. Despite efforts made to highlight the role of the Irish government in tourism policy and development at a national level, the number of studies that seek to understand how Irish local governments are engaging in tourism is rather limited. Thus, there is a gap in the literature that indicates this type of investigation is required. This research attempts to fill this knowledge gap and brings a contribution to the current relevant literature, by examining Cork County Council's engagement in tourism development.
Furthermore, this research argues that local government has a direct, unique and critical role in the tourism sector and aims to examine the specific manner in which this role is enacted and performed in County Cork. The author addresses the main functions and responsibilities of Cork County Council and attempts to identify areas of improvement in order to enhance local government participation in tourism development.

Given the current economic environment and the major importance of the tourism sector to the Irish economy, this study is particularly relevant from an economic perspective arguing that government's engagement in tourism, at all levels, is critical to ensure the sector continues to grow in a sustainable manner. As the DTTAS (2014,) notes there has to be:

\[ A \text{ clear understanding of the responsibilities and expectations of government, state agencies, local authorities, the tourism industry and other stakeholders in the development of our tourism industry; with an enhanced role for the local authorities (p.2). } \]

Thus, a clear understanding of local government's role in tourism planning, policy, promotion, environmental management, infrastructure development, resource provision and industry involvement will help inform both the government and the industry regarding the form and level of such involvement.

1.2 Main research question

The research attempts to gain a deeper understanding into the local government's engagement in the tourism industry. The main research question of this study can be succinctly stated:

**What role does Cork County Council have in developing tourism?**

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

It is almost universally recognised that the government has an important role in tourism and its significance is widely accepted (Baum and Szivas, 2008). However, academic debate regarding the form and level of such involvement is rather limited. Thus, there is a gap in the literature that indicates this type of investigation is required.

This study attempts to fill this knowledge gap by evaluating and examining the role of the government within tourism in a local context. The main aim of the research is to provide an
understanding into how Cork County Council engages in tourism, by examining its functions and responsibilities in terms of tourism industry involvement.

The following research objectives have been identified:

- To provide an in-depth examination of the role of Cork County Council and its engagement in tourism development, by capturing the views of senior tourism representatives within the organisation;
- To provide relevant recommendations for Cork County Council for future tourism development.

1.4 The Methodological Approach

Chapter Three outlines the choice of methodology and it is useful to give a concise overview of the methodology framework adopted in this study. As the study's central objective calls for insights from Cork County Council tourism representatives into the role of the local authority in assisting tourism development in County Cork, it is therefore imperative to determine a research methodology which fits the purpose of the study and allows such insights to be gathered.

The research question and objectives led to the adoption of a qualitative research method which according to Patton (2002, 14), *facilitates study of issues and detail*. Such approach emphasises the importance of focusing on data concerned with *real life* and *specific cases*, where there is room for richness and holism, and where methods are flexible and adaptable. Following the choice of research design and methods, in-depth interviews were selected as the main means or instruments of gathering research data.

Ten Cork County Council tourism representatives were chosen as the sample of this study. The sample size and type led to the generation of a significant amount of data with varied perspectives and expertise, although with many common themes evident.

1.5 Outline/Layout of the Thesis

The thesis follows a well-established structural pattern and the sequence is set out as follows:

*Chapter 2* builds on the introductory chapter and offers a review of the relevant extant literature. The chapter sets out the context of this study by discussing the role of local authorities in developing local tourism in general and by examining the same role of Cork
County Council in particular. In Chapter Two, the role and responsibilities of Cork County Council in terms of tourism development are explored in greater detail based on relevant recent reports and government publications.

Chapter 3 sets out the research philosophy and methodology utilised in the study. Chapter Three begins by outlining the main research designs and methods available to researchers and the rationale behind the chosen methods. The merits and pitfalls of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies are explored, as well as the reasoning behind the research methodology made. Chapter Three also examines the suitability of the in-depth interview as a research tool and examines the appropriateness of the case study method. The choice of sample is then examined together with the validation behind selection. Finally the research ethics section outlines the ethical considerations and concerns of the study.

Chapter 4 reports the main findings of the study and provides an analysis of these findings. These are presented in a number of thematic sections.

Chapter 5 represents the final chapter of the study and seeks to offer the reader an amalgamation of the findings and a discussion of the contribution of the research study to the extant literature on the role of Cork County Council in tourism development.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the rationale for the research identifying the research question, main aim and key objectives of the study.

It has been noted that the topic emerged as a result of the recent success of the Irish tourism sector where the government plays a key role in the development of the sector. The key aim of this research has been presented as an examination of the role of the government within tourism in a local context by providing an understanding into how Cork County Council engages in tourism, and by examining its functions and responsibilities in terms of tourism industry involvement.

This study is particularly relevant from an economic perspective arguing that government's engagement in tourism, at all levels, is critical to ensure the sector continues to grow in a sustainable manner. Finally, this study attempts to inform both the local government, in particular Cork County Council, and the industry regarding the form and level of such involvement.
Chapter Two: Literature Review
2.0 Introduction

Within the relevant extant literature, attempts have been made to examine the role of local government in tourism from various perspectives. At an international level, a number of studies focus on examining the role of local government in sustainable tourism development (Vieira et al., 2016; Brokaj, 2014; Hall, 1998). Furthermore, Nunkoo (2005), focuses on examining the level of trust in local government in relation to tourism development, while White (2010) provides an examination of local government engagement in tourism in British Columbia. In an Irish context, few scholars have attempted to understand the role of the national government in tourism (Mottiar, 2016; Clancy, 2009). Other Irish authors such as Moisuc et al. (2018); McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2017); McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2016); Boyd and Hanrahan (2008) adopt a local perspective by examining local authority tourism planning and sustainable development in Ireland. To meet the aims and objectives of this study, an overview of the general literature which examines the role of local government in tourism is required.

In this chapter, the role of the Irish government in assisting tourism development is explored in detail, based on the relevant extant literature, and other government publications. Due to the complexity of the topic areas, this chapter focuses on providing an understanding into the role of local governments in tourism development from two perspectives. First, a broader perspective is provided examining the general role of Irish local authorities in tourism development, based on secondary resources. An overview of the Irish tourism industry and the government's role in developing the industry is provided, followed by an examination of local government engagement in tourism.

Second, a more specific perspective is adopted which examines in particular, the role, functions and responsibilities of Cork County Council in developing local tourism. An organisational overview of the Council is presented, followed by a comprehensive investigation of key areas of responsibility in which the organisation is involved to assist local tourism development.

Both perspectives will provide an insight and understanding into the relevant literature behind this research project, delivering a structured and informed overview of the role of Cork County Council and its engagement in tourism development.
2.1 Ireland's Tourism Industry and the Government: An Overview

Tourism in Ireland is a key driver of social and economic development at both national and regional levels, and its repeated ability to return to growth after periods of even severe recession, has been shown over many decades demonstrating its fundamental resilience and competitiveness (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS), 2013). The industry also plays a central role in creating a positive image of Ireland, which is essential to a small country seeking to maximise the benefits of trade, investment and tourism globally. In Ireland, tourism is an industry largely populated by smaller enterprises and is deeply rooted in the fabric of Irish economic life, urban and rural, being the longest-standing source of service export earnings, supporting employment and generating billions per year in revenue from home and abroad (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2015), tourism industry's impact on the economic and social development of a country can be enormous, opening it up for business, trade and capital investment, creating jobs and entrepreneurialism for the workforce and protecting heritage and cultural values. Tourism is also considered a major source of foreign earnings with a low import content and a powerful instrument of national and regional development. By intervening in tourism, the government aims to maximise these wide-ranging economic and social benefits of the sector, by promoting Ireland, supporting enterprises and jobs and providing an attractive, competitive overall offering for tourists (DTTAS, 2013). However, to wholly understand the contribution of tourism, governments, policy makers and businesses around the world have to rely on accurate and reliable data regarding the impact of the sector (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2013).

In Ireland, organisations such as Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland have long recognised the contribution of tourism to Ireland's economic development, and there is no doubt that tourism has been a priority for the Irish Government from the outset (Tourism Ireland, 2015 p. 2).

In addition, most statistics and reports portray tourism performance in Ireland as a major success story and describe the tourism sector as one of the most successful sectors since the foundation of the state (Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC), 2015). Data from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), for 2017 show that the total contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP was EUR17.2bn (USD19.4bn), 5.9% of GDP in 2017, and is forecast to rise by 4.2% in 2018. Moreover, the same data shows that in 2017, the total contribution of Travel and Tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the
industry was 5.9% of total employment (122,000 jobs). This is expected to rise by 4.1% in 2018 to 127,000 jobs and rise by 3.6% pa to 180,000 jobs in 2028 (7.5% of total).

The Irish tourism economic impact during the past ten years, in terms of total contribution to GDP is illustrated below:

**Figure 2.1** Ireland: Total Contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP*

![Chart](chart.png)

*Source: (WTTC, 2018 p. 3)*

However, Ireland's tourism contribution extends well beyond its recent economic benefits. It is widely accepted that regional development is often induced by the presence of tourism in a particular area, such as the development of recreation and shopping facilities, transport networks, infrastructure and roads (Griffin and Carty, 2006).

On the other hand, tourism can be considered an engine of regional balance or an agent of national dispersion. ITIC (2006), identified that regional disparities in disposable income widened in Ireland during the 1990s and that these income gaps would have become greater in the absence of tourism development. Many of the most popular tourism destinations are now located in the country's west and south west, and peripherally to the Dublin metropolis. Spending by tourists in these regions acts to narrow regional gaps in incomes and employment (Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2014). As a result, tourism in Ireland has now become an important instrument of regional development, notably through the development of a vibrant and largely Irish-owned tourism industry, with enterprises and jobs dispersed throughout the island (Griffin and Carty, 2006). In particular, some of the key tourism areas are rural regions which have little or no industrial employment where both whole communities and individuals can benefit from tourism. Tourism can, thus, have a positive influence in
regional development but it is also the main source of income and employment for many rural Irish communities.

According to Mishra et al. (2011), the basic concept of rural tourism development is to benefit the local community through entrepreneurial opportunities, income generation, employment opportunities, conservation and development of rural arts and crafts, investment for infrastructure development and preservation of the environment and heritage. However, Sharpley (2003), highlights that successful regional and rural development through tourism involves a collaborative relationship between all the various actors that participate in tourism development, including the local governance, tourism enterprises and the local community.

Tourism’s substantial contribution to economic, social and regional development in Ireland is reflected through recent increases in visitor numbers both nationally and regionally, the associated growth in tourism spending and its subsequent social benefits. Yet, it is important to note that some of the major factors which contributed to the successful performance of Irish tourism include an efficient government sector, a competitive air and maritime transport network, significant investment in public and private tourism facilities and a strong partnership between public and private sector (OCDE, 2013). The sectors of the Irish tourism industry including the private and public sector are presented in the following sub-heading.

2.1.1 Sectors of the Irish Tourism Industry

The Private Sector and its role in Irish Tourism

The private sector in Ireland is populated predominantly by Irish-owned, small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs), which after facing several challenges during the recent economic downturn, are now playing a significant role in sustaining Ireland's economic recovery (ITIC, 2011). A recent SME Market Monitor Report (2016), indicates a record breaking performance in the tourism sector and underlines the importance to SMEs of sustaining this recovery (DKM Economic Consultants and Banking and Payments Federation Ireland, 2016). It is widely acknowledged that SMTEs are the economic lifeblood of the Irish tourism sector and that the recent economic recovery presents several opportunities for small tourism business to expand their scope (Dublin Economic Monitor, 2016).
Table 2.1 illustrates the tourism related enterprises within the main sub-sectors of the industry. The right hand column of the table indicates the ownership structure of the industry.

Table 2.1. Main Sub-Sectors, Services and Structure of Tourism Industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-sector</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>Airlines &amp; Shipping Companies, Air &amp; Sea Ports, Internal Transport-Bus, Rail Services, Car Hire, Coach Tours</td>
<td>Mainly public and larger companies, except in case of coach and car hire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Hotels; Guesthouses; B&amp;B's; Self-catering; Hostels; Caravan &amp; Camping Parks; University Campus; Host Homes</td>
<td>Mainly SMEs although larger hotel groups are growing in number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Accommodation providers; Restaurants; Pubs; Fast Food Outlets; Shops</td>
<td>SMEs apart from larger hotel groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities/Amenities</td>
<td>Historical sites; Houses; Gardens; Museums; Art Galleries; Theatres; Entertainment; Pubs</td>
<td>SMEs &amp; State enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Golf; Walking; Angling; Cycling; Cabin Cruising; Equine Tourism Activities; Events; Sailing; Other Water Based Pursuits; Shopping; Language Schools and Genealogy</td>
<td>SMEs almost exclusively except in the case of cabin cruising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Services</td>
<td>Petrol Stations; Banking; Communications; Tourist Information; Other Retail Outlets</td>
<td>Mainly SMEs but including major companies in banking services and petrol distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Fáilte Ireland, 2015)

The private sector is increasingly playing a key role in achieving innovative tourism development and the economic difficulties of recent years have encouraged private enterprises to devise more efficient ways to operate. As well as contributing additional capital, private sector partners are bringing fresh know-how and innovative ideas to resolve development challenges (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014). There is an increasing trend towards structural innovation, for example the development of new forms of tourism intermediaries, and the convergence of tourism with other areas of economic activity, such as the growth of food tourism. As DTTAS (2015), notes these trends reflect the private tourism sector's adaptability to a changing environment, and help to foster the industry’s future competitiveness.

On the other hand, the public tourism sector in Ireland incorporates state or governmental bodies and organisations which are mainly responsible for tourism development through the provision of fundamental resources and services necessary for the development of the sector
The public sector and its role in Irish tourism is discussed in the following section.

The Public Sector and its role in Irish Tourism

The main role of the public sector is helping to develop the tourism sector through direct support for product development, marketing, training and education (The Irish Times, 2003). In addition to its main role, the public sector is also responsible for a number of activities that are essential to the development of tourism. The public sector is responsible for the provision of infrastructure and services, in particular, those relating to access transport, roads and telecommunications. The public sector is also charged with the protection and maintenance of natural, cultural and heritage resources through the regulation of building, site development and environmental protection (Fáilte Ireland, 2016). And finally, according to Ashley et al. (2007), governments are key players in regulating the business and labour market and in determining fiscal policy.

In Ireland, responsibility for the formulation of national tourism policy rests with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS). Its goal is to facilitate the continued development of an economic and environmentally sustainable and spatially balanced tourism sector, through formulating, monitoring and reviewing a range of supporting policies and programmes (DTTAS, 2014).

The principal national State Agencies in terms of tourism development are Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. DTTAS (2014), agrees that the functions of these two national tourism bodies are bringing a significant contribution to wealth creation and employment in the economy of Ireland and its regions. Thus, a brief review of their mission is needed to understand their purpose within the Irish tourism sector.

The National Tourism Development Authority or Fáilte Ireland was established by legislation in May 2003. The agency’s mission is to foster sustainable and competitive tourism development by working in partnership with the industry and State bodies to achieve world-class standards of excellence in the products, services and marketing of the sector (Failteireland.ie, 2016).

Tourism Ireland was incorporated in December 2000 and has taken over responsibility with effect from the 2002 season, for the overseas marketing of the island of Ireland as a tourist destination. Tourism Ireland has a number of functions including ownership and management
of the tourism brand for Ireland, strategic all-island destination marketing in all markets outside the island of Ireland and responsibility for the overseas office network. Tourism Ireland is also responsible for the international delivery of product/regional marketing programmes on behalf of both Fáilte Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourism Board (NITB) (Tourismireland.com, 2010).

In addition to Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, there are a number of other State Bodies that also have a role in the development of tourism at a regional level. Some of these include Regional Tourism Authorities (RTAs), County Tourism Committees, County Enterprise Boards and LEADER Groups (The Irish Times, 2003). The involvement of such a variety of bodies in the promotion and development of local and regional tourism has the advantage of harnessing a great deal of essential knowledge and enthusiasm for this purpose. However, a wide range of such bodies carries with it the danger of duplication, inefficiency and confusion in the minds of visitors (Ministry of Arts, Sport and Tourism, 2003). As Rogerson (2013), notes supply and receipt of the tourism experience for each visitor occurs in place and time at local level and there is a need for administrative arrangements at local level in respect of tourism promotion and development that reflect this reality. However, there is not a one size fits all tourism structure. How each destination chooses to organise its tourism industry is determined by local factors, including resourcing, industry leadership, the size and importance of tourism to the local economy, and the attitude of local government (Tourism Excellence, 2014).

The Irish government undertook major restructuring of bodies at national level in 2003. To avoid the risk of overlap and duplication in the delivery and efficiency of tourism services, changes have also been introduced in regional and local structures with the passing of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 (CSO, 2015). These changes are further discussed and expanded on under the next heading.

2.1.2 Tourism Development and Changes in Governmental Structure and Policy

Over time, tourism has become one of the most important Irish-owned enterprise sectors, contributing to national and regional wealth-creation and employment generation. It became a sector with major potential to contribute more to national and regional development. According to Kerr (2003), in response to such growth in tourism, the government expressed the intention of exploiting the potential for joint marketing of the whole island of Ireland. One of the first outcomes of this initiative was the formation of Tourism Ireland in 1998, which
incorporated the functions of two separate authorities, namely Board Fáilte and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB).

Moreover, in 2003 the Tourism Policy Review Group (established by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism) recognised that the real tourism potential did not appear to be sufficiently understood and reflected in the organisational framework of government and in the prioritisation of its work. The Group believed that the economic and social contribution of the Irish tourism industry is seriously undervalued, both nationally and at Government level (Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, 2003 p. 21). Subsequently, they proposed a comprehensive strategy for the future sustainable development of Irish tourism in the 21st century, together with a set of actions for implementation by the industry and the public sector.

Since then, The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism (now the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport) in conjunction with the Tourism State Agencies, have played a more dynamic and effective role in shaping and influencing wider developments and changes at government level which impact on tourism. Firstly, new policies and programmes were introduced which brought a significant contribution to the development of Irish tourism. According to the Committee for Public Management Research (CPMR) (2003), these newly introduced policies were related, in particular, to tourism competitiveness, taxation, heritage and environmental conservation, and internal and external access transport. However, one of the major programmes introduced for the purpose of supporting tourism development in Ireland was the introduction of the National Tourism Development Act 2003. The Act provided a statutory basis for the new National Tourism Development Authority namely Fáilte Ireland, which was assigned to perform the functions assigned to it by this Act (Irishstatutebook.ie, 2014).

Since the establishment of the Act in 2003, and up to the end of 2010, a total of €44.411 million has been advanced to Fáilte Ireland for capital expenditure on projects or enterprises. Most of the projects focused on the development of new attractions and the upgrading of existing attractions, the development of tourism infrastructure (primarily through supporting local authorities to develop appropriate facilities for tourists), and the development of outdoor and other active pursuits (Irish Tourism Times, 2011).

In the early 2000s the Minster of Arts, Sports and Tourism (2003), indicated that the role of a wider tourism policy agenda and an increased focus on tourism development in Ireland needed to be complemented by strengthened industry public representation to champion industry
interests. Many representative bodies emerged and began to play an important role in supporting better management development, cooperative marketing and product development initiatives, and cross-sectoral networks. MacCarthaigh (2012), notes that this government vision led to a rapid but unregulated growth in the number of public organisations created to support not only tourism, but the overall economic development in Ireland. In addition, Keogan (2006), argues that traditionally, local government in Ireland has been often identified with the sum of local authorities. However, while local authorities were, and are central, to the understanding of government beyond the centre, such a minimalist view failed to take into account the range of activities at local (and regional) level. Keogan's argument is supported by the fact that in 2007 there were a total 283 bodies (including tourism bodies) operating on a non-commercial basis at local and regional level in Ireland.

More recently, the government recognised that given the scale of growth in public bodies and agencies, measures were necessary to increase efficiency by amending the structure of public organisation bodies at a national level. Introduced as part of the Public Service Reform Plan 2011-13, The Agency Rationalisation Programme took effect and began delivering a more efficient and integrated public service. In 2013, there were 181 fewer bodies operating in the Irish Public Service than in 2011 as a result of the measures taken in The Agency Rationalisation Programme (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2014).
Local authorities also experienced major restructuring in recent years. The new structure is illustrated in Table 2.2.

### Table 2.2. Local Authorities in Ireland at End of 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carlow County Council</th>
<th>Fingal County Council</th>
<th>Limerick City and County Council</th>
<th>Sligo County Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cavan County Council</td>
<td>Galway City Council</td>
<td>Longford County Council</td>
<td>South Dublin County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare County Council</td>
<td>Galway County Council</td>
<td>Louth County Council</td>
<td>Tipperary County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork City Council</td>
<td>Kerry County Council</td>
<td>Mayo County Council</td>
<td>Waterford City and County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork County Council</td>
<td>Kildare County Council</td>
<td>Meath County Council</td>
<td>Westmeath County Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donegal County Council</td>
<td>Kilkenny County Council</td>
<td>Monaghan County Council</td>
<td>County Council Wexford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City Council</td>
<td>Laois County Council</td>
<td>Offaly County Council</td>
<td>Wicklow County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun Laoire/Rathdown County Council</td>
<td>Leitrim County Council</td>
<td>Roscommon County Council</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from 2014 Register of Public Sector Bodies in Ireland (CSO, 2015 p.16)*

The restructuring of local government brought about the abolition of town Councils and a subsequent reduction in the number of local authorities from 114 to 31. Most significantly, at local authority level, power was handed over to municipal district bodies in 2014. The municipal district bodies began governing larger areas and reporting in turn to more authoritative County Councils (Lucey, 2014). Similarly, the Citizens Information Board (2015), notes that County Councils have now more jurisdiction or control throughout their administrative area. On the other hand, Lucey (2014), argues that the loss of town Councils saw the exit of the centrally-located town halls, town clerk, offices and local councillors. The recent changes brought into the local governmental structure are particularly relevant to this study as the new structure can have implications for tourism development at a local level where the power has now dispersed. Irish Examiner (2016), believes that the transfer of
financial authority away from towns can impact tourism development negatively. He states that as a result of the new structure County Councils have now reduced their focus on tourism development. MacCarthaigh (2012), on the other hand, believes that the new structure gives local authorities a more important economic, social and governing role. However, there is limited evidence on how the new local government format influences tourism development nationally. The new structure of the Irish government and the implication for tourism development is, thus, clearly worthy of greater examination. To meet the objectives of this study and provide a broad view on the current Irish governmental system, an examination of the government’s structures both at a national and local level, is detailed below.

2.1.3 The Structure of Irish Government

The Irish government's engagement with tourism and its role in the development of the sector is acknowledged across most Irish government publications (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). However, an analysis of the Irish governance and a greater understanding of government structures is needed in order to achieve the objectives of this research.

_Central government_ is defined by CSO (2015), to include all bodies established through political processes and for whose activities a Minister of government or other responsible person is accountable to the people through the Oireachtas (National Parliament). According to the Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI) (2010), the central government includes a total of 15 departments. A study conducted in 2006 identified the most common functions of the central government departments as being the provision of policy advice, policy implementation, regulation and the provision of information (Clancy, 2009).

On the other hand, the Irish sub-national or sub-central government is a complex system which Rhodes (1988) describes as _the arena of political activity concerned with the relations between central political institutions in the capital city and those sub-central political organisations and governmental bodies within the accepted boundaries of the state_ (p. 14). Moreover, MacCarthaigh (2012) notes the Irish sub-central governance represents an aspect of Irish government and administration that has received far less analysis and academic treatment than central government and that many policies of central government would fail without the ability of sub-national public bodies to appropriately implement them. A relevant example in this case is provided by Dexia Economic Outlook (2006), which identified that a major part of public capital investment in Ireland is implemented by local and regional organisations, and more than
20 per cent of public expenditure is at sub-national level. Thus, sub-central governance plays a vital role in implementing policy devised by central governance.

Roche (1982), argues that the services traditionally provided by Irish local authorities arose from *history, accident and tradition*, as much as through agreed division of labour between levels of government. However, currently, Irish local authorities have a multi-functional role as their work is normally categorised into different programme groups such as housing, roads, environmental protection, planning, recreation and amenity, water services, economic development and tourism. As **Figure 2.2** demonstrates, a study conducted by MacCarthaigh (2012), showed local authorities having their primary function as direct implementation of policy, with the next most common response being regulation.

**Figure 2.2 Local Authorities Primary Functions**

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2006), supports MacCarthaigh (2007), findings, revealing that much of local authority activity is conducted within defined statutory frameworks, and many functions are performed according to legislative and departmental guidelines. This seems to be a characteristic of sub-governance in general as many local and regional bodies are similarly constrained. Yet, Irish local authorities are the closest and most accessible form of government to people in
their local community. They also have responsibility for delivery of a wide range of services in their local area with a focus on making towns and cities attractive places to live, work, invest and visit (Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), 2017).

It is important to note that sub-national governance in Ireland does not operate independently of national government and changes in national policy and priorities are rapidly reflected at local level (MacCarthaigh, 2012 p. 4). Moreover, the influence of the European Union as an important stakeholder in local tourism development is not to be overlooked. Richards (1996), highlights the importance of the European Union in local and regional development arguing that the current policy climate for tourism development at a local level is also reflected at national and European levels. In other words, European and national policies designed centrally, cannot succeed without action, commitment and engagement on the part of regional and local authorities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2004).

2.2. Local Government Engagement in Tourism

A number of studies suggest that local governments play an essential role in bringing economic prosperity to regions and whole communities (McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2016; Brokaj, 2014; White, 2010; Crofts, 2010), while others note that although local government’s economic contribution is vast and widely recognised, its role is often undervalued (Lucey, 2014). Nodder et al. (2003), believes that local governments are the closest to citizens’ needs representing highly accountable and responsive organisations, grounded in their business, environmental, cultural, educational, and social communities. They also represent the third tier of public sector tourism management, which is often the scale at which most interactions with businesses occur, and where decisions regarding policy and tourism development are made. Local government is not just simply an agent of central government but it is in its own right a leader of social and economic growth across all sectors of society (Lucey, 2014)

Other studies agree that local governments bring a significant contribution to tourism development, given the influence that its functions, such as land-use planning and policy development, have on the tourism sector (Connell et al., 2009). While local tourism associations and regional Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) promote tourism, local governments tend to have the most direct involvement in tourism, through funding and operating tourism activities, events, and attractions (Connell et al., 2009). Godfrey (1998), argues that with respect to tourism, local governments are essentially, responsible for preparing
policy statements and developing management strategies, controlling development within the local planning system, providing tourism information services, and undertaking limited marketing activity. Arguably, one of the most important roles of local government is the development and implementation of community planning, legislation, and policy which underpin all tourism development (Lucey, 2014; Connell et al., 2009).

According to Saarinen and Rogerson (2013), local governments have a direct impact on the total tourism experience of tourists, and the competitive position and attractiveness of any tourism destination is influenced by the diversity, quality and overall blend of its services and resources. The provision of resources (such as infrastructure, transport, attractions and other tourism related services) and perceived value for investment indicates the priority local governments place on tourism development. The emphasis local governments place on tourism, as an indicator, seeks to gauge local government’s financial investments in tourism, their commitment to provide tourist attractions, physical attractiveness, public infrastructure, and their overall priorities with respect to resourcing for tourism (White, 2010). However, in providing resources for tourism development, local governments are faced with a range of challenges for effective tourism planning and management at their destination level. Brokaj (2014), reveals that the most significant challenge is that of integrating the management of tourism resources with other functions and responsibilities of local government.
Table 2.3 illustrates a number of key areas of local government functions relating to tourism development and resource provision.

Table 2.3 Local Government Responsibilities Relating To Tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local government roles and responsibilities and areas of planning and policy development</th>
<th>Potential resource provision for tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open space planning and management</td>
<td>Protects and conserves open space, influences the character and amenity of the destination and helps create a sense of place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage, arts and cultural development</td>
<td>Encourages the development of unique and positive sense of community and belongingness attractive to tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure provision and maintenance</td>
<td>Transport infrastructure may shape access to the destination and travel patterns within the destination. Basic infrastructure capacity may shape the destination capacity to absorb tourist and may limit development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land use planning</td>
<td>Development assessment and strategic land use planning influences the built character and spatial integration of the destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental management</td>
<td>Protects and preserves unique environmental features of a destination and manages visitor pressures on natural resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism promotion and marketing</td>
<td>Fosters branding and destination image development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Brokaj (2014)

As illustrated above, various local government's functions and responsibilities have an indirect influence on local development through their potential to provide resources for tourism. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, a clear understanding of the role of local governments in developing tourism is needed. The following sections present an overview of the role of local governments in tourism development, looking more specifically at key areas such as product development, infrastructure, transport, tourism incentives, attractions and amenities, public, and promotion and marketing.
2.2.1 Tourism Product Development

According to Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) (2014), local governments are active in many aspects of tourism, for example the development of public infrastructure, and the provision of recreation and amenity facilities, with consequent benefits for both locals and visitors. Research documenting a variety of positive effects of amenities in fostering economic growth, has sparked an interest in amenity-led tourism development efforts (Power, 2006). It is believed that the development of attractions and amenities may spur tourism, which supports increased retail expenditures, employment and new business entry. Amenity development may also draw new tourist markets, residents and new workers to a particular area (Deller et al., 2001; McGranahan, 1999; Nord and Cromartie. 1997).

While much of previous research focus has been on natural amenities such as climates, oceans, lakes, and other beautiful landscapes, more recent studies also recognise the importance of man-made features (Wojan et al., 2007; Clark 2003). Built amenities, attractions and recreation facilities can complement natural ones, resulting in stronger growth impacts than would occur from the natural ones alone (Olfert and Partridge, 2010). Heritage and cultural amenities on the other hand, such as museums, libraries and event venues contribute to local quality of life while encouraging tourism (Florida, 2002).

In Ireland, local governments and authorities are in a unique position to support economic growth in general and tourism development in particular. They are directly responsible for the planned development and improvement of tourism attractions and amenities. In the first instance, Irish counties benefit from a variety of forward planning instruments in the form of town development plans, retail studies, land use and transportation studies, design guidelines, architectural framework guidelines, village design statements and urban renewal programmes (Clare County Council, 2010). According to the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) (2016), plans of this nature brought forward by local authorities throughout the country are primary influencers on the development, design, look and physical attractiveness of Irish tourist destinations. Irish local governments have traditionally, and consistently, supported and facilitated tourism initiatives and the development of tourism facilities and attractions in their county. Through the creation and implementation of regular four year corporate plans and tourism strategies, local authorities contribute significantly to tourism development and their work is considered complementary to the role of Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland in the
promotion and development of tourism at a national level (South Dublin County Council 2015; Clare County Council, 2010).

A recent report prepared under the auspices of the City and County Management Association (CCMA) and the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) reveals that the provision of added attractions impacts the overall visitor experience, and contributes significantly to footfall. These include heritage and civic buildings together with ancillary activities such as festivals and events, which are all critically important to provide that added value and boost tourism. In the context of tourism development and supporting the local economy, local authorities have been heavily involved in the provision of cultural and heritage attractions in addition to civic buildings. More recently, local authorities are engaged in the development of way-marked ways of national and international importance, including the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East, the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains Way and the Dublin-Galway Cycle Way. The local authorities are key to the provision of these valuable amenities, which broaden the Irish tourism offer, and are of great value to the focal points and towns along these ways (CCMA and AILG, 2015).

In order to remain competitive, increase market share and continue to attract visitors from overseas, same reform states that the government will continue to support capital investment in tourism. Apart from the role that local governments play in tourism product development, it is identified that they are also involved in providing tourism infrastructure. This role and responsibility is expanded on in the following section.

2.2.2 Tourism Infrastructure Provision

Historically, a local authority’s role in tourism has been centred on the provision of infrastructure which facilitated tourism such as roads, water, sewerage, amenity areas and beaches. Since 1963, under local planning legislation, this role was broadened to incorporate a role in tourism related development of a region (Clare County Council, 2010). More recently, under the Local Government Act (Section 66), the functions and role of local authorities have been further expanded to include:

_A measure, activity or thing, deemed to promote the interests of the local community if it promotes, directly or indirectly, social inclusion or the social, economic, environmental, recreational, cultural, community or general development of the_
However, scholars have mainly discussed the importance of transport networks and infrastructure in tourism development and it is generally agreed that the provision of appropriate access, transportation and infrastructure have a critical role to play in expanding local tourism (Li et al., 2015; Khadaroo and Seetenah, 2007; Prideaux, 2000; Abeyratne, 1993; Chew, 1987, Kaul, 1985). Previous research has focused on analysing the effects of the development of transport to improve access and linking source markets with tourist destinations. Kaul (1985), for example, emphasised the importance of the transport system as a key factor in developing tourism attractiveness and activities, while Chew (1987) highlighted the importance of air access discussing how the development of air transport allows the expansion of the range of available areas.

More recently, some authors have focused their attention on the role and benefits of transport within the wider destination area (Dickinson et al., 2009; Khadaroo and Seetenah, 2008). Particularly, the quality of transport infrastructure is viewed as a potential determinant of destination attractiveness and is recognized as a basic component of successful creation of new attractions and expansion of the existing ones (Dickinson et al., 2009). Empirical studies show that destinations compete for the transport infrastructure to improve their market share and those destinations with well-built transport infrastructure have the potential to attract more tourists (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). In the opposite scenario, if the ability of tourists to travel to a specific destination is inhibited by inefficiencies in the transport systems, they might seek alternative destinations (Khadaroo and Seetenah, 2008).

Regarding tourism development, Yanase (2015), examined the competitive importance of the tourism sector nationally and locally for implementing policies to attract foreign tourists. These policies include investment in tourism infrastructure such as the creation or improvement of roads, highways, railways and other transport networks. Yet, the public infrastructure in a specific region is assumed to accumulate over time and, taking the dynamics of the infrastructure into consideration, the local government has to determine the optimal resource allocation in order to accommodate tourism while maximizing local or regional welfare (Yanase, 2015).
While there is a clear role for local governments to support transport infrastructure in response to tourism demand, establishing strong links with local host communities is key to building trust. According to Harris et al. (2012), local authorities who focus on investments geared to support local infrastructure are able to enhance community relationships and participation generating longer-term benefits by reinforcing local planning capacity for tourism. Therefore, tourism challenges development planners to provide infrastructure that is both adequate for the local tourism industry but which can also be capitalized by locals and local services.

There is also some evidence at a regional level to suggest that transport infrastructure improvements are positively associated with levels of new tourism foreign direct investment (Hill and Munday, 1994). Yet, the argument that good transport infrastructure leads to tourism growth or development is not proven as there have been a number of instances where the building of a new airport has not brought in large numbers of tourists or where a new road or railway has not led to new inward investment (Górka and Szyja, 2015). It is recognised that good access and transport infrastructure is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for tourism growth and development. To improve access to tourist destinations such as Ireland, public and private incentives to invest in local airports are required (Bieger and Wittmer, 2006).

However, while infrastructure investment takes place at central government level, many of the negative aspects of infrastructure development are mostly felt locally (Harris et al., 2011). Tourism and infrastructure development depletes natural resources, most often local ones. Local infrastructure, on which the tourism industry is highly dependent, is often maintained with local resources at great expense and land acquisition processes for tourism facilities can cause conflict significantly impacting local income inequity (Hall, 2000). In attempting to tackle environmental demand and other challenges of infrastructure development, local governments have to achieve sustainable development through striking the right balance between securing economic developments, protecting the environment and sustaining future quality of life (DOE, 2012). In Ireland, to ensure tourism-related infrastructure is fit for purpose, Fáilte Ireland’s work programme to 2017 aimed to support the tourism sector’s longer-term objectives as set by government. These objectives included the provision of tailored capital investment support to assist the introduction and/or enhancement of critical components of sustainable infrastructure with local authorities including, walks, greenways, blueways, interpretation and orientation facilities and discovery points (Fáilte Ireland, 2016).
Current government reports recognise the central role played by local authorities in supporting tourism through the development and enhancement of attractions, amenities, infrastructure and as well as through financial support (DTTAS, 2014). However, in recognition of this role, the 2015 Action Plan for Jobs stipulated the need of research to identify best practice initiatives which are being undertaken by local authorities to support tourism at local level which could serve as exemplars for consideration by other local authority areas (Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2015). Following tourism infrastructure provision, a further area of responsibility of local authorities is the provision of tourism planning and policy. This area is elaborated on in the next section.

### 2.2.3 Tourism Planning and Policy

The distinct but related processes of tourism policy formulation and tourism planning have been the subject of considerable attention from various perspectives. However, Hall and Jenkins (1995), argue that the majority of studies of tourism planning and policy have been analysis for policy rather than analysis of policy. *They are perspective studies of what government should do rather than what happened and why* (p.24). This is particularly the case at local government level. Most studies that have been carried out on local government tourism policies (Dymond, 1997; Page and Thorn, 1997; Charlton and Essex 1996) are essentially surveys of what is being done, rather than in-depth analyses of how and why such policies have been developed and what effect they have had (Stevenson *et al.*, 2008). In discussing the politics of tourism at local state level, Hall (1997) stresses the need for a deeper understanding of policy making stating that:

> Policies designed to provide economic growth and employment cannot be divorced from the interests, values and power of those who formulate them. Understanding how policies are made and implemented is central to understanding local governments' involvement in tourism (p.172).

Hall's statement is particularly relevant to certain aims and objectives concerning this study, which attempts to fill a knowledge gap and provide an in-depth analysis of how Cork County Council, as a local government entity, engages in tourism development and therewith in tourism planning and policy. Yet, in order to achieve the objectives of this study and provide a picture of local governments’ role in tourism planning and policy, it is useful to identify what is meant by tourism planning and policy. Talwar (2006), describes tourism planning concept as a goal oriented activity which is striving to achieve certain objectives by matching available tourism
resources with the needs and wants of communities. He further notes that comprehensive tourism planning requires a systematic approach usually involving a series of steps such as defining goals and objectives, identifying the tourism system, generating and evaluating alternatives, implementation and evaluation of plans.

Tourism policy is defined to incorporate:

A set of regulations, rules, guidelines, directives and development/promotion objectives and strategies that provide a framework within which the collective and individual decisions directly affecting tourism development and the daily activities within a destination are taken (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003 p.149).

The concepts of planning and policy are often linked and used conjointly because tourism planning had to be integrated into the policies and actions of the local governments, serving as a provider and developer of tourism supply components, such as infrastructure, facilities, and attractions (Churugsa et al., 2007). At the local level, municipal or county planning is typically enacted through the development of an Official Community Plan (OCP) or a Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) as a means of organising and planning for future developments in a region. These long term strategic plans seek the provision of high quality social and community facilities that meet both current and future needs, detailing the strategic framework for economic and community development of the region. LECPs help informing community and local development resource allocation, and other planning processes (Cork County Council, 2014). Once adopted, a Local Economic and Community Plans serve as a foundation for all policies, regulations, and decisions related to land use, economic and tourism development in a municipality (Bergen, 2007).

Churugsa et al. (2007), argue that in order to plan effectively, local governments should consider the demands of the tourist market. In other words, local governments have a duty to provide a supply-demand balance ensuring that resources are sufficient for both locals and tourists. In order for this equilibrium to occur, Elliot (1997), suggests that visitor research is required to inform policy development as part of the planning process, stating that local governments have a role to play to ensure the accurate, timely, and strategically relevant collection and analysis of visitor statistics.
In addition to the inclusion of visitor data and analysis into a council’s planning process, the network theory provides an important analytical approach for the study of local tourism policy development (Pforr, 2001). According to Hall (2000), in tourism, as with many areas of policy, old forms of centralised, bureaucratic policy making were replaced with new forms of interactive governance collaboration and partnerships referred to as networked tourism policy making. Over time, some other authors sustained this idea arguing that collaboration among various groups is critical to enhance tourism planning and development. Churugsa et al. (2007), for example, establishes that a partnership approach can maximise tourism benefits and minimise duplicated efforts and conflicts within a complex and multifaceted tourism industry (p.457). Dredge (2006), provides a similar yet, a more specific perspective and notes that networks spanning or collaborations between public and private sectors are increasingly important in shaping tourism planning and development. She suggests that in many destinations, the formal and informal relationships between local government and industry have a considerable effect on the capacity of the destination to harness tourism development.

The literature also recognises the importance of formal and informal social relationships that shape collaborative action between government, industry and the civil society. According to Pforr (2001):

Community groups need to be taken in to consideration and have access to policy and decision-making processes in a forum where learning, creativity and innovation are fostered amongst both government and non-government actors (p.135).

Therefore, the Councils need to work conjointly with the industry to ensure they have the right information to implement strategic plans that satisfy visitor demands and community values and expectations (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, 2015).

Regarding long-term decision making in terms of local tourism development, Ritchie and Crouch (2003), suggest that, as tourism grows and develops, local governments must adopt specific strategies to determine the community’s direction and long-term goals. Yet, these plans and strategies cannot stand alone and cannot exist in isolation of effective tourism policy (Churugsa et al., 2007). An attractive and well-functioning destination does not exist by chance and requires a well-planned environment in which tourism development is both facilitated and encouraged. Dredge (2006), suggests that, if done correctly, tourism policy can be a tool for local government to ensure that the tourism agenda is fully integrated into the Council’s areas
of responsibility. Churugsa et al. (2007), have a similar view supporting Dredge’s argument stating that policy, regulation, and legislation help define the role of local government in tourism planning. Ritchie and Crouch (2003), further note that policy can be used to ensure the success of a tourism destination, providing a clear vision and idea of where a community is going, or what it is seeking to become.

Undoubtedly, the local government has an important role in tourism planning and policy development but its role has been often criticised for not being more proactive. For example, Dredge (2001), argues that impediments to local government involvement in tourism planning and policy-making include lack of community interest; lack of resources; lack of appropriate research and information; lack of commitment to implementation; lack of co-ordination and communication; and lack of technical expertise. Additionally, Stevenson et al., (2008), argue that planning and policy development are not a straight forward process. They identify various factors and challenges that can affect policy development such as low status, lack of clarity, uncertainty, lack of consensus, lack of congruence, and complexity.

Particularly, the lack of clarity refers to the unclear role of local governments in the development and delivery of tourism policy. This may arise due to tourism’s relative disconnection from broader government policies, as well as its relative marginality as a discretionary service (Stevenson et al., 2008). Furthermore, uncertainty regarding changes in the local government environment is identified to be a challenge, as the uncertainty about how new governments will engage in tourism policy and service delivery can hinder greater levels of participation in strategic planning and policy development (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). This impediment can be associated and particularly relevant to Ireland, where, as previously mentioned, local governments have seen major changes and restructuring in recent years.

Lack of consensus and congruency between all the parties involved in implementing and delivering tourism policy can result in misdirected ill-supported and ultimately wasted collective efforts. Tourism policy is typically enacted in a contested arena with many different stakeholders and decision-makers holding different boundaries and mandates (Dredge, 2006). Thus, in order to achieve effective and sustainable tourism development, governments need to have a strong commitment to implementation as well as consistent engagement within the local community (White, 2010). Ritchie and Crouch (2003), support this statement, adding that tourism policy and local government decision-making must address key elements of destination competitiveness, including financing for tourism resources and provision of access,
transportation and infrastructure. Following the involvement of local government in tourism planning and policy, the next section examines the role of the local authorities in providing environmental management for sustainable tourism development.

2.2.4 Environmental Management for Sustainable Tourism Development

There has been a growing recognition in many tourist destinations that tourism development practices may lead to undesirable impacts on environment and society, which, in turn, can threaten both tourism development itself and the economic viability of host communities and nations (Huyber and Bennett, 2003; WTO, 1996). The failure of development in many areas has set the need for a reform or a radical rethinking of the concept of development, and changes were required in both goals and methods (Gordon and Goodall, 2000). The growing awareness of these challenges to traditional development principles has led to the increasingly wide acceptance of a new concept, that of sustainable development. As a result, sustainable development has recently emerged as a key issue in the development agenda for the tourism industry in various countries and destinations (Helmy, 2004).

Over time, the term sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from Brundtland Report (1987): sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (p.5).

In recent years, local and national authorities are increasingly using the term sustainable tourism and placing it on their agendas. Little attention, however, has been given to specifically investigating the roles and responsibilities of local government in addressing sustainable development within tourism destination contexts (Brokaj, 2014). As the political and administrative structure most closely related to local development, it is believed that the local government, due to its position in the society, has a major role in promoting and working towards sustainable development. The direct involvement and vision of the elected members is centrally important, as are the internal performance of local authorities and their overall approach to the planning, development and servicing of their areas (National Standards Authority of Ireland, 1993). As providers of social services, builders of economic infrastructure, regulators of tourism activity, and managers of the natural environment, local authorities have many direct instruments at their disposal to influence tourism development. According to International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (1999), in addition to
their direct roles in the development process, the most important role that local authorities can play in an economy is that of facilitator among the diverse interests seeking to influence the direction of sustainable local development. Local governments, nevertheless, have a critical role in creating the context and stimulating actions to ensure that tourism planning and development become more sustainable. Arguably, local governments’ role in planning for a destination, and in regulating development, is pivotal in facilitating or inhibiting sustainable tourism development objectives (Ruhanen, 2013). As Middleton and Hawkins (1998, p. 39) claim sustainable tourism development depends on the competence and authority vested in local government responsible for specific tourism destinations. Nevertheless, environmental management for sustainable development is a relatively new role for local governments under neoliberal agendas, and it represents a shift from the traditional roles in servicing the roads, rates and waste of local communities (Beaumont and Dredge, 2010).

In Ireland, in particular, the real emphasis on sustainable economic development began in the early 1990s, when the government committed to sustainable development focusing its national, regional and local efforts to achieve a more sustainable future. According to World Commission on Environment and Development (1994), at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (“the Earth Summit”) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Ireland was one of over 150 nations which endorsed Agenda 21, a major blueprint for how the world’s nations can work individually and collectively towards sustainable development for the 21st century. With the introduction of Agenda 21, Irish local authorities began to execute relevant policies, plans or programmes reviewed or developed to address environment and development concerns fully and to reflect the overall vision of the community regarding sustainable development. They began adopting an environmental charter, mission statements and voluntary environmental management system, pursuing environmental objectives within budget preparation processes and adopting sustainable land use/development policies (Department of Environment and Local Government, 1995).

Since then, the Irish government places environmental issues at the core of sustainable tourism policy at national, regional and local levels. Today, local tourism development strategy plans concentrate on enhancing competitive image, improving the quality of the tourism product and attracting tourists seeking environmentally-based holidays (Government of Ireland, 2013). Irish planning authorities make provision in their development plans for sustainable tourism, and ensure through the planning process that overdevelopment does not take place. Moreover,
local development plans and strategies ensure the protection of landscape and action programmes towards sustainable transport potential environmental impacts of this infrastructure are taken into account. Government’s reports reveal that now, more than ever, Ireland’s tourism industry relies on strong and appropriate environmental policies (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). However, a recent longitudinal study on Irish local authorities’ sustainable planning for tourism, suggests that despite the responsibilities placed on local authorities to plan for tourism, the ability of Irish local authorities to plan sustainably and protect the tourism product is still questionable. The same study recommends the use of a tourism planning tool-kit, including tourism indicator systems, which will allow Irish local authorities to move towards an informed evidence-based approach to tourism planning (McLoughlin and Hanrahan, 2017). In examining local authority tourism planning in Ireland, from an environmental perspective, McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2016) also bring a significant addition to the national literature, identifying the provision of environmental planning for tourism in every Irish local authority. Their work reveals that local authorities are creators of plans which focus on tourism's interaction with the environment and support area protection measures (p.1). However, their data also illustrates a lack detailed tourism policies, strategies, budgets and guidelines to facilitate the implementation of plans, and an overall lack of understanding of sustainable tourism indicators among Irish local authority planners.

It is clear from the above secondary examination that the Irish local authorities can play an important role in areas such as tourism product development, tourism infrastructure provision, tourism planning and policy and environmental management. While this section provided a broader perspective and examined the general role of Irish local authorities in tourism development based on the secondary resources at hand, the next section provides more specific perspective and examines in particular, the role, functions and responsibilities of Cork County Council in developing local tourism.
2.3. The Role of Cork County Council in Tourism Development

2.3.1 Cork County Council Organisational Structure and Divisional Services: An Overview

According to recent reports, Cork County Council, as the local authority of County Cork plays a direct, unique and critical role in developing the tourism sector in its region (Cork County Council, 2016). In an attempt to examine the specific manner in which this role is enacted and performed in County Cork, an overview of the Council as an organisation and its involvement in tourism is needed.

*Cork County Council: The Organisation*

The government’s blueprint for local government (*Putting People First – Action Programme for Effective Local Government*) published in October 2012 sets out a clear and all-inclusive vision for Ireland’s local governments as being:

*The main vehicle of governance and public service at local level – leading economic, social and community development, delivering efficient and good value services, and representing citizens and communities as effectively and accountably as possible* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012, p.3)

The functions of government at local level are built around this vision and performed through the local government system to the greatest possible extent. Consistent with this vision, a key purpose of local government is to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities, through effective, accountable representation, and efficient performance of functions and delivery of services. As many public services can be delivered best through locally-based bodies that are responsive to local needs and circumstances, local authorities can present certain advantages over more centralised organisations achieving good performance, with greater commitment and ownership. However, is important to note that local government has constitutional status, accounts for substantial resources, and is present in every part of the State (Government of Ireland, 2013).

In County Cork, in particular, local responsibility and accountability is disposed and enacted by Cork County Council. According to the most recent Corporate Plan 2014-2019 published in 2015, Cork County Council can be described as:
A progressive and dynamic local authority committed to enhancing the quality of life of our people and visitors, supporting a sustainable environment where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy. This will be achieved through strong democratic leadership, promoting the development of vibrant communities, engaging positively with businesses, promoting economic growth and providing high quality, efficient services and infrastructure across Cork County (Cork County Council, 2015, p13).

In terms of size, Cork County Council is the second largest local authority in the Republic of Ireland, and the largest based on geographic area size. The Council has an annual revenue budget of approx. €300m and services a population of 400,000 people (141,000 households) (Corkcoco.ie, 2015). As an organisation, the Council delivers a broad and diverse range of services, including: roads, housing, planning, environmental, water (under service level agreement with Irish Water), economic development and tourism, community development, motor taxation, fire services, libraries, commercial rates among others. The organisation also comprises a number of internal support departments such as finance, corporate services, human resources, ICT, internal audit and organisational development (Corkcoco.ie, 2015). The Council structure consists of elected public representatives which create policies that are further carried out by the County Manager (Chief Executive). These policies are further executed by Directors of Services, Head of Functions and County Engineer which lead teams of staff in implementing the policies appropriately within the above organisational structure (Cork County Council-Personnel Department, 2007). The majority of services executed by Cork County Council are functional-led while, from a citizen perspective, frontline services are delivered across eight Municipal Districts and 23 associated areas offices.

According to a recent report Your Council Matters, published in 2016, the nature of Cork County Council’s roles and functions itself have changed and expanded greatly in recent years. The assumption that Cork County Council should remain the sole provider of traditional services, such as roads, planning, housing and water, has recently emerged to embrace the wider aspects of running a successful modern society. Cork County Council functions and responsibilities have evolved and have a considerable influence across areas such as economic development, tourism, community and rural development (Cork County Council, 2016).
Cork County Council: Tourism

It is believed that using appropriate planning and management by the local authorities, tourism can be a positive force, bringing economic benefits to tourist destinations and indigenous communities in the region (DTTAS, 2014). In its various reports Cork County Council recognises that the sustainable development and promotion of a successful well managed tourism industry is critical to the economy of County Cork (Cork County Council, 2016; 2014). The latest mission statement of Cork County Council in terms of tourism development can be summarised as follows:

To develop and promote a sustainable and well managed tourism industry with associated economic benefits throughout the County. Identify and develop new and diverse tourism products particularly those associated with heritage and environment, arts and culture and acknowledge the need to spread appropriate tourism growth and tourist related enterprises beyond established resorts and larger towns to rural areas (Cork County Council, 2016, p. 120).

Apart from the above mission and objectives, evidence from County Developed Plans suggests that Cork County Council it’s committed to develop, enhance and protect new and existing tourism assets, products, attractions and tourism infrastructure. The Council is also keen to maximise tourism numbers using marketing and promotional initiatives while contributing to economic and community development in the region (Cork County Council, 2016; 2014). To support and assist in the delivery of such objectives, Cork County Council established its Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism Department in 2012 (Cork County Council, 2014).

Since the establishment of the Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism Department, Cork County Council has increased its activity in the tourism field and has made substantial progress on a number of tourism initiatives (Cork County Council, 2015). For instance, the department supported the adoption of a master plan for Spike Island development, assisted tourism infrastructure development strategies, guided preparation of festival and events, and continuously contributed to the development of the Wild Atlantic Way initiative in the region (Cork County Council, 2016). At present, the Tourism Department of Cork County Council works closely with Fáilte Ireland, Local Development Companies, Tourism Service Providers,
Local Communities and other Directorates within the Council to maximise the economic return from tourism to Cork in terms of overseas visitor numbers, revenue and employment. To meet the objectives of this study and provide an understanding of how Cork County Council engages in tourism, a broad discussion on the role of the Council in providing for local tourism and economic development is presented in the following sections.

2.3.2 Current Challenges, Strategies and Collaborations for Tourism Development in Cork County Council

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, Cork County Council's objectives in terms of local tourism development refer to local tourism product development, marketing and promotional campaigns and overall tourism contribution to economic and community wellbeing of the region (Cork County Council, 2016; 2014). Apart from the local involvement, empirical research underlines the important contribution made by Cork County Council in areas such as the national tourism strategy by supporting strategies and programmes at national level (County and City Managers’ Association, 2012). However, evidence suggests that the intention of Cork County Council in fostering efforts for developing local tourism and supporting national tourism strategies is challenged from various perspectives. Firstly, a lack of consolidated plans at a local level was previously noted in various reports published by Cork County Council (2015; 2014), and also by O'Mahony (2015) who believes that these are essential for Cork to capitalise on the recent projected growth in visitor numbers. Secondly, the Strategic Tourism Task Force (2015), states that Cork as a tourism destination is, as yet, not fully known across many international markets and segments, noting that attracting these markets would be key in extending the holiday season (Strategic Tourism Task Force, 2015). A similar perspective is provided by Fáilte Ireland’s (2015) findings, which show that Cork is not fully appreciated internationally for all it has to offer as international visitors are uninformed regarding Cork's tourism product offering. Finally, a media release published by the Cork County Council (2015) reveals the need for an overall co-ordinated strategy for the county to be put together in collaboration with the city Council and other industry partners.

In response to the above challenges, Cork County Council recognised the urgency of a regional strategy for the development of tourism, leading to the establishment of a dedicated Tourism Strategy Group for Cork (Cork County Council, 2015). Since its establishment, the new tourism strategy group took various actions to adapt Cork's tourism product to the existing demand by identifying strengths and weaknesses of the region, creating and implementing new
objectives, goals and strategies. Led by a high level Tourism Strategy Group, Cork County Council, Cork City Council, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland funded the development of a Cork Tourism Strategy to develop a vision and action plan which will direct the future growth of tourism in Cork and maximise the economic potential from tourism in Cork in relation to overseas visitor numbers, revenue and employment. The Tourism Strategy Group was also charged with the development of the supporting Action Plans to ensure the Strategy will be delivered. This included the establishment of a public-private stakeholder led Brand Management and Marketing support unit known as Visit Cork (Cork County Council, 2015).

The new Cork's strategic tourism group also created a new tourism proposition for County Cork and developed an ambitious new targeted five year plan (2015-2020). The plan incorporates a cooperative approach developed by the Cork Tourism Strategy Taskforce being designed to increase domestic and international visitors to the Cork region by in excess of half a million. The new targeted five year plan also encourages the dispersal of visitors across the entire county and extending the length of the tourism season. The boost to the local economy is projected to be in the region of €865 million and according to Cork County Council (2015) if the projected strategy is going according to plan, Cork County should be the most successful local authority in Ireland (Corkcoco.ie, 2015). According to the Strategic Tourism Task Force (2015) the key ambition under the new strategy is to create sustainable growth for tourism in County Cork where the growing significance of tourism as an economic driver and the importance of attracting increased revenues from both overseas and domestic markets to support businesses, communities and jobs cannot be overlooked. Three main objectives were set under the strategy including making Cork region a must visit destination for domestic and international visitors, whilst leveraging Ireland’s Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way, creating sustainable growth by developing responsible tourism across Cork and generating significant revenue and economic contribution to the local economy.

It is important to note that the new tourism strategy is the result of a number of years’ targeted market research including several rounds of stakeholder engagement which have culminated in the delivery of four plans with defined, measurable actions and deliverables (O'Mahony, 2015). The research findings are supported by an implementation framework to ensure that Cork can reach its tourism potential over the next five years and beyond. An article issued by Avondhu Blackwater (2015) states that collaboration played a key role in the formation of the new group and strategies as both Cork County Council and Cork City Council took initiative
to bring together, in conjunction with other key industry and state partners, a core strategy group to lead and develop a strategy and action plan for tourism development.

In terms of collaborations and relationships for tourism development, various authors and government publications agree with, and emphasise the importance of collaboration and its compelling role in tourism planning, development and policymaking, (Strategic Tourism Task Force, 2015; Bramwell and Lane, 2000; Bramwell and Sharman, 1999). It is believed that collaborative arrangements for tourism planning and development involve interactions between stakeholders which may be public, semi-public, private or voluntary sectors, including pressure and interest groups (Bramwell and Lane, 2000). To realise successful collaborative interactions, a well-coordinated execution of the agreed actions and a supporting structure to lead this with the many stakeholders is essential. The efforts of Cork County Council as a local authority in fostering this type of collaboration and partnerships are invaluable, the Council being involved in various partnership actions for tourism development. Cork County Council collaborates on a regular basis with national public bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to enhance the tourism potential of the region, and with various private stakeholders of industry. Partnerships with other local public authorities such as Cork City Council in developing new tourism programmes and strategies are perceived as vital in increasing the competitiveness of the region. Collaborations with private players in the industry such as Cork Airport and other service organisations are key in introducing new routes for Cork Airport and new services in terms of inbound tourism (Corkcoco.ie, 2014).

It is clear that Cork County Council is committed to overcome current challenges affecting tourism performance in the region and is actively engaged in implementing local tourism strategies and collaborative actions for tourism development. To ensure continued tourism performance and facilitate the development of the tourism sector, Cork County Council is also responsible for the delivery of strong, year-round high quality integrated tourism products (Cork County Council, 2014, p. 121). The role of Cork County Council in developing superior local tourism products is explored in greater detail in the following section.
2.3.3 Tourism Product Development in Cork County Council

A report published by the Strategic Tourism Task Force (2015), indicates that Ireland has seen a significant increase in visitor numbers, and County Cork, as a tourism destination finds itself in an excellent position to capitalise on this upturn. At a regional level, other statistics reveal that in terms of tourism figures, the South West Region of Ireland has consistently been one of the most popular regions in the country, with Cork being the most visited county after Dublin (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). Cork’s location in the South West Region means that it is a direct beneficiary of being a part of a popular tourist region. Reports also state that, apart from the potential to benefit from the recent increase in visitor numbers, County Cork is positioned within the experience brands, Ireland’s Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way. This represents an imposing opportunity for the County to benefit by leveraging the two brands’ success (Cork County Council, 2015). DTTAS (2014) believes that the success of Cork’s inclusion in the Wild Atlantic Way has been of great benefit to the County and today Cork attracts approximately 17.5% of all overseas visitors who come to Ireland.

The Council’s efforts in developing tourism in the area are also aided by Cork’s affluent tourism product which combines a rich hinterland of scenery, excellent hotels and guest houses, heritage sites and cultural events, along with the hundreds of artisan food producers who trade from the region (Cork County Council, 2016). According to Discoverireland.ie (2014), tourism in County Cork is based on its rich natural and built heritage. The principal features of the area’s tourism product include; mountains and upland habitats; rivers and lakes, over 1,100 km of scenic rugged coastline and peninsulas with long stretches of sandy beaches, fertile agricultural land and many upland peatlands and forest/woodland areas. These natural assets combined with a rich heritage of archaeological and historical sites, built environment including manor homes and gardens, attractive towns and villages offer a unique tourism product (Discoverireland.ie, 2014).

Cork County Council is regularly engaged in developing tourism at a local level being involved in tourism development projects and initiatives (Cork County Council, 2014). According to the County and City Managers' Association (2012), the local authority provided support, constructed and assisted in the planning of various projects relating to a broad range of recreation and amenities facilities. These range from small-scale tourism mapping projects to large scale development of heritage sites, theatres, museums, greenways and walkways. Some of the recent projects in which the Council was directly involved in terms of tourism
development include the development of Spike Island, Camden Fort Meagher in Cross Heaven, Michael Collins House and the Youghal Clock Tower. A further €5 million visitor enhancement programme, part funded by the Council has also commenced, highlighting the island's vast penal, military and social history.

However, the Council's responsibility does not extend only to developing and enhancing tourism attractions and assets. County Development Plans (2014) note that the Council has a duty to protect and conserve the existing tourism product which includes natural, built and cultural heritage features that form the resources on which the County’s tourist industry is based. According to O’Riordan (2015) a report issued by officials shows that between 2011 and 2014, the local authority spent €9,669,139 on developing tourism sites and promoting tourism events. The major proportion of €8,253,377 went towards refurbishment of buildings, which the Council believes will pay appreciable dividends to the tourism industry in the future. Statistics show that the county Council spent €926,192, in conjunction with the city Council, on promoting events such as Irish Open Golf, The Gathering, and Rebel Week. Between 2011 -2014, the local authority spent a further €489,610 supporting local festivals, marketing the Sheep’s Head Way and cruise tourism in West Cork, printing West Cork islands brochures, and bringing European angling journalists to Cork Harbour. Sponsorship by the Council was also provided for various programmes aimed at increasing visitors' numbers, including Cork Harbour Open Day, Flavours of Cork, MTV Crashes Cork, and the Cork Convention Bureau.

The above initiatives and figures illustrate the important role that Cork County Council plays in cultivating local products and events to benefit the development of local tourism. County and City Managers’ Association (2012) reveal that the extent to which the local authorities support and underpin local tourism attractions, assets and events can serve as the backbone of the local Irish tourism industry. However, apart from these key roles, the local authority is also a leading driver of local economic development, being well placed to act as an engine for growth to the benefit of local tourism business and tourism employment (Cork County Council, 2016). A discussion on Cork County Council’s role in driving economic growth and the importance of this role for local tourism development is provided below.
2.3.4 Tourism and Economic Development in Cork County Council

The appealing notion that tourism encourages economic growth has attracted over time a large number of theoretical and empirical studies, and there is a clear understanding in the literature that the concepts of tourism and economic development are interlinked (Sahli and Carey, 2013). In terms of local governance, Smyth (2008), reveals a general trend, where local authorities are adopting a progressively more active role in the use of tourism as an economic development tool (p. 27). The role of the Council in fostering local economic development through offering tourism industry supports, is worthy of close attention.

Research by the County and City Managers' Association (CCMA) (2012), argues that some core responsibilities of the local authorities in terms of tourism and economic development are often overlooked, and that their role in promoting local or regional tourism enterprise and jobs tends to be undervalued. It is further argued that many supports provided by local authorities are indirect and it is often difficult to directly link the local authority role to positive outcomes such as tourism jobs provided or tourism enterprises sustained. However there is no doubt that the Irish local authorities provide a key enabling role in a myriad of activities, including tourism, which ultimately yield valuable and significant job, enterprise and subsequently, economic dividends (CCMA, 2012).

In particular, Cork County Council has for many years played a large and significant role in the economic development of the County. This has included the traditional role of providing a strategic overview and vision for the development of the County through County Development plans and local area plans, but particularly through Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) and its implementation structures which have guided and driven the development of the Greater Cork Area since the first Land Use and Transport (LUT) Plan in the late 1970s. Such strategic vision has ensured that major infrastructural provision has dovetailed with land use developments ensuring a co-ordinated, plan led, investment strategy by the myriad of public and private sector bodies who came together to develop a shared vision in terms of economic development (Cork County Council, 2015). Previous evidence shows that Cork County Council also has a successful track record over a long number of years in actually delivering individual projects which directly resulted in job creation and facilitated local enterprise, from the development of enterprise space to tourism projects to roads, sanitary and water projects.
In more recent years, Cork County Council has increased its activity in the enterprise field, with an emphasis being placed on this role by central government policy and with the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) now part of the local government structure, the local authority plays an even more critical role in the economic development field. The Supporting Economic Recovery and Jobs Locally report and support to Economic Development documents provide a strong impetus to local authorities to deliver in this area (Cork County Council, 2015). Yet, probably the most notable finding arising from several Cork County Council reports is that tourism has been identified as an area where there is extensive opportunity for local economic growth and job creation (Cork County Council, 2014). It is noted that today Cork County Council’s activities to support employment and enterprise, span a much broader range of activities than previously acknowledged, where tourism represents a key sector for which employment and enterprise supports are provided (Cork County Council 2014). Browne (2017), notes that the Council is pro-actively engaged in a range of measures aimed at future proofing the region in a manner that will set conditions to enable the future growth of Cork and Cork County. Therefore, a major role of the Council is to facilitate these conditions that lead to economic growth in their area. Cork Chamber of Commerce (2015), suggests ways in which such growth can be achieved through tourism, stating that local tourism industry supports and initiatives provided by the Council have the potential to benefit both the local community and economy in the long run. It is further suggested that prime tourist destinations within article 6 the county should be specially designated for tourism development and supported accordingly by Cork County Council, to facilitate economic growth through provisions such as enhanced tourism enterprise and retail developments (Cork Chamber of Commerce, 2015). The pivotal role played by Cork County Council in fostering economic growth and development across the county is highlighted by various initiatives and programmes which are fundamental to enterprise support, start-ups, job creation and subsequently economic development at a local level. Even though such programmes are not designed or aimed directly at tourism, they foster significant benefits to the development of local tourism assisting tourism entrepreneurship and employment in the region (Cork County Council, 2015).

Tourism enterprise support and job creation has seen a significant improvement within Cork County with the introduction of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in 2014 by the Local Government Reform Act. LEOs are described as entities which act as one stop shops to deliver enterprise supports through the local government system and they provide all the local government supports for tourism start-ups in one easily accessible place (Bruton, 2015). With
the introduction of LEOs, Cork County Council, as a local authority, is now actively involved in supporting small and medium tourism businesses, enterprises and start-up initiatives by delivering positive results in terms of local job creation and economic growth. According to Lucey (2015), the results achieved within County Cork in year one of the LEO initiative, show that the policy is clearly working and that real jobs and added value is being created for business in general and tourism business in particular. Since 2014, Cork County Council has helped create hundreds of jobs within the tourism industry through its work with Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) as a significant number of business projects, including tourism projects, were approved for financial assistance through the initiative, totalling €1.62 million. The number of people in the region employed by LEO-assisted companies in 2015 stood at 1,094 (O’Riordan, 2015).

Apart from the above economic supports, a recent report issued by Cork County Council (2016), states that with the emergence of LEOs, the local authority has started to play an important role in cultivating local innovation and entrepreneurship by providing direct and indirect support for local tourism business networking events, entrepreneurial support programmes and leadership and other training programmes that benefit Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs) and other start-up companies (Cork County Council, 2016). Despite the of lack of empirical research and the difficulty associated with quantifying outcomes delivered by such enterprise supports at a local level (CCMA, 2012), recent reports note an emerging role for Cork County Council in fostering local economic growth through the provision of tourism industry enterprise supports and job creation (Cork County Council 2016; 2015).

The growing responsibility of local authorities in providing for local economic development and growth is often associated with the introduction of the Local Government Reform Act in 2014 (Irish Statute Book, 2014). Yet, it is important to note that with the introduction of the Act, Cork County Council has not only been given responsibility for the establishment and support of Local Enterprise Offices but an increased role in providing for the economic and community development of the county. According to the Economic Development Fund Report (2015), the local authority role has been amended to establish and support Local Community Development Committees and to enhance social and cultural experiences for both locals and visitors. The relationship between community development and tourism and Cork County
Council's role to facilitate this relationship for the benefit of both locals and visitors is further discussed under the following heading.

2.3.5 Tourism and Community Development in Cork County Council

The relevant literature suggests that the relationship between tourism and communities is multi-dimensional, encompassing economic, social, cultural, ecological and political forces (Singh and Timothy, 2003). The need for community participation in tourism is also well-recognised and it is believed that community involvement in tourism can ensure community benefits, empower the locals and promote community development. On the other hand, from a local governance perspective, Su (2014) suggests that proper planning and management are needed to facilitate the sustainable development of both tourism and the community at a local level.

In Ireland, in particular DTTAS (2014), has long recognised the enhanced role of local authorities in driving sustainable local community development and the close link between this role and local tourism initiatives. Similarly, other government publications have always emphasised the invaluable contribution of Irish communities to tourism and vice-versa, the contribution of tourism to local communities (Tourism Ireland, 2010; Fáilte Ireland, 2017). Most recently, the newly published report Driving Tourism Sustaining Communities (2017) articulates the importance of tourism-community relationships, encouraging communities to work in partnerships with local authorities in the delivery of local tourism programmes, and highlighting the opportunities to which Irish communities are exposed to by becoming active participants in the development of tourism in their locality (Fáilte Ireland, 2017). The same report advises Irish local authorities to provide tailored capital investment support to assist the introduction and enhancement of community development through tourism (Fáilte Ireland, 2017). Finally, Meade (2015), reveals that community-based tourism initiatives administered at a county level have the potential to increase community participation in tourism development and bring subsequent financial and nonfinancial benefits to Irish regions.

Today, Cork County Council is committed to supporting local communities and is regularly involved in tourism programmes and community-based tourism initiatives working closely with Local Community Development Committees. Some of these community-based programmes are centrally-led or in other words, implemented at an international or national level through central tourism strategy and subsequently enacted by the local authority at a local level (Cork County Council, 2016). Regardless of the level at which they are implemented, it
is important to emphasise the fact that such programmes, either directly or indirectly, have the potential, to influence tourism and community development at a local level. Two current active programmes with roles in enhancing tourism development and aimed at benefiting community development in County Cork are LEADER and the Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative. The LEADER Initiative, (Liaisons entre actions de développement de l’économie rurale) for instance, was established by the European Commission in 1991 being designed to aid the development of sustainable rural communities following the reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy (European Commission, 2014). Even though LEADER is co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the programme is centrally (nationally) administered in Ireland by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. However, in Cork County, the initiative is managed and implemented on the ground by Cork County Council through three Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) operating in each of Cork County's three respective divisions (Cork County Council, 2016). According to Lucey (2016) Cork County Council is one of the few local authorities across the country that has backed-up the LEADER programme in this way. The LEADER programme has made a significant contribution to Cork rural areas since its commencement in County Cork in 2016, supporting local and community projects across a diverse range of themes including rural tourism, enterprise development and rural towns (Cork County Council, 2016).

Another programme implemented at a national level and enacted by the local authority which proved beneficial for tourism and community development alike is the Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative. According to Meade (2015) the initiative builds on the community involvement legacy and provides an annual fund of €1 million to support local community based events and festivals. In County Cork, in particular the fund is administered by Cork County Council and provides support to local and community event organisers, activities and projects harnessing diaspora links for the benefit of local and community tourism. Apart from benefiting tourism and community development, more importantly, initiatives as such have the potential to address main challenges faced by the Council through creating local tourism awareness across international markets and segments (Cork County Council, 2015).

At a local level, Cork County Council, through the municipal districts, is also committed to supporting local communities and community based tourism development. The Council supports and administers directly local community based tourism projects and subsequently
community development by offering fund contributions from local schemes. Such fund contributions include financial support to community groups and local organisations wishing to undertake development projects in their area, to support festivals, and for local communities to work with Cork County Council on local projects (Youghal Tourism, 2017). Similarly, local Community Contracts offer an opportunity for local communities to work with Cork County Council on local works and tourism projects being agreed with the local Area Engineer with the aim to enhance the area in which the community group is active (Cork County Council, 2016).

Based on the above evidence, is it clear that Cork County Council attempts to enhance the relationship between Cork's community and local tourism development through either central-led policy and programmes or local schemes acting as a moderator in the context of tourism industry in the county and playing a greater role in making Cork a great place to live, work and visit (Cork County Council, 2015, p.1). Following the role of Cork County Council in driving local economic and community development to benefit tourism, the local authority functions in terms of tourism planning and policy is also worthy of closer attention. This function is further examined in the following section.

2.3.6 Tourism Planning and Policy in Cork County Council

There is an understanding in the relevant literature that local governments have the potential to bring a significant contribution in tourism development, given the influence that their functions, such as land-use planning and policy development, have on the tourism sector (Connell et al., 2009). According to Nodder et al. (2003), the local authorities represent the third tier of public sector tourism management, which is often the scale at which most interactions with businesses occur, and where decisions regarding policy and tourism development are made. As Limerick Chamber of Commerce (2013), notes a local authority is best positioned to act proactively and be responsive in implementing tourism policy at a local level. It is also stated that a local authority has to be adequately resourced with the specialist skills to provide this service, without generating duplication within a policy framework of clearly defined roles and responsibilities (Limerick Chamber of Commerce, 2013). A local authority can thus, have a key role to play in tourism policy development where policy is implemented at a local level proceeding from the bottom of a hierarchy upward. However, while tourism policy is best implemented at a local level, most local tourism policies and strategies are formulated within the national policy context (Fáilte Ireland, 2015) and there is
often a need for national strategic direction to be adopted by the local authorities in implementing such policy (Limerick Chamber of Commerce, 2013).

In Ireland, the national policy context for the development of tourism has focused in the past on supporting sustainable growth in visitor expenditure with an emphasis on a wider regional and seasonal spread of business (OECD, 2013). However, according to DTTAS (2014), the fundamental goal of tourism policy today, is to ensure tourism contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of the country. It is stated that nowadays, tourism policy considerations at a national level are made in a number of areas including tourism product development, tourism marketing, human resources (HR), training, enterprise support, innovation and competitiveness (DTTAS, 2015). In Ireland, such tourism policy is regularly directed at a national level and further implemented and put into practice locally and regionally by the local authorities. To achieve the objectives of this study and identify the way in which Cork County Council engages in implementing tourism policy at a local level, there is a need to set and discuss the current national policy context in which the local authority operates. A discussion on the current national tourism policy and the subsequent implications for Cork County Council is further provided.

According to DTTAS (2015), government’s current tourism policy, entitled People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025 sets out a range of objectives and aims to grow tourism by 2025. The national tourism policy document represents a fundamental examination, and a clear statement, of what Ireland wants to achieve for tourism in the coming decade and sets out ambitious targets for growth in overseas visits, associated revenue, and increased tourism employment. In terms of local authorities’ role in tourism development, the current policy sets out the alignment of Local Authority actions with national policies, stating that local authorities need to have due regard for national tourism policy as expressed in People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025.

Firstly, People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025 highlights the organisational support provided by local authorities in community tourism initiatives and suggests the development of a more structured role for local authorities in supporting community initiative and involvement in tourism development (DTTAS, 2015). This particular duty set out under the national policy is enacted and delivered on the ground by Cork County Council through the creation of local community-based tourism initiatives and through the provision of local schemes and funding that support community involvement in local tourism projects (Cork
County Council, 2015). The national policy also directs Irish local authorities to act in cooperation with one another in managing and developing destinations by crossing administrative boundaries (DTTAS, 2015). Buttmer (2015), suggests that this duty set under the national policy could be the basis for a new approach for tourism development in County Cork where both Cork City and County Council could develop and market Cork as a single region or tourism destination. Amongst other directions given to the local authorities, the new tourism policy also mentions cooperation between local authorities and the tourism industry local support for tourism and supporting volunteer effort for tourism development (DTTAS, 2015).

The potential for local authorities to support the key tourism strengths of Irish tourism policy, people and place is highlighted in the document, noting, however that the tourism industry does not operate in isolation. According to DTTAS (2015), given the diverse nature of tourism-related economic activity, tourism development is affected by a wide range of policies, both at the domestic and EU level, for example:

*Policies that impact on the natural and built environment, the nature and rates of taxation on various forms of economic activity, and structures for the public support of private enterprise all impact on the sector* (People, Place and Policy, p.64).

It is revealed that even though tourism policy is prepared at a central level, Cork County Council as a local authority has an important role and duty to support tourism development as expressed in the national policy by integrating national level strategies and implementing them at local level. Moreover Cork County Council has a due regard for national tourism policy as set by DTTSA (Cork County Council, 2015). To facilitate this process, Cork County Council established a dedicated tourism strategy group to be directly responsible for tourism strategy and policy implementation on the ground in the region. Since the establishment of the previously mentioned tourism strategy group, the role of Cork County Council as a leader of tourism development for its region is now strongly recognised in the new national policy for local government and in the national government’s tourism policy (Cork County Council, 2015).

In terms of tourism planning, at a local level, with the introduction of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Cork County Council has been directed by statute to prepare Local Economic and Community Plans. The current national policy suggests the identification of tourism as a priority in the Local Economic and Community Plans, and the provision of support to start-up
and developing tourism enterprises to be aligned with the local authorities’ tourism objectives and plans for their areas (DTTAS, 2015).

Cork County Council has also an important role to play in local tourism planning by dealing with land-zoning submissions and project plans for tourism development purposes, which are being lodged with the Council for approval on a regular basis (Cork Chamber of Commerce, 2014). For instance, a €40 million retail village development plan in the Bandon Area was submitted to the Council at the start of 2016 and it is believed that the potential tourism and economic boom for Bandon as a result of this project is huge (Barry Design, 2016, p.1). Implementation of such project plans have the capability to bring major benefits for tourism within the county being designated for tourism development and supported accordingly by Cork County Council to facilitate further tourism traffic in the area (Cork Chamber of Commerce, 2014).

As author of development plans as well as influencer of regional areas strategic plans, Cork County Council plays a key role in aligning tourism policies at a local and regional level (Cork County Council, 2014). However, as noted by other Irish authorities, local governments are enablers, not directors of tourism. Policies and plans adopted need to provide the necessary resources, such as regulatory and taxation environment and adequate tourism infrastructure, in order for the industry to flourish (Limerick Chamber of Commerce, 2013). A detailed examination of the role of Cork County Council in providing tourism infrastructure is provided below.

2.3.7 Tourism Infrastructure Development in Cork County Council

Local authorities have a direct impact on the total tourism experience of visitors and it is believed that the competitive position and attractiveness of any tourism destination is influenced by the diversity, quality and overall blend of a local authority's services and resources (Rogerson, 2013). According to White (2010), the provision of resources (such as infrastructure, transport, attractions and other tourism related services) and perceived value for investment, indicates the priority local governments place on tourism development. The provision of resources by the local authorities is described to include a number of areas from the provision of basic services (e.g. water, sanitation and electricity); provision and maintenance of public infrastructure, transport; public attractions and other public amenities; to the provision of the tourism promotion and tourism regulatory environment (Rogerson, 2013).
The link between the provision of basic resources and local tourism development has been highlighted by several scholars, who mainly discussed the importance of transport networks and infrastructure in tourism development and generally agreed that the provision of appropriate access, transportation and infrastructure have a critical role to play in expanding local tourism (Li et al., 2015; Khadaroo and Seetenah, 2007). Dickinson et al., (2009) argued that the quality of transport infrastructure is viewed as a potential determinant of destination attractiveness and is recognized as a basic component of successful creation of new attractions and expansion of the existing ones. Similarly, Page (2005), noted that transport and local tourism industries are closely linked, whereas a proper supply of infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure, provide a significant competitive advantage for tourism development. In terms of local governments' role in the provision of such resources, there is a clear understanding in the literature that local authorities, governments and Councils' traditional services include planning, developing, and maintaining key infrastructure in their functional areas (Hasselgren, 2013).

In Ireland, in particular, a number of Irish local government reports note that the core functions of the Councils' are closely related with local tourism development and include infrastructural development such as provision of road networks, parking facilities, appropriate signage and amenity sites for tourism development purposes (Clare County Council, 2010). A more recent survey identifies that Irish local authorities deliver resources to help improve the enjoyment and interpretation by tourists of local attractions (Local Government Management Agency, County and City Management Association, Local Authorities Ireland, 2017, p. 10). Local authorities have been identified as the principal financial investors in tourism infrastructure as in 2016 they invested €21.57million in tourism infrastructure, as illustrated in Figure 2.6 (Local Government Management Agency, County and City Management Association, Local Authorities Ireland, 2017, p. 10).
In Cork County Council, the importance of resource provision and infrastructural development for tourism development is highlighted in various County Development Plans issued year on year by the Planning Policy Unit (Cork County Council, 2007). According to documents as such, the provision of adequate resources and the reinforcement of local infrastructure to meet the needs of visitors is fundamental to the effective delivery of the county tourism strategy. Additionally, the importance of providing resources such as new tourist facilities and adequate transportation for visitor access purposes is also emphasised and highlighted in the County Development Plan:

*The provision of tourist facilities should respect the tourism strategy and objectives of the County enabling key facilities to be provided where they can be used by visitors to several locations or by visitors using public transport* (Cork County Council, 2007, p.149).

Apart from the provision of key tourism facilities, Cork County Council makes a significant contribution to the development of the tourist experience in their local area, by directly running or providing support to various amenities and attractions. Cork County itself benefits from a number of key tourist attractions of national importance. These attractions include historic houses, castles, gardens, geoparks, blueways and greenways, visitor and interpretive centres, museums, arts centres, theatres, galleries, lighthouses, historic forts, islands, heritage centres,
and many more. Such variety in terms of the types of attractions is often seen to benefit the tourist experience in a particular region. As Fáilte Ireland (2015), notes, local authorities that achieve the provision of a more diverse range of visitor attractions have the potential to encourage longer visitor stays, help extend the visitor season and add to the quality of life for people who live in the area. Thus, it is clear that by supporting such a variety of resources Cork County Council brings a significant contribution to the development of the tourist experience in its local area benefiting both the overall local tourism industry and the local community.

It is also important to note that in Ireland, the local government sector recognises that the needs and priorities of tourists continuously evolve (DTTAS, 2015). It is critical that local tourism resources are sustained and upgraded on a regular basis (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). According to DTTAS (2016), some examples of prospective tourism projects for local authorities include developing walking routes, greenways and blueways; installing new Wild Atlantic Way discovery points; providing new parks; restoring and conserving historic houses, estates and heritage projects; building new visitor centres; creating new museums; improving and providing caravan and camping facilities; developing angling, river and marina attractions; expanding sports facilities and implementing new promotion initiatives.

Following continuous investment and development of tourism attractions, experience and infrastructure, local authorities together with local communities work to promote their local areas to domestic and overseas tourists. This is often undertaken in partnership with Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, consistent with national and international tourism marketing campaigns. (Local Government Management Agency, County and City Management Association, Local Authorities Ireland, 2017). As will be outlined in the section below, a range of approaches and types of marketing are used by Cork County Council to promote local areas, from organising festivals and events, to implementing targeted promotional campaigns.

2.3.8 Tourism Marketing and Promotion in Cork County Council

According to Papadopoulos (2004), place marketing efforts of local and regional governments involve a variety of objectives such as region positioning in international markets, enhancement of a place's exports, and protection of local businesses from foreign competition, attraction or retention of development factors and generally positioning the place or region for advantage domestically and internationally in economic, political and social terms. In terms of tourism development, Hall (1997), notes that tourism is intimately connected to the place marketing process being often used by local and national governments as a vehicle for place positioning,
development and regeneration. Hence, tourism is often used as a medium for the achievement of a number of local marketing objectives and the marketing of regions and places is turned into an increasingly professionalised, highly organised and specialised industry that encourages the growth of tourism (Gotham, 2002). It is however, important to note that marketing policy, strategy and operations undertaken by local governments cannot be considered independently of product characteristics whether in tourism or any other sector (Fáilte Ireland, 2015). The tourism product offer is core to direct Local authorities’ decisions about whom to market to, and how to do so. DTTAS (2014), identifies a variety of factors to be taken into account when deciding on where to focus marketing efforts for maximum returns, including current economic conditions, consumer sentiment, and prospects for growth in the domestic market and in key overseas tourism markets, product fit to the market or segments of the market, access trends and growth prospects for passenger transport and global tourism generally, and finally particular tourist segments such as looking at what types of tourists (particular age-groups, backgrounds, interests) would be most interested in Ireland’s local offering.

It is noted that, in Ireland, local authorities are in a unique position to support local marketing and tourism promotion initiatives due to their continuous involvement in local tourism product development (DTTAS, 2015). Local authorities can provide the expertise needed to deliver and promote tourism development and as a result, duties and responsibilities for local authorities in supporting local tourism promotion and long-term sustainable market growth are increasingly mentioned in Ireland's national tourism policy and legislation. DTTAS (2015), argues that with the introduction of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Irish local authorities, including Cork County Council, have been given greater responsibility for branding and marketing the county and its tourism product. Similarly, Buttimer (2015), notes that the current national tourism policy, People Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025, provides for a central role for local authorities in developing tourism and marketing tourism in their region. Following implementation of this policy, all Irish local authorities and local communities work to promote their local areas to domestic and international tourists. Such activities are often undertaken in partnership with national tourism bodies such as Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, being delivered in accordance with national and international tourism marketing campaigns (Local Government Management Agency, County and City Management Association, Local Authorities Ireland, 2017).
A range of approaches are used by the local authorities in order to promote local areas, from organising festivals and events, to implementing targeted promotional campaigns. Regardless of the type of approach adopted by local authorities, industry stakeholders’ partnerships and community collaboration are key in delivering local tourism promotional campaigns (Bramwell and Lane, 2000). According to a recent study, festivals and events are recognised as an excellent means by which local communities can celebrate local assets, strengths and history, while taking a targeted approach to attracting visitors. Apart from supporting events and festivals, Irish local authorities are working with a range of partners to promote their local area and wider region. According to Fáilte Ireland’s Local Government Tourism Survey Irish (2016), local authorities leveraged spend of €7.3million on tourism promotion in 2016, of which €4.3million was provided by the local authorities and €3million was provided by a number of stakeholders as illustrated in Figure 2.4 below:

![Investment in Tourist Promotion Ireland 2016](image)

*Source: Fáilte Ireland (2016)*

Regarding Cork County Council’s direct involvement in tourism marketing and promotion, a number of reports published include various real examples of collaborative ventures between the local authority and national or local partners to support both festivals and events and targeted promotional campaigns. The variety of approaches and types of marketing activities undertaken by Cork County Council includes supporting local tourism organisations to bring local tourism stakeholders together to enhance tourist offering and promotion; investing in
national and international marketing campaigns on TV, radio and online; providing marketing funds for routes to airports and ports; promoting tourist offerings to cruise companies. Other marketing related activities initiated by the Council consist of running tourist information offices; holding conferences and events for tourism stakeholders; creating local multi-lingual maps, guides and brochures; creating libraries of promotional images, videos and drone footage; setting up familiarisation trips for journalists and travel companies; pitching to and supporting the production of travel television programmes; and creating local tour group itineraries (Cork County Council, 2016; 2015; 2014).

A significant amount of the marketing done by Cork County Council is in support of national brands such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland’s Ancient East and that the Council collaborates on a regular basis with national public bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to enhance the tourism promotion and potential of the region. The Council also provided a significant amount of investment funds towards tourism marketing and according to O’Riordan (2015), Cork County Council spent an estimated €10 million on marketing, promoting and staffing tourist attractions in a four-year period from 2011 to 2014. The significant spending on tourism-related marketing and promotional activities is particularly aimed to maximise Cork's potential as a tourism destination and to provide clarity and awareness of what Cork has to offer (Lucey, 2016). Irish Examiner (2015), notes that Cork County Council plays a very unique role in promoting tourism at regional level committing a serious amount of money on product development and marketing, while receiving valuable support from various co-operative tourism groups across Ireland.

Is it clear from the above examination of the literature that Cork County Council plays an active role in developing local tourism, by being involved in tourism product development, economic and community development, tourism planning and policy, tourism infrastructure development and tourism marketing and promotion.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter examined the relevant extant literature concerning the main thematic areas of this study and attempting to provide an understanding into the role of Cork County Council in tourism development based on relevant secondary sources available. Due to the complexity of the emerging topic areas, this chapter focused on providing an understanding into the role of local governments in tourism development from two perspectives. Both perspectives provided an insight and understanding into the relevant literature behind this research project, delivering
a structured and informed overview of the role of Cork County Council and its engagement in tourism development.

Firstly, a broader perspective was provided in Section 2.1 and Section 2.2 examining the general role of local authorities in tourism development based on the secondary resources at hand. An overview of the Irish tourism industry and the Irish government's role in developing the industry was provided, followed by an in-depth examination of local government engagement in tourism.

Secondly, a more specific perspective was adopted in Section 2.3 which examined in particular, the role, functions and responsibilities of Cork County Council in developing local tourism. An organisational overview of the Council was provided, followed by a comprehensive investigation of key areas of responsibility in which the organisation is involved to assist local tourism development. Based on secondary sources of research and various local government publications, these key areas of responsibility are identified as and include: Tourism Product Development, Tourism and Economic Development, Tourism and Community Development, Tourism Planning and Policy, Tourism Infrastructure Development, and Tourism Marketing and Promotion. Each area of responsibility will be explored and discussed in the following chapters based on the primary research process and findings.
Chapter Three: Methodology
3.0 Introduction

Conducting research requires a methodology and according to Weinberg (2002), an appropriate study design is of paramount importance to deduce the right research conclusions. The research methodology framework can be described as *the study or description of research methods* and represents the systematic, theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge (Beskerville, 1991 p. 22). Typically, it comprises concepts such as a theoretical model, research design and quantitative or qualitative techniques (Irny and Rose, 2005).

This chapter reports the methodology framework of this study, providing a discussion on the research design and methods of data collection chosen to meet research objectives. The chapter begins by examining the selected research design and describing the qualitative approach. The case study method is further explored together with the main instruments used for the collection of data. Finally, the process of sample selection, limitations and ethical constrains posed by the research context are presented.

3.1 The Research Design

Polit and Hungler (1999), describe the research design as a blueprint, or outline, for conducting the study in such a way that maximum control will be exercised over factors that could interfere with the validity of the research results. The research design is the researcher’s overall plan for obtaining answers to the research questions guiding the study. Burns and Grove (2001) state that designing a study can facilitate the researcher's planning process in a way that will help him obtain the intended results, thus, increasing the chances of acquiring information that can be associated with the real situation. Similarly, Burns and Grove (2001), statement is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (1998 p. 83), who believe that:

*A research design situates researchers in the empirical world and connects them with specific sites, people, groups, institutions, and bodies of relevant interpretive material.*

An appropriate study research design not only outlines the methods by which data is gathered or investigated, but it also shows what kind of evidence is collected and from where. It also shows how such evidence is constructed and allows the research questions to be answered (Easterby-Smith et.al., 1991). The main research question of this study aims to explore *What*
role does Cork County Council have in developing tourism?, from the main question a number of sub-questions have emerged:

- What are the main functions and responsibilities of Cork County Council in terms of tourism and economic development?
- How does Cork County Council assist tourism development?
- How is Cork County Council involved in tourism planning, policy, promotion, environmental management, infrastructure development and resource provision?

As stated by Flick (2007 p.50):

> A good research design has a clear focus and is built around a clear research question. Both design and questions allow the research to reduce the study to the essential issue for answering the question. A good research design makes the research manageable in resources and time and is clear in decisions about sampling and why particular methods are used.

As such, for the purpose of this study, an exploratory rather than a descriptive or causal research design of investigation was chosen. According to Domegan and Fleming (2007), a lot of organisational, market and social research deals with description as well as exploration. While the main purpose of descriptive research is to answer clearly defined research questions, exploratory research can provide description as well as in-depth understanding.

The difference between exploratory and descriptive or causal research isexplained by Sandhursen (2000), who states that exploratory studies result in a range of causes and alternative options for a solution of a specific problem, whereas, descriptive and causal studies identify the final information that is the only solution to an existing research problem. In other words, exploratory research design simply explores the research questions, leaving room for further researches, whereas descriptive and causal research designs are aimed to provide final findings for the research.

Exploratory research, as the name suggests, is conducted in order to determine the nature of the problem. According to Saunders et al. (2012), this type of research is not intended to provide conclusive evidence, but helps to provide a better understanding of the problem. Exploratory research design does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, but merely explores the research topic with varying levels of depth. It has been suggested that exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more
conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method (Singh, 2007 p. 64). Exploratory research also tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done (Brown, 2006 p. 43)

As the study's central objective is to gain a deeper understanding into the local government's engagement in tourism development, it is imperative to determine a research design and methodology which fits the purpose of the study and allows such insights to be gathered. Even though it is universally recognised that governments have an important role in tourism, academic debate regarding the form and level of such involvement is rather limited (Baum and Szivas, 2008). Thus, there is a gap in the literature that indicates this type of investigation is required.

This study attempts to fill this knowledge gap by evaluating and examining the role of Cork County Council in tourism development. The main aim of the research is to provide an understanding into how Cork County Council engages in tourism, by examining and exploring its functions and responsibilities in terms of tourism development.

The following research objectives are identified:

- To deliver a structured and informed overview of the role of Cork County Council and its engagement in tourism development.
- To present an overview of the Cork County Council's engagement in tourism in County Cork.
- To provide relevant recommendations for Cork County Council and to identify areas for improvement related to tourism development and industry involvement.

The research question and objectives above led to the adoption of an exploratory research design which tends to explore the research questions and topics in-depth, tackles current issues on which little or no previous research has been done, and leaves room for further research or investigation (Saunders et al., 2012; Singh, 2007; Brown, 2006).

In the relevant literature, exploratory research is often closely linked with qualitative research which produces holistic understandings of rich, contextual, and generally unstructured, non-numeric data (Mason, 2011). A discussion on the qualitative approach employed is provided below.
3.2 The Qualitative Approach

Although traditionally qualitative research has been seen as the lesser approach (Patton, 2002), both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches have their strengths and pitfalls. Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p. 18), note that qualitative researchers have been considered as unreliable, impressionistic and not objective, while qualitative work has often been regarded in the past as unscientific, or only exploratory, or subjective. However, more recently, the contrast between the two methods and their appropriateness was clearly outlined by Patton (2002, p. 14):

*Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail. Approaching field work without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness and detail of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand require the use of standardized measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned.*

It is clear that quantitative data can be transposed into numbers, in a formal, objective, systematic process to obtain information and describe variables and their relationships (Brink and Wood 1998; Burns and Grove 1993). However, a lot of useful information cannot be reduced to numbers. For example peoples judgements, feelings of comfort, emotions, ideas and beliefs. These record qualities rather than quantities and are regarded as qualitative data (Walliman, 2011).

According to Patton (2002), the new data of qualitative inquiry can be regarded as in-depth and descriptive, it does not make judgments about what occurs and it takes the reader into the situation. Patton (2002), also explains that although the qualitative approach is more difficult to analyse, it allows an understanding from the respondent's point of view. Similarly, Ezzy (2002, p. 80), suggests that qualitative research offers a more sophisticated understanding of the issues. Further key features of the qualitative approach are outlined and summarised by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10):

1. Qualitative data is all about the real life, focusing on naturally occurring and ordinary events in natural settings.
2. The qualitative approach implies *richness and holism*, allowing for detailed descriptions of complex situations.

3. Qualitative methods tend to be flexible allowing for methods to be adapted throughout the data collection, if needed.

4. The focus of qualitative research is on people's *lived experience* and the meanings people place on these experiences.

5. Qualitative research can focus on specific cases where the local or organisational context is taken into account.

As a result, qualitative research as a method is not subjected to quantification or quantitative analysis but it aims to produce in-depth understandings (McDaniel and Gates, 1998). Although some forms of data can easily be expressed as numbers (such as economic and scientific data), others seem unlikely from quantitative measures and cannot be converted into numbers. For example, gaining a deeper understanding into the local government's engagement in tourism development seems difficult to quantify into numerical terms. Such objective calls rather for certain organisational actions, functions and issues to be understood and expressed in a qualitative manner.

The review of the relevant literature on both quantitative and qualitative research approaches leads to the adoption of a qualitative approach which according to Patton (2002, p. 14) *facilitates study of issues and detail*. Such approach emphasises the importance of focusing on data concerned with *real life* and *specific cases*, where there is room for richness and holism, and where methods are flexible and adaptable. Qualitative research is reasoned as the most appropriate method of addressing the research question and objectives of this study. Firstly, the purpose of this research is to provide an understanding into how Cork County Council, as a local authority, engages in tourism development. For this to be ascertained, the researcher must seek in-depth insights, thoughts and opinions from Cork County Council representatives into the role of the local authority in tourism development. Furthermore, this study attempts to fill this knowledge gap by evaluating and examining the role of the government within tourism in a local context. As illustrated in Chapter 1, in Ireland, in particular, there is a lack of such academic data, which indicates that this type of investigation is required and in-depth information is needed.

Although it is easy to associate qualitative research to one category, according to Sauro (2015), there are a variety of qualitative methods developed over time which are now available
to researchers. These include Ethnography, Narrative Research, Phenomenological, Grounded Theory and Case Studies. While the five qualitative methods generally use similar data collection techniques (observation, interviews, and reviewing text), the purpose of the study differentiates them. According to Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 544), the qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts. When the approach is applied correctly, it becomes a valuable method for organisational research to develop theory and evaluate programs. The following section discusses in detail the case study method, providing suggested steps to follow in conducting case study research while presenting reasons on why this method fits best the purpose of the study.

3.3 The Case Study Method

It has been previously noted that qualitative research produces holistic understandings of rich, contextual, and generally unstructured, non-numeric data (Mason, 2002), by engaging in conversations with the research participants in a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). As part of the five qualitative methods available to researchers, Yin (2003), notes that the case study method allows the researcher to explore individuals or organisations, simply through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs. The case study method was introduced and made famous by the Harvard Business School and it is believed that even mainly quantitative researchers can relate to the value of the case study in explaining an organisation, entity, company, or event (Sauro, 2015).

The author's choice of the case study approach is worthy of discussion. Yin (2014, p.4), provides advice which is relevant to the question and objectives of this study:

*Your choice depends in large part on your research question(s). The more that your questions seek to explain some present circumstance, the more that case study research would be relevant. The method is also relevant the more that your question requires an extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomenon.*

Furthermore, Yin (2003), suggests that a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.
For instance, this study seeks to gain a deeper understanding into the local government's engagement in the tourism industry and it does that by exploring the role of Cork County Council in tourism development. As such, a case study was chosen because the case is the organisation Cork County Council, but the case could not be considered without the context, local government's role in the tourism industry, and more specifically Irish local authorities’ role in tourism development. It is in Cork County Council's organisational setting that the role of local governments in tourism development is enacted, executed and explored in this study. It would be difficult for the author to have a true picture of the present local government’s role in tourism without considering a specific local authority or context within which it occurs.

According to Baxter and Jack (2008), after deciding on the use of a case study approach, researchers must determine the case or unit of analysis and it is believed that determining what the unit of analysis (case) is can be a challenge for both novice and seasoned researchers alike. The case or unit of analysis is defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as:

*A phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The case is, in effect, your unit of analysis. Studies may be of just one case or of several.*

Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 546), further suggest that researchers can ask the following questions to help them determining what their case is: do I want to analyse an individual? Do I want to analyse a program or process? Do I want to analyse an organisation? Do I want to analyse the difference between organisations? Is it clear from the research question and objectives that Cork County Council, as representative organisation of Irish local authorities, is being investigated and represents the single case or unit of analysis of this study.

According to Yin (2003, p. 39), the single-case design represents an appropriate method under several circumstances or rationales: when the case is a critical case, when the case represents a unique or extreme case and when the case is a revelatory case. In the later instance, when a case study is chosen because is a revelatory case, the investigator has the opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation or where only few social scientists had previously the opportunity to investigate the case. There is also the situation in which the single case study may be conducted as a prelude to further study such as the use of single case studies as exploratory devices (Yin, 2003, p.41).

The choice of a single case in this study namely, Cork County Council, is based on the revelatory case rationale of Yin (2003), where the investigator has the opportunity to analyse...
and explore the role of the representative Irish local authority in tourism, and where few researchers had previously the opportunity to investigate. The author of this study aims to gain in-depth insights into the role of the local authority and to investigate issues related to the role of Cork County Council in tourism, even though these issues may be common across other Irish local authorities. This single-case study can also be regarded as an exploratory device due to the lack of previous research and attempts to create a prelude of further study.

According to Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 547), once researchers have determined what the case will be and decided over a single or multiple case design, they will have to consider what the case will not be. Is it believed that one of the common pitfalls associated with case study is that there is a tendency for researchers to attempt to answer a question that is too broad or a topic that has too many objectives for one study. In order to avoid this problem, several authors including Yin (2003), and Stake (1995), have suggested that placing boundaries on a case can prevent this from occurring. Suggestions on how to bind a case include: (a) by time and place (Creswell, 2003); (b) time and activity (Stake); and (c) by definition and context (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Bounding the case will ensure that the study remains reasonable in scope and, as Baxter and Jack (2008) note, the establishment of boundaries in a qualitative case study design is similar to the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria for sample selection in a quantitative study.

To ensure this study's' objectives are reasonable and within scope, the sample or boundary of this case study is set around of a group of representatives of Cork County Council having knowledge and expertise within tourism and other tourism related organisational areas such as services, planning, environmental management, infrastructure and community development. The boundary is also set around the organisation itself and the expertise/grade of the sample. The sample of this case study is further discussed and expanded on in section 3.6.

3.4 Merits and Pitfalls of Case Studies

Using a case study approach in research has both strengths and limitations. As a research strategy, case studies are used in a variety of contexts and disciplines, for example, in organisations in marketing and information systems (IS), in small communities, households, families in psychology and social work; or in countries, nations or regions in political science (Mouton, 2001). Firstly, the relevant literature indicates that the case method supports both theory building (Yin, 2009), and theory testing (Eisenhardt, 1989), where the case study method’s support for theory building is particularly useful in areas where existing theoretical
and conceptual frameworks are inadequate or non-existent (Chetty, 1996). Usually, no hypothesis is formulated but *general ideas or expectations* can act as a guide to the empirical research (Mouton, 2001, p. 150). It is noted that the insights arising from case-based theory building research can be used as hypotheses or propositions in further research and in general, case study research can play an important role in advancing a field’s body of knowledge (Merriam, 2009).

Other merits of using case studies identified in the literature include research flexibility such as the ability to use a variety of research methods (Davies, 2007), the ability to establish rapport with research subjects and in depth insight (Mouton, 2001). More importantly, Merriam (2009), notes that case studies have the potential to obtain sufficiently rich description that can be transferred to similar situations, individuals or organisations. For instance, the case study at hand exploring how Cork County Council engages in tourism development could be informative and relevant to other Irish local authorities.

The special features of case study research that provide the rationale for its selection, also present certain limitations in it usage. Stake (2005), notes that although rich, thick description and analysis of a phenomenon may be desired, a researcher may not have the time or money to devote to such an undertaking. He also states that case studies can also be limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator.

Further limitations are revealed by Flyvbjerg (2006), which sets up five *misunderstandings* regarding case study research, which he then dismantles, substituting a more accurate statement about the issue underlying each misunderstanding. These misunderstandings and their restatements are displayed in Table 3.1. The second misunderstanding, for example, *that one cannot generalise on the basis of a single case is usually considered to be devastating to the case study as a scientific method* (p.224).
Table 3.1 Five Misunderstandings of Case Study Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misunderstanding</th>
<th>Restatement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. General knowledge is more valuable than context-specific knowledge.</td>
<td>Universals can't be found in the study of human affairs. Context-dependent knowledge is more valuable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. One can't generalize from a single case so a single case doesn't add to scientific development.</td>
<td>Formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development; the force of a single example is underestimated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The case study is most useful in the first phase of a research process; used for generating these activities.</td>
<td>The case study is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to hypotheses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The case study confirms researcher's preconceived notions</td>
<td>There is no greater bias in case study toward confirming preconceived notions than in other forms of research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is difficult to summarise case studies into general propositions and theories.</td>
<td>Difficulty in summarizing case studies is due to properties of the reality studied, not the research method.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 219-245).*

However, citing single cases, experiments, and experiences of Galileo, Newton, Einstein, Bohr, Darwin, Marx, and Freud, Flyvbjerg (2006), makes the point that both human and natural sciences can be advanced by a single case. He also argues that formal generalizations based on large samples are overrated in their contribution to scientific progress (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Hamel (1993), also suggests that case study strengths can outweigh its limitations. As such, case studies continue to be a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education, social work, public administration and health, where applied field's processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about in depth understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice.

Patton (1990), notes that potential data sources for case studies may include; but are not limited to: documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artefacts, direct observations, and participant-observation. The choice of the in-depth interview as the main data collection tool for this study is further expanded in to the next section.
3.5 Data Collection: The In-Depth Interview

The literature identifies in-depth interviews as being the most popular primary data collection method used in qualitative and exploratory research (Patton, 2002), and also one of the most important sources of information within a case study (Yin, 2014). As Gubrium and Holstein (2004, p.140) state, interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world and is believed to provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena.

In choosing the method of data collection, Esterby-Smith et al. (1991), advise that if the questions posed by the research are straightforward and simple, then a questionnaire, such as a tick the box offering may suffice. If, however, the research calls for a thorough investigation into the situation, than an in-depth interview can be the most appropriate means of inquiry (Esterby-Smith et al., 1991). Hague (1993, p.23), reveals that when researchers use face to face in-depth interviews they are able to see the interviewees' hand actions and facial expressions and then can gain a deeper understanding of the validity of the response. Hague also states that when the interview is taking place face to face, it is easier for the interviewer to hold the respondents attention. The interview thus, allows the researcher to access the respondent’s feelings and beliefs on subject matters on how and why these feelings and beliefs have come about (Esterby-Smith et al., 1991).

Similarly, Yin (2014, p. 112), suggests that an interview provides a unique opportunity to capture an interviewee's own sense of reality, which can be captured through the flowing structure of the interview. Yin (2014, p. 110), also indicates that the in-depth interview will:

Resemble guided conversation rather than structural queries. Although you will be pursuing a consistent line of inquiry, your actual stream of questions in a case study interview is likely to be fluid rather than ridged.

For example, before interviewing Cork County Council representatives the author compiled and followed a structured interview guide. However, during the interview, when participants’ opinions and perceptions were uncovered, they provided a basis for further inquiry and questions. Furthermore, as Yin (2014), reveals, the interviewee may identify other sources of evidence to pursue or suggest other persons to interview. As such, during the data collection process of this study, the interviewees often acted as an important source of further information providing valuable recommendations and suggestions in terms of potential interviewees and contacts.
Regarding the in-depth interview process, Easterby et al., (1991), proposes the use of an interview guide which is not designed to constrict the researcher to a rigid set of questions, but to keep the researcher focused and on track, and to ensure all issues are covered. During the interview process, Chrzanowska (2002), states that while it is possible for the interviewee to feel under pressure as they are the sole focus for the interviewer, it is more likely that the respondent will enjoy being the centre of attention and the opportunity to air their thoughts and opinions on previously undiscussed matters. A useful summary on the merits of the in-depth interview is provided by Patton (2002, p.340):

*We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. The issue is not whether observational data is more desirable, valid, or meaningful than self-report data. The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things.*

As the study at hand calls for deep insights into the role of Cork County Council in tourism development, the use of in-depth interviews are the best fit for the purpose of such investigation. The data collection process involved compiling a structured interview guide build and based on the literature review. The data was collected by interviewing a number of ten Cork County Council representatives adhering to the interview guide and trying to capture their views on the current role and functions of the local authority in tourism development. The choice of the sample of interviewees is further discussed below.

### 3.6 The Sample of Interviewees

The relevant literature suggests that sampling is an important aspect of life in general and social research in particular. Regardless of the method used to capture primary data, the researcher should consider and understand all aspects associated with sampling (representativeness and sample size) and obtaining data of suitable quality (Baggio et al., 2011).

Flick (2007), suggests that sampling is driven by the study's objectives and theoretical interests, and it often associated with selecting the right cases from a known reservoir of cases (p. 30). He also highlights the importance of sampling in developing qualitative research as follows:
It is the step in which you reduce the potentially infinite horizon of possible materials and cases for your study to a manageable and at the same time justifiable selection of cases and materials. (Flick, 2007 p. 33)

Similarly, Robson (2000) defines sampling as the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organisations) from a population of interest which is closely linked with the external validity of the study. He also reveals that the population refers to all the cases that are available to be studied by the researcher. However, it is unusual and almost impossible to be able to deal with the whole population, which is where the sampling comes in (Robson, 2000).

Robson (2000), identifies two main broad categories of samples, probability samples and non-probability samples. In probability sampling it is possible to specify the probability that any person will be included in the sample. On the other hand, any sampling plan where it is not possible to do this is called non-probability sampling. Interviewing and small-scale surveys commonly employ non-probability samples as they are less complicated to set up and more acceptable. They typically involve the researcher using his/her judgement to achieve a particular purpose and sometimes are referred to as purposive samples (Robson, 2000).

Burns and Grove (1999, p.22), point out the following characteristics and benefits of non-probability sampling:

• Every person who meets the criteria is asked to participate

• It is a less complicated and more economical procedure than random sampling.

• The researcher’s judgment is used to select individual subjects who meet the eligibility criteria.

In choosing a research sample, Flick (2007, p. 33), identifies factors that will play a role in determining the right sample such as your relation to the field, your access to the people, situations or materials. Creswell (2013, p. 155), on the other hand, advises that it is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied. When further trying to determine the number of interviewees, Patton (2002, p 244), suggests that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, and that the size of the sample will largely depend on the purpose of the study, as well as the time and resources that are available. In qualitative research the researcher needs to consider the depth of information gathered rather than the quantity of interviewees:
The validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size (Patton, p.245).

The samples in qualitative research tend to be quite small and selected purposefully, where the logic and strength of sampling purposefully is choosing the cases which are rich in information (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling is according to Ezzy (2002, p. 74), the most important thing about sampling in relation to qualitative data analysis. When such information-rich cases are studied the result is in-depth insights and understanding which allows the researcher to learn a great deal about the issues that are central to the purpose of the research. Mason (2010, p. 10), recommends that for qualitative research it is best to work with a small number of interviews which can be decoded and innovatively analysed to offer sound qualitative insights. Although Mason (2010), suggests that the sample size becomes irrelevant as the quality of the data is the measurement of its value, he further points out that in general sample sizes for qualitative research tend to be between 20 and 30 participants. However, few authors including Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Morse (1994), recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. According to them, saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information. Such guidelines suggests at least six interviews would suffice to capture the quality of rich in-depth data needed in qualitative investigation (Morse, 1994). The concept of saturation is also supported by Baker and Edwards (2012, p. 9), which advise that the researcher should gather data until empirical saturation is reached.

The primary research objective in this study focuses on exploring the role of Cork County Council in tourism development. For the scope of this research, a purposive non-probability sample method was used as the most appropriate to identify the representative interviewees. The principle of selection in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgement as to typicality or interest. Robson (2000, p. 21), highlights that a purposive sample enables the researchers to satisfy their specific needs in the project...and it is an approach commonly used within flexible designs. Thus, the sampling in this study relied on recruiting respondents from the overall population based on the researcher's judgement, personal knowledge and contacts. Due to case at hand, namely Cork County Council as a comprehensive local authority, the sample population for this study comprised all Cork County Council representatives and employees that have a relevant knowledge and expertise in tourism development areas within the
organisation. From the overall sample population of the study the author focused on locating information and knowledge-rich interviewees who have a vast experience of or have been involved in or managed tourism development projects and initiatives within the organisation.

The potential interviewees were initially contacted internally via phone and email. Fourteen requests for interview were made and seven positive responses were received. This figure was enlarged by those who were initially contacted recommending other potential interviewees. As a result, a total of ten interviews were conducted within the organisation when the researcher stopped gathering data as empirical saturation was reached. Due to similar internal organisational knowledge of the sample, the author noticed the same data was repeating and considered that adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information.

All interviewees had a vast knowledge and expertise in tourism development projects and procedures and the sample consisted of directors of services, senior executives, former and executive officers and staff, from various departments within the organisation. This is outlined in the table below together with the length of each interview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Category/Grade</th>
<th>Length of Interview (minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Director of Services 1</td>
<td>25:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Director of Services 2</td>
<td>40:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Senior Executive 1</td>
<td>30:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Senior Executive 2</td>
<td>45:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Senior Executive 3</td>
<td>25:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Senior Executive 4</td>
<td>32:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Senior Executive 5</td>
<td>50:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Executive Officer 1</td>
<td>38:01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Executive Officer 2</td>
<td>29:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Former Senior Executive</td>
<td>30:28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above represents the interviewee category of expertise in tourism development. Due to access limitations only two directors of service were interviewed. Most respondents were
however represented by Senior Executives while the remaining three were both Executive Officer and Former Senior Executives.

3.7 Recording and Coding the Interviews

Yin (2014), suggests that recording the interview is a matter of preference to the interviewee, while at the same time acknowledging that it is useful in recording accurately so what was said cannot be underestimated. Similarly, Flick (2007, p. 82), proposes that the merits of the recorder for accurate reporting and transcribing should not be undervalued:

Transcription consumes a considerable part of the resources. To make this step easier and the results better, it is necessary to have good recording equipment available.

A similar view is held by Easterby-Smith et al. (1991), who suggest that the researcher will be sorely tested to rely on memory alone when transcribing, and recommends taping the interview to improve accuracy. However, Yin (2014, p. 110), states that the recorder, however useful, should not be employed if:

1. An interviewee refuses permission or is uncomfortable in its presence.
2. There is not a specific plan in place for transcribing the contents of the electronic record.
3. The researcher is clumsy enough with mechanical devices as to allow it to be a source of distraction during the interview.

Hague (1993, p. 14), suggests that generally, the tape recorder does not induce the inhibitions that might be imagined, while Yin (2014), notes that the recorder does not give the researcher the excuse to tune out during the interview itself and he must listen closely the whole time regardless of the recording. Hague (1993), further suggest that if the interviewer is confident and assumptive, it is likely that the interviewee will forget the recorder's presence. Finally, Chrzanowska (2002, p. 109), offers another valid reason for the use of the recorder:

The listener may hear mainly what he or she wants to hear- a very good reason for listening to tapes or reading through transcripts afterwards.

For the purpose of this study, all ten interviews were recorded electronically using a high quality device. According to the consent form complied by the author (See Appendix B.), the interviews were intended to last approximately 30 minutes. However, following the reordering
of all interviews, the actual total length of the interviews was in average of 42 to 50 minutes. All ten interviewees were recorded while the interviewer was taking brief notes and none of the interviewees expressed unease at the thought of being recorded.

Following the transcription process, the researcher coded the interviews. As Patton (2002), suggests, if the raw material comes in the form of transcripts then making sense of the mass of material is difficult. Therefore, some scheme of coding is needed. Patton (2002, p. 463), also proposes that:

\[\text{Without classification there is chaos and confusion. Content analysis involves identifying, coding, categorising, classifying and labelling the primary patterns in the data. This essentially means analysing the core content of interviews and observations to determine what's significant.}\]

Coding and categorising are among the most preeminent methods of qualitative analysis of the data that results from interviews (Flick, 2007). Miles and Huberman (1994), advocate codes are efficient data labelling and data-retrieval devices. They also state (1994, p. 56) that:

\[\text{Coding is analysis. To review a set of field notes, transcribed or synthesised, and to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis. This part of analysis is how you differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information.}\]

As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), coding forms a part of early data analysis which leads to reshaping of your perspective and of your instrumentation for the next pass (1994, p. 65). The codes are derived from the material and the aim is to develop a theory from the data rather than trying to impose an existing theory (Flick 2007). Miles and Huberman (1994), describe codes as tags or labels used to assign meaning to the data, and advise that this is done by attaching the labels to chunks of words or phrases which are then organised by the codes. Corbin and Strauss (2008), recommend that the researcher should consider the coding process as the mining through the data, additionally adding that coding should not be considered in the same terms of paraphrasing. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994), argue that the meaning behind the word is significant rather than the actual words. Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 66), advise that coding comprises:

\[\text{Interacting with data using techniques such as asking questions about the data, making comparisons between the data, and so on, and in doing so, deriving concepts to stand}\]
for those data, then developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions.

Patton (2002), recommends reading through the transcripts and making comments in the margins. This begins the organising of data into topics which are then given a label. However, Patton (2002, p. 463), also cautions that:

*Several readings of the data may be necessary before field notes, or interviews can be completely indexed and coded.*

Corbin and Strauss recommend avoiding writing in the margins during the first reading of the manuscript. The purpose of the first reading, they advise is to *enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing and listen to what they are telling us* (2008, p. 163). The more the researcher works over the data the more they will begin to understand the meaning behind the words. Patton suggests using coloured pens to highlight different ideas and concepts. This allows the researcher to track ideas as the different colours represent various concepts. This is the method that this research study employed. Although coding can be a tedious process, it can help with analysis further on as a strong foundation has already been laid (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

For the purpose of this research study, the various coding techniques that were employed were open coding, axial coding and theoretical saturation. Corbin and Strauss (2008), describe open coding as *breaking concepts apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of data* (2008, p. 195) and axial coding as *crosscutting or relating concepts to each other* (2008, p. 195). Theoretical saturation refers to the point in analysis when *all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions and variations...and further data gathering and analysis add little to the conceptualisation* (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 263).

Miles and Huberman (1994), propose that it is sometimes difficult to know when to finish analysing and go with a specific coding scheme. He suggests that the coding process might be considered complete when:

*Sources of information have been exhausted, when sets of categories have been saturated so that new sources lead to redundancy, when clear regularities have emerged that feel integrated, and when analysis begins to overextend beyond the boundaries of the issues and concerns guiding the analysis* (p. 466).
An example of coding in this study can be seen in identifying the current challenges, strategies and collaborations for tourism development in Cork County Council. This theme was intended to examine key challenges, strategies and collaborations in relation to tourism development in County Cork. Due to the nature of the qualitative interview, sets of data concerning a specific topic were not located in the same place in every transcript, requiring the researcher to sort through significant quantities of transcriptions. If the respondents made reference to challenges encountered in developing tourism in County Cork, then same was highlighted in one colour. If the respondents mentioned key current strategies or collaborations for tourism development in County Cork, similarly they were highlighted in two different colours.

The respondents, for example those who mentioned challenges encountered by Cork County Council in developing tourism, when expanding they answers they listed various types of challenges such as lack of adequate funding and an expensive tourism product. These types of challenges were further highlighted indifferent colours and categorised according to the answers. The codes regarding the challenges, strategies and collaborations for tourism development in Cork County Council and its associates sub-elements where accordingly organised to create a theme.

In summary, the main goal of coding is to facilitate the retrieval of data segments categorised under the same codes. Segmenting and coding the data enabled the author to think about the data, to break the data apart in analytically relevant ways in order to lead toward further questions about the data. Appendix C presents an explanation of the coding which emerged from the analysis of the transcripts.

3.8 Analysing the Data

As noted by Patton (2002), there is no precise point where data collection ends and analysis begins. Corbin and Strauss (2008), propose it would be beneficial to begin data analysis after completing the first interview. This ensures that the data does not build up into a significant amount of work after completing the first interview (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

The raw data for this research study comes in the form of direct quotations. As Miles and Huberman (1994), suggest this form of data is useful because it provides thick descriptions which are complex and rich in detail. Difficulties may arise when analysing qualitative data. Patton (2002, p. 436), suggests that when undertaking a quantitative study, the lines between data collection and analysis are usually distinct, but in the case of qualitative work the fluid
and emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry makes the distinction between data gathering and analysis far less absolute. As Corbin and Strauss (2008), point out, qualitative data is full of possibilities and there is never just one story to tell. There is a need for a systematic approach that deals with this data. The approach used in the analysis of data of this study was the grounded theory method. The grounded theory method involves the generation of themes inductively from the data as outlined in the model provided by Easterby-Smith et al. (1991).

The literature studied contributed to the construction of the interview guide which was then revised to help in focusing the analysis of data, and which is used to organise the topics for discussion in Chapter Four. This method involves applying codes to the data by reading through the transcripts and making comments in the margins. The process begins with organising the data into topics which are then given a label (Patton, 2002) and letting the main themes emerge. These codes are necessary, as Patton (2002), points out, in order to make sense of the mass of material that inquiry methods such as interviews generate. The themes emerging from this study are presented and analysed in Chapter Four and Five.

3.9 Research Ethics and Being an Insider Researcher

According to Glesne (1999), ethical issues associated with case study research are becoming increasingly notable due to the emergence of more rigorous ethics guidelines and review procedures for research involving human subjects in universities, granting agencies and organisations. Important ethical principles generally included in ethics guidelines include: doing no harm and preferably doing good, protecting respondents, rights to privacy and confidentiality, informing them clearly of the benefits and risks of the research, and ensuring that they are given an opportunity to decide whether or not to participate (Glesne, 1999; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2006). As this case study research aims to acquire in-depth understanding through direct contact and deals with both human and organisational factors, a close analysis of the ethical issues posed by such context is needed.

Firstly, ethical principles in case studies involving human interaction are identified by Langley and Royer (2006), which note that case study research engages deeply with ethical issues for various reasons. They state that the methods used by case study researchers are founded on the idea that valid knowledge is best acquired through direct human contact, proximity, detail, and specificity. Thus, the knowledge acquired about particular people and situations is deeper and
more sensitive than in a survey, demanding a great deal of respondents and rendering them potentially more vulnerable.

Secondly, Lindorff (2007), *interestingly presents* some of the ethical issues associated with organisational research, by questioning Kakabadse and Kouzmin (2002, p. 105), statement that organisational research *advances and shapes organisational objectives, culture, individuals and societies as it provides new insights that inform premises upon which decisions and judgements are based.* Lindorff (2007), also notes that mainstream management literature has tended to overlook the social impact of undertaking organisational academic research and proposes a framework of three ethical principles in conducting such research: justice, beneficence, and respect for persons.

In terms of justice principles in organisational research, Lindorff (2007), further notes that the relationships between researchers, participants, and organisations present a special challenge if those with lesser power, usually the employees who are the participants in the research and which are not to be exploited for the gain of the organisation or researcher. An example of such exploitation is a requirement for employees to provide information, time or energy to a research project they would not otherwise wish to be involved in.

In this study, given the absence of an initial demonstrated or required direct benefit to the employees or the organisation itself, there was little societal obligation to undertake or participate in this research. As a result, all interviewees collaborated voluntarily without being under any obligation or burden to participate.

According to Lindorff (2007), the second ethical principle in case study organisational research, beneficence, requires that researchers should make efforts to secure the wellbeing of participants. In conducting organisational research, there might be times when responses raise other issues, such as when participants comment upon inappropriate or illegal organisational practices or individual behaviour, express worries, or seek advice (Lindorff, 2007). In the absence of specific benefit to participants, this study required that minimal risk to be absent for all interviewees. No robust procedures that anticipate and confront possible harms were used during carrying out this research. To avoid responses that raise other organisational issues such as the above, the researcher used professionalism during the data collection process, while adhering to a structured interview guide and focusing on leading the interviewees answers towards meeting purposes of this study only.
The third core ethical principle in conducting organisational research, respect for persons, is demonstrated by viewing individuals as autonomous agents, and protecting those with diminished autonomy. This principle suggests that individuals have rights, such as for autonomy and privacy, and these cannot be violated without causing harm (Lindorff, 2007).

As advised by Lindorff (2007), in order to adhere to the ethical principle of respect for persons in organisational research, the researcher compiled a standard consent form for participation in the research interview. Primarily, the consent form was used as a tool to get participants consent to be recorded during the interview process. However, the consent form also included general information regarding the research context, terms of participations such as confidentiality and volunteering, and rights to withdraw. A copy of this consent form can be found in Appendix B. All participants were required to read, understand and sign the consent form prior to interview and they were given a copy of same.

By following the principles of justice, beneficence, and respect for persons, the author of this study aimed to avoid common problems of ethics encountered in both social and organisational research.

Apart from the importance of following the above ethical principles in social and organisational research, Unluer (2012,) notes that it is crucial for social researchers to clarify their researchers’ roles especially for those utilising qualitative methodology. The researchers that engage in qualitative studies can take on a variety of member roles when they are in the research setting. These roles can range from complete membership of the group being studied (an insider) to complete stranger (an outsider) (Adler and Adler, 1994). While there are a variety of definitions for insider-researchers, generally insider-researchers are those who choose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group under study (Breen, 2007).

As this study was conducted within an organisational setting where the researcher was a member of the group being studied (an insider), it is important to highlight the benefits and challenges of such researcher-participant relationship. Bonner and Tolhurst (2002), identified three key advantages of being an insider researcher: (a) having a greater understanding of the culture being studied; (b) not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally; and (c) having an established intimacy which promotes both the telling and the judging of truth. Further, insider-researchers generally know the politics of the institution, not only the formal hierarchy but also how it really works. They know how to best approach people. In general, they have a
great deal of knowledge, which takes an outsider a long time to acquire (Smyth and Holian, 2008).

Although there are various advantages of being an insider-researcher, there are also problems associated with being an insider. For example, greater familiarity can lead to a loss of objectivity. Unconsciously making wrong assumptions about the research process based on the researcher’s prior knowledge can be considered a bias (DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002). Another risk may be that the insider-researcher gains access to sensitive information. To conduct credible insider research, insider-researchers must constitute an explicit awareness of the possible effects of perceived bias on data collection and analysis, respect the ethical issues related to the anonymity of the organisation and individual participants and consider and address the issues about the influencing researcher’s insider role on compliance and access to privileged information, at each and every stage of the research (Smyth and Holian, 2008). As stated above there are both advantages and disadvantages to being an insider researcher. It is important to address and overcome the disadvantages in order to ensure credible insider research.

As indicated by Smyth and Holian (2008), the author of this study addressed the challenges of being and insider-researcher by respecting the ethical issues of the organisation and the participants while being aware of the possible effects of bias on data collection and analysis.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the chosen research methodology for the study. Furthermore, the reasons for selecting this particular methodology were outlined. The exploratory research design and the qualitative and case study methods were explored and reasons for its choosing were justified. Particularly, this study has utilised in-depth interviews as the main instrument in data collection, while a purposive non-probability sample method was used in the sampling process.

The findings generated from the employment of the research methodology, together with analysis of these findings, are outlined in the following chapter.
Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis
4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings which emerged from the primary research, which was carried out by the means of in-depth interviews. In addition to the presentation of the findings, this chapter also offers an analysis of those findings. As already outlined in Chapter Three, Cork County Council as a representative Irish local authority, was selected as the single case for this study. Ten interviews were conducted with Cork County Council representatives who have knowledge and expertise in the tourism development field. To safeguard anonymity, the direct quotations are broadly referred to by the author as representative of those provided by Interviewee A through to Interviewee J.

To ensure that the research objectives (see Chapter Two) were met, an interview guide was designed and utilised for the interview process. During the data analysis process, a number of thematic areas were identified, which are elaborated on in this chapter. Each theme is analysed to highlight the research findings. Also, each theme is discussed in relation to the relevant literature review detailed in Chapter Two, while highlighting new areas and roles that emerged during the data collection process, with a view to adding to the existing literature. This chapter begins by looking at the evolving role of Cork County Council in tourism development.

4.1 The Evolving Role of Cork County Council in Tourism Development

As discussed in Chapter Two, governments in general and local governments in particular, have started to play a more important role in tourism development. The literature reveals that even though tourism has always had a major potential in Ireland, this did not appear to be sufficiently understood and reflected in the organisational framework of government and in the prioritisation of its work. However, as stated in section 2.2, over time, the Irish government has started to play a multi-functional role becoming more dynamic and effective in shaping and influencing wider developments and changes at government level which impacts on tourism.

Cork County Council's role in tourism development has evolved and progressed in recent years, which is identified clearly by the majority of the interviewees during the primary data collection. When asked what role Cork County Council plays in tourism development, all respondents revealed that the Council's role has significantly changed in the last couple of years. However, this questioning resulted in a range of perspectives highlighting the
approaches, reasons, stages and possible consequences of the evolving role of Cork County Council in developing tourism:

In terms of what role Cork County Council has in developing tourism, I think it has changed. In the past, Cork County Council didn’t have much of a tourism development role or didn’t see itself as such (Interviewee A).

The respondents further highlighted this evolving role by referencing the past, when Cork County Council had a passive role or a hands-off approach in developing tourism:

In the past, there was a very hands-off approach and Cork County Council didn’t see the importance of tourism. It now has become more central, from having proper regulation, good infrastructure, having decent planning. A lot of funds and capital in particular are invested in tourism development and definitely Cork County Council has now a much more important role in developing tourism (Interviewee F).

With the establishment of a singular tourism department and the appointment of a tourism officer, Cork County Council recognises the importance of tourism and now plays a much more significant role in developing the sector.

The relationship, or link, between changes at national level and the evolving role of local authorities in tourism is supported by a number of respondents, all of whom highlight the importance of national policy documents and national decision making in influencing tourism development at a local level:

Cork County Council down through the years would always have had a role in tourism, but it wasn't specifically identified in legislation, and that it has now changed significantly in terms of national tourism policies. It now has a tourism section and a tourism officer which it never did in the past (Interviewee B).

Cork County Council has now a huge role, and tourism has become a very big area in every local authority in Ireland in the last five years as a result of national policy (Interviewee G).

Is it clear that the national government played a significant role in driving local tourism development by strengthening local authorities’ functions and responsibilities in terms of tourism development. Yet, the above responses suggest that Cork County Council is still in the
early stages in developing tourism, as its role is continuously evolving leaving room for more growth, expansion and giving the edge needed to tourism development within the organisation.

The changing nature of the services and functions provided by Cork County Council is articulated by interviewees:

*Even though we will find that local authorities would still provide the older kind of hard services such as waste water, roads etc. they are also moving into the tourism, community development, maybe a softer type of service would be the best to be described* (Interviewee B).

Findings from the primary research suggest that Cork County Council should not lose its traditional focus on basic services while favouring the provision of new emerging services and strategies. Despite the changing nature of the services provided by Cork County Council, a strong focus on the basic services is continuously needed.

*The priority should be getting the basic services right and then focusing on talking about tourism strategies and figures* (Interviewee G).

In summary, the findings suggest that the role of Cork County Council in terms of tourism development has evolved. With the establishment of a singular tourism department and the appointment of a tourism officer, Cork County Council now plays a much more significant role in developing the tourism sector. The findings highlight the importance of national policy documents and decision making in influencing tourism development in Cork County Council.

The findings regarding challenges, strategies and importance of collaborative actions for tourism development in Cork County Council are discussed under the next theme.
4.2 Current Challenges, Strategies and Collaborations for Tourism Development in Cork County Council

This section focuses on presenting and analysing the findings arising from the primary research in relation to the current challenges, strategies and collaborations for tourism development in Cork County Council.

4.2.1 Challenges for Tourism Development in Cork County Council

During this study's primary research, the participants were asked to identify current challenges faced by Cork County Council in developing local tourism. This questioning resulted in a broad range of opinions revealing various types of challenges faced by the local authority, such as lack of adequate funding, the need for maintaining value for money, the peripheral location of the County and the lack of enterprise culture:

*The major challenge is funding. Also, developing tourism can be difficult to deliver on the ground without sufficient funds* (Interviewee B).

*The principal challenge is our peripheral location we are a long way from everywhere... I mean Ireland is a long away from the world; you have to fly here or take a boat* (Interviewee A).

*The biggest problem is the lack of local enterprise culture. We would have enough hotels in Clonakilty and tourism enterprise built in the last couple of years, but for example Bandon has no major hotel, Skibberreen and Baltimore as well* (Interviewee C).

The first response above is given by the majority of the respondents (seven), which identified that the major challenge faced by Cork County Council in developing tourism is the need for adequate funding. The respondents also revealed the difficulty associated with the lack of funding in assisting and delivering local tourism development projects on the ground, and highlighted the reliance of the local authority on national government funding. The challenges posed by the lack of tourism funding has also been addressed in relation to the size of the county and the significant funding demands in other areas such as infrastructure, roads and housing:

*It has been a challenge because of the money and obviously the size of the county and because of the county and the demands in terms of infrastructure and roads. When you*
look at the budget there is so much of it is allocated to maintain our roads and so much to maintain even our houses. Sufficient money should be available for our tourism development. The biggest challenge is thus to put more money and more resources into tourism than what we do (Interviewee H).

The above quotation, representative of all interviewees, emphasises that the major challenge faced by Cork County Council in developing local tourism is the lack of appropriate and sufficient funding. Without adequate funding, it will be difficult for the Council to develop and enhance its tourist offering.

A further significant challenge outlined is the poor competitive position of Cork geographically, as a tourism destination:

*Another major challenge is our peripheral location. We are a long way from everywhere, Ireland is a long way from the world. You have to fly here, or take a boat.* (Interviewee A).

In tandem with the poor geographical location, respondents also highlighted the difficulty of distinguishing Cork's tourism product from other destinations, and the challenge of making potential markets aware of Cork's tourism offering:

*Another challenge for Cork would be what makes it distinctive? The unique selling point. What's different from most of England, most of Scotland which have similar products? At a national and international basis, Cork's product it's very hard to be distinguished* (Interviewee A).

It is suggested that in response to this challenge, Cork County Council should focus its efforts on determining a unique selling point while working closely with other partners to market the region and make Cork's tourism offering known across a variety of markets. The next challenge identified, by respondents, is the expensive tourism product offering:

*Ireland is seen as an expensive destination. There is no low budget accommodation in West Cork and prices can be considered high comparing to other markets* (Interviewee C).
I would see that the biggest challenge is we have the product we have the landscape we have the visitor experience, the challenge is to maintain value for money because people would go elsewhere if they feel they are being overcharged (Interviewee F).

Equally, the findings acknowledge that maintaining value for money is another challenge that currently needs to be addressed in developing tourism.

Along with the need to maintain value for money in developing tourism, a number of respondents identify the need to extend the holiday season as equally important:

Extending the tourism season is critical for the local economies because a lot of people are dependent on tourism. And this is one of the biggest challenges, along with value for money. How do we extend the seasonality? Well if we can extend the season and achieve that then we are automatically enhancing tourism development. Economic development at the end of the day is about turnover isn’t it? Bring in the cash into the county and spreading it with the rate payers and the residents. If the tourism is only coming May to September then what do you do for the rest of the year. Most of the county is very tourism dependent (Interviewee E).

Extending the holiday season would ensure that more money is spent in the local economy and its one of the current urgent matters to be addressed by the Council in developing tourism. During the primary data collection the concept of regional balance emerged as a further issue to be addressed by the local authority. The notion of County Cork’s tourism offering not being equally distributed across the county is further mentioned by six respondents portraying a lack of tourism industry in East and North Cork, and an affluent tourism product in West Cork:

Tourism is only developed in some parts of the county, particularly in West Cork. The challenge for Cork County Council is to try to spread that benefit throughout the county and try getting a way more balanced overall tourism product. For example North and East Cork would need to be developed more as there are not enough tourists coming there comparing to West Cork (Interviewee J).

Our main tourism product is mainly focused on West Cork. We must try to get that balance and get more tourism products that we can offer. We are trying to improve
the offering in North Cork at the moment and to encourage tourism, but we need to do more promotion as well for East and North Cork (Interviewee G).

This disparity in the tourism offering appears to be one of the main issues that Cork County Council has to address in its attempt to spread tourism’s associated benefits throughout the county and achieve a balanced overall tourism product. In addition to an imbalance in the tourism offering, respondents highlighted an imbalance between tourism supply and demand, particularly, in rural areas.

Lack of private investment in tourism businesses especially in rural areas and developing areas can be an issue (Interviewee B).

Although the respondents of this study do not provide any suggestions on how such challenges might be addressed by Cork County Council, is it clear that the local authority should provide programmes, or initiatives, to encourage private investment for tourism business in the rural areas of County Cork.

Apart from the lack of local enterprise culture, an interesting insight is brought by interviewees who revealed that Cork County Council is currently challenged in developing tourism, by external factors of which the local authority has no control over. Respondents draw attention to the urgent challenge of Brexit, which may negatively impact on overall visitors’ numbers in the county:

In developing tourism and economic impact of the county, indirectly Brexit could be considered a challenge. In that a lot of the UK people coming here and Brexit might affect the connectivity and access between the UK and Ireland in terms of transportation and other relations. We must look at ways and collaborations that might improve the link between UK and Cork to keep getting in the English market (Interviewee H).

The unknown challenge of Brexit poses a significant external challenge for Cork County Council and tourism development.

As the above findings point out, Cork County Council is currently dealing with various types of challenges which impact tourism development in the County. In response to such challenges, respondents suggest that Cork County Council recognises the importance of implementing
regional tourism strategies that aid the development of tourism. The findings in relation to Cork County Council's current strategies for tourism development are discussed under the following sub-heading.

4.2.2 Strategies for Tourism Development in Cork County Council

As presented in Chapter Two, various reports reveal that Cork County Council's objectives in terms of local tourism development refer to local tourism product development, marketing and promotional campaigns and overall tourism contribution to economic and community wellbeing of the region. Reinforcing the relevant literature, the respondents of this study emphasise the relevance of recent reports published by Cork County Council outlining and revealing current and future strategies for tourism development. Firstly, the findings mention the recently published *Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017*, revealing the functions of the document and proposed strategies to enhance tourism development:

*I must mention the recent production of the Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2022 which put an onus on us to take into account all of the various policy and strategy documents that are in place and to outline clearly how Cork County Council as an organisation fits within the policies and strategies that are out there. The document details our work programme over the next five years and it shows step by step where we want to go in developing further the tourism product, marketing of Cork and the further development of festival and events, which all would have the knock-on effect in increasing visitors numbers* (Interviewee E).

The above quotation draws attention to the recent *Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017* published by Cork County Council which takes into consideration all strategy documents previously published. The findings reveal that the recent document outlines clearly in a systematic manner the direction and strategies that the local authority plans to follow during the next five years in developing tourism. Also, reinforcing findings from other reports reviewed in the literature, the above statement suggest that the overall aim of the current strategies presented in the recent document, is to increase visitors numbers which is believed to contribute to the economic wellbeing of the region (Cork County Council, 2016; 2012).

Cork County Council tourism development strategies and objectives are further addressed in relation to the recent National Statement of Tourism Strategy Document:
The National Statement of Tourism Strategy was launched by the minister Patrick O’Donovan, minister of state last march. Inside of that strategy we find Cork County Council tourism strategy for the next 3 to 5 years. It presents our short to medium and long term objectives in what we do in the area of tourism. For example: how we develop the product, how we will collaborate with the industry and how we will work with the partners. It is very exciting as it gives us a charge with a statutory role in tourism (Interviewee F).

The above quotation reveals that Cork County Council’s tourism strategies are mentioned in the recent National Statement of Tourism Strategy and includes short and medium term objectives in terms of tourism development. It also infers that under the current national tourism strategy document, Cork County Council has now a statutory role and a clear direction in how to achieve certain tourism development objectives. More importantly, the above statement echoes the literature findings providing a clear example of the important contribution made by Cork County Council in national tourism strategy (County and City Managers’ Association, 2012).

Apart from the importance of local and national strategy documents, the literature reveals that Cork County Council recently recognised the urgency of a regional strategy for the development of tourism, leading to the establishment of a dedicated Tourism Strategy Group for Cork (Cork County Council, 2015). Even though the findings of this study do not include, or mention, the establishment of a dedicated Tourism Strategy Group for Cork, two respondents made reference to the recent collaborative initiative known as Visit Cork:

We have the Visit Cork initiative made in collaboration with the City which is the main local strategy (Interviewee G).

There is a big project happening currently called Visit Cork. And Visit Cork is a promotional brand. It is supported by both Cork County Council and Cork City Council. On the board we have the Airport, the Hotels Federation, Fáilte Ireland and the Local Chamber of Commerce. This is an example of the local authorities both the City and County Council working collaboratively to promote Cork as a whole, as a brand itself. And that is being worked at currently. We are coming to a conclusion with it and we are hoping to launch the brand shortly. It hasn’t been finalised yet. Interviewee J).
As the above quotations point out, the recent Visit Cork initiative is referred to as the main local strategy for Cork with the aim of promoting Cork as a brand itself in collaboration with various stakeholders which include Cork County Council, Cork City Council, Cork Airport, the Hotels Federation, Fáilte Ireland and the Local Chamber of Commerce. Nonetheless, the above findings also indicate that the Visit Cork brand is currently still at the developmental stage and is being finalised to promote Cork County and City as an exclusive tourism destination, while calling attention to the importance of collaborative actions for local tourism development. The findings arising in respect to current collaborative actions for tourism development in Cork County are further presented below.

### 4.2.3 Collaborations for Tourism Development in Cork County Council

The respondents suggested that Cork County Council’s efforts in fostering collaboration and partnerships are invaluable for tourism development. A number of reports, published by Cork County Council, include various examples of collaborative ventures between the local authority and national or local partners to support both tourism and economic development (Cork County Council, 2015; 2014). Cork County Council collaborates on a regular basis with national public bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to enhance the tourism potential of the region, and with various private stakeholders of industry.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of collaborative actions in developing tourism at a local level. First, the respondents point out the relevance of collaborative actions between Cork County Council and the national tourism bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. The findings reveal that such partnerships are critical for tourism development in the county, as each stakeholder or player has an invaluable role in delivering tourism development initiatives on the ground. Furthermore, the respondents highlight the importance of collaborations in delivering particular tourism development initiatives such as product development initiatives, marketing initiatives, growing festivals and events and even developing infrastructure. The statements below are representative of the significant role that collaborations play in developing tourism in County Cork:

> How we collaborate with the industry and how we will work with the partners is critical and it is very exciting. Developing tourism challenges us working with other bodies of the industry, stakeholders, with Tourism Ireland, with Fáilte Ireland which constitutes a great example of how partners can work on the ground, because without each one of the players, it doesn’t work (Interviewee J).
We work very closely with Fáilte Ireland, because Fáilte Ireland creates a vision through the brands Ireland Ancient East and Wild Atlantic Way and develops specific strategies to support that, in terms of developing infrastructure and the tourism product and assisting them in doing that (Interviewee A).

The above quotations serve to reinforce that partnerships between Cork County Council and industry stakeholders are not only important to support tourism development and to enhance the tourism potential of the region, but they are fundamental in delivering various tourism initiatives. In addition, partnerships are key to financing tourism development projects and they are vital in maximising the visitor numbers in the County.

In summary, this section presented and analysed the findings arising from the primary research in relation to the current challenges, strategies and collaborations for tourism development in Cork County Council. The challenges that Cork County Council currently faces in developing local tourism were highlighted. The findings identified the need for adequate funding as being a major challenge along with the poor competitive position of Cork as a tourism destination, an expensive tourism offering, the need to extend the holiday season, the peripheral location, the lack of regional balance and local enterprise culture, and other external factors of which the local authority has no control over such as Brexit. Furthermore, the findings make reference to the recent collaborative strategy known as Visit Cork which currently finds itself in the developing stage and in process of being finalised to promote Cork County and city as an exclusive tourism destination. Finally, the findings serve to reinforce the facts presented in the literature review, indicating that partnerships between Cork County Council and industry stakeholders are not only important to support tourism development, but they are vital in delivering various tourism initiatives on the ground, in financing tourism development projects and in maximising the visitors numbers in the county.

This section provided an initial insight into the role of Cork County Council in developing tourism by presenting challenges strategies and collaborations for tourism development. The next sections explore the role of Cork County Council in developing, protecting and enhancing the tourism product.
4.3 The Role of Cork County Council in Developing, Enhancing and Protecting the Tourism Product

This section explores the findings arising from the primary research in relation the role that Cork County Council plays in developing, enhancing and protecting the tourism product of the county.

As presented in Chapter Two, various reports and documents articulate that Cork County Council is committed to enhancing Cork’s unique tourism product and boost tourism figures in the region. Examples of such projects are presented drawing attention to the high level of commitment and investment that Cork County Council provided in developing and enhancing top local tourism attractions. Supplementing the facts presented in the relevant literature, the findings of this study reveal that Cork County Council is actively involved in developing and enhancing tourism attractions by taking ownership of various local attractions and enhancing their tourism potential by providing continuous investment and funds:

*Cork County Council owns a number of tourist attractions such as the Michael Collins House, The Heritage Centre in Skibberreen, Kinsale Museum* (Interviewee C).

Cork County Council’s commitment to developing and enhancing its tourism product, and particularly its visitor attraction is illustrated in the above statement. The findings suggest that Cork County Council makes a significant contribution to the development of the tourist product and experience in their local area, by directly running or providing support to various amenities and attractions.

It is revealed that apart from developing its own tourism attractions and products, Cork County Council also works closely with Fáilte Ireland to encourage tourism investment in the area by being involved in tourism product enhancement programmes such as the *Large Scale Capital Funding*. The findings also reveal that the Council supports various local private operators in enhancing their tourism product offering.

The respondents of this study further invoke that as part of its tourism product development functions, the Council supports and administers various local tourism festivals and events:
More recently Cork's tourism product development has shifted toward festivals and events, for example the music festival in Bantry. This is different than the traditional tourist that used to wonder around and enjoy the great outdoors. (Interviewee C).

The above quotation emphasises Cork County Council’s efforts in developing and enhancing the tourism product include various investments and supports to local festivals and events. It is noted that tourism product development in County Cork has recently evolved to include a new dimension different from the traditional delivery of product development programmes.

Apart from the key role of Cork County Council in developing attractions, festivals and events, the local government sector recognises that the needs and priorities of tourists continuously evolve. It is, therefore, suggested that Irish local authorities need to focus on continuously developing, maintaining and improving tourism resources while providing a range of innovative tourism products. The findings of this study also divulge that Cork County Council’s efforts in developing and enhancing the tourism product comprise new product development initiatives. An interesting viewpoint regarding new innovative product development is provided by exemplifying a recent initiative in West Cork:

One of the new incentives here in West Cork is encouraging cruise tourism. A new concept. The cruise industry has massive potential in West Cork which can attract the high spending top end tourist not only into Ireland but directly into our county. (Interviewee D).

New product development initiatives, led by Cork County Council, demonstrate that the local authority recognises the continuous need of strengthening and upgrading the existing tourism offering of the county, which is essential in developing local tourism.

It is clear from the findings that Cork County Council is involved in various initiatives and programmes to continually develop and enhance Cork's tourism product. The Council also plays a key role in protecting and maintaining the existing tourism product of County Cork. As noted in section 2.3.3 the Council has a duty to protect and conserve the existing tourism product. Similarly, the respondents of this study draw attention to the important statutory duty that Cork County Council has in protecting and conserving the existing tourism products and assets:
Cork County Council has a statutory duty to protect Cork's tourism product using documents such as The National Monument Act which protects the national historical value. Cork County Council has also various control and checks measures in place in order to ensure that it maintains and protects its cultural, heritage, tourism products and assets (Interviewee B).

Cork County Council ensures the best quality of maintenance while protecting counties tourism products and assets (Interviewee J).

The above statements refer to Cork County Council as a key local government body which has a statutory role in maintaining and protecting the value of the tourism product. In relation to such a statutory role, the respondents of this study further highlight the functions of Cork County Council in maintaining the existing natural features and elements of the tourism product:

The Council is in charge of the blue flag beaches, maintaining official walkways and trials, hill-walks and greenways, blue ways as well. All these actions add value to the existing tourism product (Interviewee D).

The above responses emphasise that maintaining the natural features of the tourism product is critical and such incentives are believed to complement the existing tourism offering. The appropriate maintenance of the natural resources in the county is part of Cork County Council's functions and responsibilities, and complements its role in developing tourism.

The findings further emphasise that Cork County Council has launched major tourism initiatives in recent years, committing a significant amount of funds to tourism product development in the region. The findings illustrate the important role that Cork County Council plays in cultivating new local products and events to benefit the development of local tourism. The findings also highlight the substantial support offered by Cork County Council in the development of Cork's tourism product and in supporting events for tourism development. Apart from tourism product development, Cork County Council is committed to supporting local economies and communities and is regularly involved in tourism programmes and community-based tourism initiatives. The following section presents and analyses the role of
Cork County Council in enhancing local economic and community development through tourism.

4.4 The Role of Cork County Council in Enhancing Economic and Community Development through Tourism

4.4.1 Enhancing Economic Development through Tourism

As presented in the previous section, Cork County Council is directly committed to enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of its tourism product through the delivery of tourism assets, attractions and events. Additionally, Chapter Two notes that the role of the Council in fostering local economic development through offering tourism industry supports, is also worthy of close attention.

In particular, Cork County Council has for many years played a significant role in the economic development of the County. To explore the role that Cork County Council has in enhancing economic development, the respondents of this study were asked to identify how economic development can be strengthened through tourism. This questioning resulted in a variety of responses which illustrate the economic benefits brought by tourism, while highlighting the strong link between tourism, and economic development.

First, the majority of the interviewees referred to the major economic benefits that tourism brings into the County, revealing in particular, the dependence of the county's rural areas on tourism:

\begin{quote}
At the moment, we mostly look at the economic benefits that tourism brings into the county and we can say that tourism brings an overall sense of wellbeing (Interviewee B).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
The very obvious benefit brought by tourism is the economic side. In terms of investment the benefits brought to the local enterprise and job creation (Interviewee C).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
County Cork is a vast rural county. Currently, tourism builds economic development and infrastructure development in all small rural areas (Interviewee A).
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
One of the biggest benefit is the economic value that tourism brings and particularly in terms of Co. Cork the benefits that tourism brings to rural communities. In West
Cork a lot of communities depend on tourism in terms of sustaining employment and tourism brings a great economic impact to the area (Interviewee J).

The findings of this study emphasise that tourism has the potential to build economic development by supporting local enterprise and job creation. Predominantly, the respondents make reference to the small rural areas in the county which are believed to be highly dependent on the economic dividends brought about by tourism. An interesting comment is made in relation to what economic development means and why Cork's rural areas are so reliant on tourism. Interviewee G believes that economic development is bringing financial benefits into an economically disadvantaged area and reveals that the dependence of County Cork on tourism revenue is due to a lack of other industrial base. This particular statement acknowledges the importance of the tourism industry in the County and the significant role that tourism plays in benefiting Cork's rural areas. The economic value that tourism brings to County Cork is also acknowledged in relation to sustaining employment in tourism dependent areas, such as West Cork, where local communities feel the positive economic impact that tourism has in their area. It is clear, therefore, that tourism represents a sector where there is extensive opportunity for local economic growth and job creation in small rural areas.

Five interviewees identified a strong link between tourism and economic development disclosing that economic development can be strengthened using tourism due to a knock-on effect:

*There's always a link between tourism and economic development. But I think it's a matter of which comes first tourism or economic development? But certainly economic development in County Cork is achieved through tourism* (Interviewee B).

*Economic development can be strengthened through tourism by the multiplier effect and the spin-off effect. It is not just eating and sleeping, is the tour guides is the local shop and the ice-cream is petrol is the souvenir shop is the arts and crafts. Everybody benefits from tourism* (Interviewee H).

The above responses portray a strong relationship between tourism and economic development. Interviewee B raises an interesting point, asking whether economic development encourages tourism or vice versa. Yet, regardless of the correlative link between the two concepts, the majority of the responses reveal that tourism development leads to a positive knock-on effect which brings subsequent economic benefits to the County. The knock-on effect is also referred
to by the respondents as a *multiplier effect* or a *spin-off effect* and consists of money spent by tourists which circulate through the local economy bringing benefits to various primary and secondary industry stakeholders. In other words, as stated by Interviewee H: *everybody benefits from tourism.* It is clear from the above findings that tourism encourages local economic growth and that economic development in County Cork can be achieved through tourism.

The findings reveal that this role is currently evolving and that Cork County Council is continuously active in the area of economic development and tourism. Cork County Council is now focusing its efforts on enhancing economic development through tourism and maximising the benefits that tourism brings to their area. The responses once again illustrate the correlative link between economic and tourism development suggesting economic development can be achieved through tourism by *developing local area retail and local tourism products.*

It is clear from the above findings that tourism development encourages local economic growth. The findings arising in relation to the role of Cork County Council in enhancing community development using tourism are presented below.

### 4.4.2 Enhancing Community Development through Tourism

Chapter Two suggests that the relationship between tourism and communities is multi-dimensional, encompassing economic, social, cultural, ecological and political forces (Singh and Timothy, 2003). As presented in section 2.3.5, the need for community participation in tourism is well-recognised and it is suggested that community involvement in tourism can ensure community benefits, empower the locals and promote community development.

To explore the importance of communities in tourism development and to identify the role of Cork County Council in enhancing community development using tourism, the respondents of this study were asked to determine how community development can be enhanced through tourism. The findings resulting from this inquiry accentuate the importance of the tourism-community relationships in local developing tourism:

*Tourism is the cart that creates community development* (Interviewee I).
Community development focus in Ireland is particularly very strong. Local volunteering in tourism in part of the parcel of what has been done forever (Interviewee A).

Tourism and community development in Ireland is done at local level, not at an international basis, not the fancy stuff, we keep it local and be open to it (Interviewee F).

The above statements reinforce the idea that tourism development drives community development emphasising the invaluable contribution brought by of Irish communities in tourism. The findings suggest that in Ireland, the community development concept is particularly important and local volunteering is one of regular activities undertaken by communities. The findings also illustrate the unpretentious nature of the tourism and community development concepts in Ireland, where communities are open and receptive to participation. Another dimension of the tourism-community development relationship in Ireland is provided by three respondents which reveal that nowadays, Irish communities are more aware of the potential benefits that tourism brings to their area:

Cork County's Communities are now realising that they have to get together and promote tourism themselves as that would be in their advantage. Tourism is the big income and job generator for these communities (Interviewee C).

One of the biggest benefit is the economic value that tourism brings. In County Cork particularly, the benefits that tourism brings to communities. In West Cork a lot of communities are now aware of these benefits and that tourism development has a great economic impact to the area (Interviewee E).

The findings suggest that the County’s communities are often working together to promote tourism realising the advantages that tourism brings, such as income and job generation. This community awareness is particularly evident in specific areas such as West Cork where tourism has already a large economic impact. The findings further identify that local communities in Cork County are appreciative of the tourism offering in their areas and often become ambassadors for their own tourism and heritage assets.
In a similar vein, an interesting viewpoint is made in relation to the importance of active communities in developing tourism highlighting the challenge of bringing communities together for tourism development:

One of the challenges is ensuring that there are active communities in all those areas where the tourism product is. At the end of the day is the community involvement at the ground that matters. We need to see the value of developing the specific community and also to make them realise and see the economic potential and value of tourism (Interviewee F).

The above viewpoint highlights the importance of community involvement in developing local tourism, stating that active communities are key players in areas where tourism products are being developed. The statement provides a reciprocal solution to the challenge of bringing communities together in developing tourism. The findings further suggest that the value of community involvement should be widely acknowledged by Cork County Council, while the communities must be notified and made aware of the economic potential and value brought by tourism.

The findings of this study emphasise the recent efforts of Cork County Council in enhancing community development through tourism and reveal numerous initiatives and programmes which aid local community and tourism development. Six respondents make reference to Cork County Council’s different approaches to community and tourism development, noting that the local authority is regularly involved in delivering local tourism programmes and community-based tourism initiatives:

Nowadays, a lot of the work that the Council does in terms of its community development will be done through tourism initiatives (Interviewee G).

The community is the one that provides the visitor experience. If you go to West Cork North Cork and parts of South Cork, you want to meet the locals. The locals are going to deliver the story about the island or about the fisher men years ago or about the local heroes. We work so close with the community in projects such as Tidy Towns. We work with them through the festivals committees. So yes we provide funding but we are getting it back in goodwill and voluntary effort. As a result without the community we don’t have a tourism product they are crucial to the continuous
development of tourism. They are part of the product. The visitor experience is talking to locals so community is king really (Interviewee I).

In terms of community development through tourism, the Council is trying to get communities involved in local tourism promotion. Sheep’s Head now would be one example where the local communities were involved and have done well. The other example is in North Cork as well. There is another little village in there where communities have got together and joined up together to try and help themselves using tourism. In order for them to do that they need to be supported by the Council and of course they need funding (Interviewee H).

The above responses portray the commitment of Cork County Council to supporting local communities, via tourism while exemplifying a series of initiatives and supports provided by the local authority. The importance of communities in tourism development is once again highlighted while recognising that the community is a key element of the tourism product or experience in County Cork. It is illustrated that such community-based tourism initiatives and actions in tourism development have the potential to nurture the community while allowing shared information to be delivered between the community and Council’s local agencies.

The above responses also draw attention to the financial support offered by the Council to aid tourism and community development. The findings reveal that Cork County Council regularly offers local grants and schemes that are available for local communities to avail of for tourism, local development and community participation in projects. An interesting suggestion is made in relation to recent innovative ideas and incentives to get the community involved in developing tourism. Interviewee E states that community development can be achieved through tourism by innovation and reveals that some communities are creating their own marketing incentives such as websites, to promote their region with the support of Cork County Council.

It is apparent from the above findings that active communities are crucial to the continuous development of tourism and that Cork County Council is committed to supporting local communities being often involved in tourism programmes and community-based tourism initiatives. Regardless of the level at which they are implemented, it is important to emphasise the fact that such programmes, either directly or indirectly, have the potential to influence tourism and community development at a local level. One of the active programmes centrally
led and presented in Chapter Two is the LEADER programme. The respondents of this study make reference to the LEADER programme and recognise the current benefits of the programme and other similar initiatives in local tourism and community development:

You are probably familiar with it is the LEADER Programme is also being delivered through this directorate and part of the funding there goes towards agri-tourism. It is recognised that agri-tourism is crucially important to the local community and particularly to peripheral rural communities. So when we talked a while ago about extending the shoulder season, there is a role for the agri-tourism sector to play in trying to develop or extend that season. The programme is all about local farm tourism, bringing the people maybe to experience home baking or cheese making or black pudding making etc. They are all products in the rural development communities that are being worked on and grown. And is the LEADER Programme absolutely. But again is community groups accessing funding through ourselves and working with us and with the tourism partners Fáilte and Tourism Ireland (Interviewee J).

Community development can be enhanced through training first of all. That training is generally provided through Fáilte Ireland and also through the LEADER Companies. As such, using the support of Fáilte Ireland and LEADER Companies they present a package which enables Fáilte Ireland to market that package and sell it on to the overseas customer through all the other various travel fairs that are organised. Various groups come in from overseas and participate in these trails. You got to start by giving them the initiative of training and seeing the value of that. And then it goes from there (Interviewee E).

The above statements indicate that initiatives such as the LEADER programme, bring a significant contribution to rural Cork areas and communities, supporting local and community projects across a diverse range of themes including rural tourism, enterprise development and local food production. Interviewee J argues that agri-tourism development in County Cork is critical in tackling current challenges such as the need to extend the tourism season. An interesting addition is brought by Interviewee E, which apart from the LEADER programme, identifies the importance of community training initiatives in tourism and community development. The respondent emphasises that Cork County Council works in close collaboration with national tourism bodies and LEADER companies delivering community
training and initiatives such as *West Cork Agri Food Trails*. The findings further reveal that such programmes have the potential to attract international groups and markets into County Cork which adds to the value of tourism and community development.

In summary, this section illustrated the important role that Cork County Council plays in enhancing economic and community development through tourism. It was revealed that tourism brings significant economic benefits in County Cork where small rural areas are highly dependent on the industry. The findings further identify a strong link between tourism and economic development disclosing that economic development can be strengthened through tourism due to a knock-on effect. It further emerged that Cork County Council's role in the economic development and tourism field is currently evolving as the local authority is continuously focusing its efforts on enhancing economic development by maximising the benefits that tourism brings to their areas. Regarding the role of the Council in developing community development, through tourism, the findings emphasise the invaluable contribution brought by Irish communities who are now more than ever aware of the positive benefits that tourism can bring to their locality. The findings also portray the commitment of Cork County Council in supporting local communities, using tourism initiatives, actions, and supports provided by the local authority. Finally, the findings make reference to centrally-led tourism programmes and community-based tourism trainings initiatives which have the potential to extend the tourism season and attract international markets into the County. Following the role of Cork County Council in developing tourism to benefit local economic and community development, the local authority role in terms of tourism marketing and promotion is also worthy of closer attention. The findings arising in relation to this function is further examined in the following section.

4.5 The Role of Cork County Council in Providing Tourism Branding, Marketing and Promotional Supports

It is clear from the above findings that Cork County Council plays an active role in developing local tourism by being involved in tourism product development, economic and community development. Section 2.3.8, argued that Cork County Council's commitment and investment in tourism promotion and marketing is of significant importance.

Regarding Cork County Council’s direct involvement in tourism marketing and promotion, a number of reports published include various examples of collaborative ventures between the
local authority and national or local partners to support both festivals and events and targeted promotional campaigns.

Section 2.3.8 illustrates that a significant amount of the marketing done by Cork County Council is in support of national brands such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East. On a similar note, the findings of this study reveal the importance of the County’s inclusion in the two major national brands. The following statements serve as an initial confirmation of the benefits brought by Cork’s inclusion within the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East while highlighting the marketing efforts done by Cork County Council in supporting these national brands:

*County Cork really covers such a vast area and is one of the two counties in the country that covers Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland Ancient East as well* (Interviewee B).

*Anything that we do here as a local authority in terms of developing and marketing our own local product, would fit nicely into either Wild Atlantic Way or Ireland Ancient East. County Cork is lucky to fit in both. There is no other place that is the gateway. So that is giving us a competitive edge* (Interviewee J).

The findings identify how Cork County Council’s marketing efforts could link with either the Wild Atlantic Way, or Ireland Ancient East, strategies. A different perspective is offered by further respondents which provide a comparison between the successes of the two brands while revealing the challenge of marking peripheral areas of the County as part of the brands:

*The Wild Atlantic Way really did its job and got more tourists coming into Cork, but Ireland Ancient East which covers all parts of Cork needs to be developed a lot more than what it is at moment. More marketing of Ireland’s Ancient East must be done and more promotion of it* (Interviewee C)

*In terms of the Wild Atlantic Way there are huge regions of West Cork that are not marked as part of the Wild Atlantic Way. We have to focus on supporting tourism in marketing those disadvantaged areas as well and their communities* (Interviewee F).

The above quotations acknowledge that the inclusion of Cork in the Wild Atlantic Way brand has been more beneficial to the County due to its significant success as a national tourism
brand. As a result, the findings suggest that efforts should now be focused on further developing Ireland Ancient East, as the brand covers a much more significant area of the County than the Wild Atlantic Way. In a similar vein, criticism is brought by Interviewee F in relation to the County's disadvantaged regions which are not marked as part of the Wild Atlantic Way, suggesting that efforts should be made to market those areas in the benefit to local communities.

Reinforcing the relevant literature, the findings arising from this study illustrate Cork County Council's direct involvement in tourism branding, marketing, and promotion while capturing the importance of collaborations, and exemplifying various initiatives such as supporting festivals and implementing local targeted promotional strategies:

*The marketing and supporting the branding would relate to the arts sector, festivals and events. Cork County Council is involved in local national events, music events, etc. In terms of branding support and marketing I would say that where it does an enough of lot* (Interviewee A).

*We will continue to support a lot of other local marketing initiatives that are ongoing as I said in West Cork, supporting marketing initiative undertaken by West Cork Islands, Living the Sheep's Head Way for example, the Ring of Cork in East which is collectively marketed Aside from that we have another recent initiative Cork Harbour Island Brand. So really all of these local initiatives. We support them because they do have a key role to play in supporting marketing initiatives* (Interviewee E).

*The recent initiative Visit Cork is all about marketing Cork as a whole and a unique destination in Ireland. We now recognise that we have to compete with other areas as well so we have a very proactive role in this particular area of branding and marketing* (Interviewee J).

Respondents stated that communication and partnerships are key elements necessary in promoting and marketing the County, while festivals and events are exemplified as key initiatives in promoting the region. The findings further acknowledge the presence of targeted local marketing initiatives such as West Cork Islands, Living the Sheep's Head Way, The Ring of Cork and the inauguration of the recent Cork Harbour Island Brand. An interesting comment is made in relation to work done in collaboration with community groups, such as the Harbour
Island group, to promote specific areas of the county. However, Interviewee E notes that regardless of the recent marketing efforts done by Cork County Council, County Cork is not yet fully branded as an entire destination. This respondent identifies the need for an all-inclusive marketing strategy for Cork in order to brand Cork as a whole tourism destination. However, Interviewee J mentions the recent ongoing initiative Visit Cork which is aimed at marketing Cork as a unique destination of Ireland.

While the majority of the respondents highlight that Cork County Council currently plays a significant role in tourism marketing and promotion, two respondents reveal that there is room for improvement suggesting that Cork County Council should take advantage of the current opportunities and allocate more resources into branding County Cork:

*Branding and Marketing we certainly need to do more. The role of the tourism section is to support that we want to do branding and marketing at a community level. We still need to get people that have experience in this area to actually come together and come and promote what we have* (Interviewee D).

*There are definitely more opportunities for us to promote County Cork as a whole. We are not as advanced as other counties. Kerry is very good at this for example. Cork does need to try to put more resources into branding Cork and the county and promoting it* (Interviewee G).

While the above views are not widely expressed among the respondents, it appears that the efforts of Cork County Council on marketing and promotion are not fully acknowledged by the interviewees. The two responses above indicate that the local authority is not entirely committed to supporting tourism marketing and promotion due to a lack expertise at a community level. The existence of more opportunities in promoting Cork as a whole is also acknowledged by Interviewee G, which suggest that Cork County Council should allocate more resources to branding and promoting the county. Although this outlook is not expressed among the majority of the respondents, it appears that the efforts of Cork County Council in promoting and branding the county could be improved.

In summary, this section highlighted that Cork County Council plays an important role in promoting tourism at regional level. The findings revealed the importance of the County's
inclusion in two major national brands, Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland Ancient East, which is highly beneficial in promoting the region. It was noted that the inclusion of Cork in the Wild Atlantic Way brand has been more beneficial to the County and that efforts should be focused on further developing Ireland Ancient East. Communication and partnerships were identified as key elements necessary in promoting and marketing the County, while festivals and events were identified as key initiatives in promoting the region. Finally, the findings acknowledged the need of an all-inclusive marketing strategy for Cork and revealed Cork County Council should take advantage of the current opportunities and allocate more resources into branding and promoting County Cork. While this section explored the role of Cork County Council in tourism marketing and promotion, the next section focuses on analysing the findings in relation to the role of Cork County Council in tourism planning and policy.

4.6 The Role of Cork County Council in Tourism Planning and Policy

As noted in Chapter Two, the distinct but related processes of tourism policy formulation and tourism planning have been the subject of considerable attention from various perspectives. Since the introduction of new central policy, the tourism development concept is increasingly mentioned in annual documents and plans published by Cork County Council. To explore this key role, the participants were asked to describe the functions of the Council in terms of tourism planning and policy. This questioning led to a variety of responses which reveal the importance of Cork County Council's responsibility in developing plans and regulating tourism policies at a local level.

First, the idea of tourism planning being primarily enacted through the development of County Development Plans and Local Area Plans was raised by the majority of interviewees. The respondents identified the inclusion of a tourism section in the County Development Plans and Local Area Plans highlighting the novelty of this inclusion and the importance of these statutory documents in driving tourism policy:

*In terms of policy development and policy implementation strategically, it starts with Cork County Council forming its own plan. That’s the very basics. We have the County Development Plan and then we have the Local Area Plans which now include a tourism section* (Interviewee G).
Planning is enacted in terms of documents, such as the County Development Plan, which has a tourism section incorporated in it, a community development section, a rural tourism, and an island section (Interviewee A).

The above responses illustrate that documents such as County Development Plans, Local Areas Plans and Community Development Plans are key instruments in driving tourism planning and policy in Cork County Council. The findings also highlight that Cork County Council’s tourism planning and regulatory functions are now much more developed than in the past.

In terms of tourism policy development and implementation, the participants highlight that apart from the planning role, Cork County Council has also a regulatory role which is enacted through various partners, such as its Councillors and Strategic Policy Committees who are actively involved in tourism policy development:

I will also mention that the Councillors would also have a strong input into tourism policy and at a local basis the Strategic Policy Committees (Interviewee E).

Every other country would have their own tourism Strategic Policy Committees (SPC). But here in Cork one that is very active in terms of tourism policy development (Interviewee I).

The above responses highlight that Cork County Council’s efforts in developing and implementing tourism policy are aided by various partners. The findings acknowledge the involvement of County Councillors and active Strategic Policy Committees in developing tourism policy.

In relation to tourism policy, Chapter Two also notes that local governments have the potential to bring a significant contribution to tourism development, given the influence that their functions, such as land-use planning and policy development, have on the tourism sector. Interviewee A acknowledges that in Cork County Council policy implementation takes place at a local basis through its Community Local Area Plans which are locally led and often incorporate tourism policy:
We also do a lot of Community Local Area Plans and most of those would have tourism policy incorporated in it, which are locally led. And it would be underestimated on how strong that is because implementation of tourism policy is widespread at a local basis (Interviewee A).

The respondents reinforce the significance of local-led tourism policy as presented in the relevant literature stating that implementation of policy is currently widespread at a local basis in the county. The importance of the national tourism policy document and the relationship between Cork County Council tourism policy and national policy are also highlighted by the respondents of this study:

_In term of our involvement we have the national policy "People Place and Policy" that places particularly community tourism focus on the work of Cork County Council and sees the strengths that we have there in terms of our direct linkage involvement with communities at so many levels_ (Interviewee J).

The above quotation provides an overview of how Cork County Council’s tourism policy links with centrally-led policy. Interviewees also noted that tourism policy actions taken by Cork County Council must fit in, or link, with both local and national policy.

Together with the challenges outlined in section 4.2, the respondents were further asked to identify the challenges associated with implementing national tourism policy at a local level by Cork County Council. This questioning resulted in a variety of responses highlighting the difficulties that may arise in linking national tourism policy and local policy implementation:

_The difficulty I would see in any type of policy formulation would be linking the national policy with the local one, linking the two. And also which comes first, which has priority? And then what drives it? You might have policy at a national basis that is not geographically led, which is not good at a local basis. Having said that you might have a diversity of local policies that doesn’t help national policy_ (Interviewee A).
**National tourism policy may not filter down it might not suit at a local level; it might compete as opposed to deliver. So in general this is what I see as the main difficulty** (Interviewee E).

The above responses illustrate that linking national policy with local policy represents a further challenge. It is suggested that policy formulated at a national basis might not always fit, or suit, local policy while policies available at a local level might not always aid national policy. However, a different perspective is brought about by Interviewee J who believes that getting visitor feedback is key in the development local tourism policy:

*That is what I would see as a big challenge as well, trying to get that feedback for tourism policy development. But we work very closely with Fáilte Ireland and I think we are getting to that stage where we will be able to review what people have to say about us* (Interviewee J).

This statement suggests that in order to plan effectively, local governments should consider the demands of the tourist market. These findings suggest that visitor research is required to inform policy development.

In summary, this section explored the role of Cork County Council in tourism planning and policy. The findings suggest that tourism planning in Cork County Council is primarily enacted through the development of County Development Plans and Local Area Plans, while the inclusion of a tourism section in such documents is also revealed. In terms of tourism policy development and implementation, the findings highlight that apart from the planning role, Cork County Council has also a regulatory role which is enacted through various partners, such as its Councillors and Strategic Policy Committees, who are actively involved in tourism policy development. The importance of the national tourism policy document *People Place and Policy* and the important relationship between Cork County Council tourism policy and national policy is also highlighted. Finally, the findings reveal the challenges associated with implementing national policy at a local level, suggesting that policy formulated at a national basis might not always translate into local policy while policies available at a local level might not always aid national policy. The next section examines the role of Cork County Council in sustainable tourism.
4.7 The Role of Cork County Council in Ensuring Sustainable Tourism Development

The relevant literature reviewed in section 2.2.4 notes that local and national authorities are increasingly using the term sustainable tourism and placing it on their agendas. It is noted that little attention has been given to investigate the roles and responsibilities of local government in addressing sustainable development within tourism destination contexts (Brokaj, 2014). However, in an Irish context, research conducted by McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2017; 2016), illustrates an overall lack of the understanding of sustainable tourism indicators among Irish local authority planners.

As providers of social services, builders of economic infrastructure, regulators of tourism activity, and managers of the natural environment, local authorities have many direct instruments at their disposal to influence tourism development. In addition to their direct roles in the development process, the most important role that local authorities can play in an economy is that of facilitator among the diverse interests seeking to influence the direction of sustainable local development. As Chapter Two notes, local governments have a critical role in creating the context and stimulating actions to ensure that tourism planning and development are more sustainable.

Despite the research conducted by McLoughlin and Hanrahan (2016) regarding local authority tourism planning in Ireland, from an environmental perspective, their research is more generic, and not focused on individual local authorities. In an attempt to fill this gap, the respondents of this study were asked to identify Cork County Council's role in addressing sustainable tourism development. The vast majority of the responses reveal an ambiguous perspective, highlighting that Cork County Council is not particularly active in the area of sustainable tourism development:

*Sustainable tourism is about looking to the future it's not a short term thing. But I think we could do a lot more in it* (Interviewee C).

*Sustainability is not achieved over night but at the moment we don’t have something that we are using. In Cork’s tourism it’s not overproduction is still about development* (Interviewee A).

*Cork County Council is not majorly active in that particular area at the moment. In terms of the materials we use, ensuring that they don’t impact on the environment etc. We encourage growth with a very conscious mind and we are conscious in the long
term of ensuring that the product we develop is developed in a sustainable way. It’s something that we should be working more on but in the same way we are very conscious of it (Interviewee F).

The above statements reinforce McLoughlin and Hanrahan’s (2017; 2016) work which illustrates a lack of clear understanding of sustainable tourism amongst Irish local authorities and questions the ability of Irish local authorities to plan sustainably. The responses highlight a lack of awareness and uncertainty in relation to the tourism sustainability concept in the organisation while it is obvious that Cork County Council is not currently proactive in providing sustainable tourism development. The findings strongly outline that tourism sustainability is an area still to be addressed by Cork County Council echoing the need for a more active role in stimulating actions to ensure that tourism development is sustainable in the region. However, it is interesting to note that Interviewee A believes that tourism sustainability is related to mass tourism or overproduction, while Interviewee F acknowledges that Cork County Council pursues tourism product development in an environmentally conscious manner. These views are reflective of Beaumont and Dredge's (2010) notion, that of the environmental management for sustainable development being a relatively new role for local governments and representing a shift from the traditional roles in servicing the roads, rates and waste of local communities. Even though the majority of the responses illustrate the need for a more proactive role in addressing sustainable tourism development, a different perspective is brought about by three respondents which reveal that Cork County Council’s role in addressing sustainability is currently enacted through its planning function:

I assume that the sustainability of tourism in County Cork is done through our County Development Plan (Interviewee E).

That is through the planning process. There are two aspects to sustainability: The physical planning and is something sustainable in the long term so it is not a blot in the landscape so the planning process looks after that. We need to ensure that it is environmentally sustainable and that we are in a litter free environment and we have good waste management practices (Interviewee H).

As a planning authority and an environment regulator we do assist sustainability countywide and we have an economic long term view (Interviewee G).
Supporting Fáilte Ireland's (2015) findings, the above quotations indicate that Irish planning authorities, including Cork County Council, should make provisions in their development plans for sustainable tourism, and ensure through the planning process that overdevelopment does not take place. The findings of this study highlight that sustainable tourism development in County Cork is currently achieved though County Development Plans and environmental policies. This notion supports and is reflective of Fáilte Ireland's (2015) findings which indicate that local development plans and strategies can ensure the protection of landscape while encouraging action programmes towards sustainable tourism development.

It is clear from the above findings that Cork County Council addresses sustainability in tourism development through its planning and regulatory functions. Yet, as previously mentioned, the majority of the respondents identified sustainable tourism development as an area to be further addressed by Cork County Council. Identifying the need to address sustainable tourism development as a key issue to be addressed by Cork County Council brings a key contribution to the relevant literature.

4.8 Conclusion
This chapter identified and analysed the relevant findings emerging from the primary data collection. The findings revealed that the function and role of Cork County Council in terms of tourism development is currently evolving and is now much more advanced than in the past. Important additions to the relevant extant literature were made in revealing the challenges that Cork County Council currently faces in developing local tourism. The findings identified the need for adequate funding as being a major challenge along with the poor competitive position of Cork as a tourism destination, an expensive tourism offering, the need to extend the holiday season, the peripheral location, the lack of regional balance and local enterprise culture and other external factors of which the local authority has no control over. The findings further served to reinforce the facts presented in the literature review, indicating that partnerships between Cork County Council and industry stakeholders are not only important to support tourism development, but they are vital in delivering various tourism initiatives on the ground, in financing tourism development projects and in maximising the visitors numbers in the county.

The findings also revealed the significant role that Cork County Council plays in various key tourism and tourism related development areas such as: tourism product development,
community and economic development, marketing and promotion, tourism planning and policy. Firstly, as regards the efforts towards developing, enhancing and protecting the local tourism product, the findings portray the important role that Cork County Council play in cultivating new local products and events to benefit the development of local tourism. The findings also illustrated the important role that Cork County Council plays in enhancing economic and community development through tourism revealing that tourism brings significant economic benefits in County Cork where small rural areas are highly dependent on the industry. A strong link between tourism and economic development was also identified disclosing that economic development can be strengthened using tourism due to the dispersion of economic benefits at a local level. Regarding the role of the Council in developing community development through tourism, the findings arising from the primary research process emphasise the invaluable contribution brought by Irish communities to local tourism development and the commitment of Cork County Council to supporting local communities through tourism.

This chapter also revealed that Cork County Council plays an important role in promoting tourism at regional level. The findings highlighted the importance of the county's inclusion in two major national brands, Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland Ancient East, which are highly beneficial in promoting the region. Communication and partnerships were identified as key elements necessary in promoting and marketing the county, while festivals and events were identified as key initiatives in promoting the region. The findings acknowledged the need for an all-inclusive marketing strategy for Cork and revealed Cork County Council should take advantage of the current opportunities and allocate more resources into branding and promoting County Cork.

In relation to tourism planning and policy, the findings suggest that tourism planning in Cork County Council is primarily enacted through the development of County Development Plans and Local Area Plans. In terms of tourism policy development and implementation the findings highlight that apart from the planning role, Cork County Council has also a regulatory role which is enacted through various partners, such as its councillors and Strategic Policy Committees (SPC’s), who are actively involved in tourism policy development. The findings further acknowledge the presence of a public participation policy network in Cork County Council comprising a working group on tourism policy.
Finally, it emerged that Cork County Council addresses sustainability in tourism development through its planning and regulatory functions. Yet, the need to address sustainable tourism development was identified as a key issue to be addressed by Cork County Council. This calls into question the efficiency of Cork County Council’s role in developing local tourism in a sustainable manner.

The following chapter outlines a diagrammatic representation of the above findings, together with a conclusion, limitation of the study, and recommendations for practice.
Chapter Five: Conclusion
5.0 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter one, this study attempts to fill a knowledge gap and to gain a deeper understanding into local government's engagement in the tourism industry, by evaluating and examining the role of an Irish local authority. Particularly, the main aim of the research was to provide an understanding into how Cork County Council engages in tourism, by examining its functions and responsibilities in terms of tourism development. This chapter presents a diagrammatical representation on the role of Cork County Council in tourism development, together with conclusions and key findings drawn from primary research.

First, the diagrammatical representation on the role of the local authority in developing tourism is presented. This diagrammatical representation was developed as a result of the data gathered during the primary research and brings together the findings and discussion from Chapter Four allowing conclusions to be drawn. Second, the diagrammatical representation, and the five functional areas of Cork County Council in tourism development are discussed. The chapter then moves to outlining the limitations of the research and provides recommendations for practice, which emerged from the findings. This is followed by an agenda for future research and an overall conclusion.

The five functional areas in which Cork County Council is involved in developing local tourism are presented in a diagrammatical format. A discussion on this representation is presented below.

5.1 Diagrammatic Representation of the Role of Cork County Council in Tourism Development

As evidenced from the findings and discussion in Chapter Four, Cork County Council has a direct, unique and critical role in developing the tourism sector. Analysis of the data gathered from the Council representatives in this case study highlights that this role is currently evolving and reveals current challenges, strategies and collaborations for tourism development in Cork County Council.

In addition, the analysis of data identifies a number of themes which relate directly to the role of Cork Council in tourism development. These themes emerged as a result of the primary research, and translate into five key areas of responsibility for developing tourism in Cork County Council. For the purpose of this study, the five areas are referred to as key functional
areas in which Cork County Council is involved in developing local tourism. These functional areas as follows:

- Enhancing, Protecting and Developing the Local Tourism Product
- Enhancing Local Economic and Community Development through Tourism
- Providing Tourism Branding, Marketing and Promotion Supports
- Providing Local Tourism Planning and Policy
- Ensuring Sustainable Tourism Development

The primary research clearly argues that the above five functional areas define the current role of the local authority in tourism development in a structured manner. As a result, these are equally illustrated in a diagrammatic representation below.

**Figure 5.1 Diagrammatic Representation of the Role of Cork County Council in Tourism Development**

Emerging from the primary research, Figure 5.1 illustrates that Cork County Council's role in tourism development is currently evolving. The diagrammatic representation portrays an overview of the role of Cork County Council and its engagement in tourism development by further illustrating the five key functional areas in relation to this role. Each of these clearly
identified functional areas act as an integral part in the existing role of Cork County Council in tourism development. These are further expanded on in the following sub-sections.

**5.1.1 Enhancing, Protecting and Developing the Local Tourism Product**

The primary research showcased that Cork County Council has an important role to play in enhancing, protecting and developing the local tourism product. With the identification of specific elements, or features, of the local tourism product, this study confirms that Cork's tourism product offering comprises a combination of rich natural features, a distinctive fun personality of the place and strong built heritage elements. These features add to the product elements identified in previous research and represent characteristics of the local tourism product that Cork County Council should take into account in its efforts developing local tourism.

The analysis of findings also offered an insight into how the local authority engages in tourism development by being actively involved in developing and enhancing tourism products. It was revealed that the functions of the local authority include developing the local tourism product by taking ownership of various local attractions and enhancing their tourism potential while providing continuous investment and funds. Cork County Council's commitment to developing and enhancing its tourism product, and particularly its visitor attractions, was identified to bring a significant contribution to the development of the tourist product and experience in the local area. However, compared to previous research, this study noted that the local authority relies on direct and indirect funding in developing and enhancing these local tourism assets and its continued efforts in developing attractions is challenged by a lack of sufficient funding. It was also revealed that Cork County Council also supports and administers various local tourism festivals and events. Yet, an additional dimension of this functional area was provided by the respondents of this study which revealed that Cork County Council also encourages new product development initiatives. The findings highlighted recent new product development initiatives and showcased the commitment of Cork County Council to providing a range of new innovative tourism products in West Cork.

Evidence from the findings also suggested that the local authority plays a key role in protecting and maintaining the existing tourism product of County Cork. The findings described Cork County Council as a key local government body which has a statutory role in maintaining and protecting the value of the tourism product, while acknowledging the existence of various
regulatory acts, checks and control measures to ensure a high level of maintenance of Cork's cultural, heritage, and tourism products and assets. As a result, this study argues that the appropriate maintenance of the natural resources in the county is part of Cork County Council's functions and responsibilities, and complements its role in developing tourism.

Following the role of Cork County Council in enhancing, protecting and developing the local tourism product, this research revealed that the local authority plays an important role in enhancing local economic and community development through tourism. A discussion on this role is provided below.

5.1.2 Enhancing Local Economic and Community Development through Tourism

The findings of this study highlighted the important role that Cork County Council plays in enhancing economic and community development through tourism. Supporting evidence from previous local government’s reports, this research showcased the economic benefits brought by tourism in the county while highlighting the strong link between tourism and economic development. It was acknowledged that Cork County Council is continuously active in the area of economic development and that local tourism development enhances economic growth and wellbeing while bringing monetary benefits to the county.

Regarding the role of Cork County Council in enhancing community development through tourism, the findings from this study accentuated the importance of the tourism-community relationships in tourism development as presented in the relevant literature. However, the primary research disclosed an unpretentious nature of the tourism and community development concepts in Ireland, where communities are open and receptive to participation. The importance of community involvement in tourism was highlighted in relation to the existent active communities which can be described as key players in areas where tourism products are being developed. As a result, this study offers a different perspective on the theory concerning community and tourism development and portrays the Irish local communities as being responsive to tourism development initiatives led by the local authority.

On the other hand, particular reference was made to Cork County Council’s different approaches to community and tourism development, noting that the local authority is regularly involved in delivering local tourism programmes and community-based tourism initiatives. The commitment of Cork County Council to supporting local communities through tourism was demonstrated by exemplifying a series of initiatives and supports provided by the local
authority. Compared to previous research, these findings clarified that Cork County Council’s efforts in terms of community development, are directly related to local tourism initiatives and that significant financial supports are offered to support same. It can be stated that active communities are crucial to the continuous development of local tourism and that Cork County Council is committed to supporting local communities often being involved in tourism programmes and community-based tourism initiatives.

The following section focuses on the third functional area, arising from the findings, and focuses on the role of the local authority in providing tourism branding, marketing and promotion supports.

5.1.3 Providing Tourism Branding, Marketing and Promotion Supports

This study discloses that the role of Cork County Council in tourism development includes providing tourism branding, marketing and promotion supports. The respondents of this study had a similar view in relation to branding as argued in the literature review. The importance of the County's inclusion in the two major national brands the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East was highlighted, while acknowledging the marketing efforts undertaken by Cork County Council in supporting these national brands. The primary research illustrated Cork County Council’s direct involvement in tourism branding, marketing and promotion while capturing the importance of collaborations, and exemplifying various initiatives such as supporting festivals and implementing local targeted promotional strategies. It can be stated that Cork County Council is actively involved in the marketing and promotion of the tourism offering in its area where communication and partnerships are key elements necessary in promoting and marketing the County. However, this study questions the efficiency of tourism branding in Cork County disclosing that the region is not fully branded as an exclusive tourism destination yet. Apart from the recent ongoing initiative known as Visit Cork, the need for an all-inclusive marketing strategy for Cork to brand Cork as an entire tourism destination was identified by this study as a key priority in Cork County Council tourism development efforts.

While this section focused on the important role that Cork County Council plays in tourism branding, promotion and marketing, the next section focuses on the role of the local authority in providing local tourism planning and policy.
5.1.4 Providing Local Tourism Planning and Policy

As part of its tourism development functional areas, Cork County Council provides local tourism planning and develops policy. This study identified the idea of tourism planning in Cork County Council as being primarily enacted through various statutory documents such as the County Development Plans and Local Area Plans. Moreover, the inclusion of a tourism section in the County Development Plans and Local Area Plans was highlighted in this study together with the importance of these statutory documents in driving tourism policy in Cork County Council. This study states that the inclusion of a tourism section within these planning documents aided the evolving role of Cork County Council in tourism development. In exercising its planning function, the analysis of the findings showcased that Cork County Council produces various tourism development plans, playing a key role in regulating tourism policies, at a local and regional level.

In terms of tourism policy development and implementation, the findings reveal that Cork County Council has also a regulatory role which is enacted through various partners, such as its Councillors and Strategic Policy Committees who are actively involved in tourism policy development. Yet, compared to previous research, this study disclosed that the tourism planning and policy process is not taking place independently but taking into consideration, following and respecting regulatory measures established outside the tourism directorate. The importance of local tourism policy implementation was highlighted, thereby, revealing that Cork County Council is proactive in implementing tourism policy at a local level through its Community Local Area Plans.

On the other hand, in terms of national policy, the investigation revealed the importance of the national tourism policy document People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025, and emphasised the relationship between Cork County Council tourism policy and national policy. However, this study provided an additional perspective concerning this relationship and disclosed that that policy formulated at a national basis might not always fit, or suit local policy, while policies available at a local level might not always aid national policy.

While this section provided a conclusion on the role of Cork County Council in providing local tourism planning and policy, the following section examines the role of Cork County Council in ensuring tourism sustainability.
5.1.5 Ensuring Sustainable Tourism Development

The final functional area identified in this study in relation to the role of Cork County Council in tourism development is ensuring sustainable tourism development. The analysis of findings revealed that Cork County Council addresses sustainability in tourism development through its planning and regulatory functions. This study indicates that Irish planning authorities, including Cork County Council, make provision in their development plans for sustainable tourism. The primary investigation highlighted that sustainable tourism development in County Cork is currently achieved through County Development Plans and environmental policies. Similarly, it was revealed that tourism sustainability in County Cork relies on strong and appropriate planning and environmental policies.

However, the study also outlined that tourism sustainability is an area still to be addressed by Cork County Council, echoing the need of a more active role in stimulating actions to ensure that tourism development is sustainable in the region. The findings further showcased a similar and common understanding among the respondents that Cork County Council pursues tourism product development in an environmentally conscious manner. Such views were reflective of Beaumont and Dredge's (2010) notion, that of the environmental management for sustainable development, being a relatively new role for local governments, and representing a shift from the traditional roles in servicing the roads, rates and waste of local communities. This study further argues that Cork County Council addresses sustainability in tourism development through its planning and regulatory functions. Yet, this investigation identified the need to address sustainable tourism development as a key issue to be taken into account by Cork County Council.

In conclusion, this section focused on presenting the main findings of this study and examined each the five functional areas in which the Council is involved in developing local tourism. The following section discusses the limitations of the study.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The main research limitations of this study refer to and were associated with the pitfalls of adopting a qualitative method. According to Bowen (2006), the major drawbacks associated with employing a qualitative analysis is that this process is time-consuming. Previous research also identifies qualitative investigations as a labour intensive approach which is necessary for the analysis process, such as categorisation, coding and recoding, etc. (Elo and Kyngäs 2008).
By employing a qualitative methodology, the author of this study spent a significant amount of time collecting qualitative data and particularly transcribing and coding the data collected. For instance, the entire data collection process including organising, conducting and transcribing interviews took several months and the varied perspectives recorded were analysed based on the limited experience and understanding of the researcher.

Other research limitations refer to the use of the case study method which involve the issues of reliability, validity, and generalisability. Additionally, the case study method has been criticised for its lack of rigor. This lack of rigor is linked to the problem of bias, introduced by the subjectivity of the researcher and others involved in the case. It is, therefore, suggested that both the readers of case studies and the authors themselves need to be aware of biases that can affect the final product.

According to Galdas (2017), recognising, understanding and counteracting research bias is crucial for determining the utility of study results. To successfully achieve the second stated objective, of making recommendations to Cork County Council, there are a number of main sources of bias that were addressed by the author.

First, the researcher's employment status as an insider, as discussed in section 3.9, was addressed by respecting the ethical issues of the organisation and the participants.

Second, the profile of interview participants as discussed in section 3.6, are likely to be largely homogenous and pro Cork County Council in their viewpoints. However, to address such bias the author focused on asking open ended questions during the data collection. In addition, the profile of interview participants was reflected in both the title and the objectives of this study.

The third area of bias addressed by the author is the literature reviewed. To counteract the bias emerging from reports and sources authored by Cork County Council, which can viewed as potentially biased in favour of the organisation, the author reviewed a variety of other sources, including newspaper articles, and other Irish local authority reports.

It is also important to note that this research is representative of the views of senior tourism representatives employed in Cork County Council. This case study explores only the internal perspectives and only the perspectives of relatively senior respondents. As one of the objectives of this single case study was to provide an understanding into how Cork County Council engages in tourism, it was deemed to be valid not to collect any primary data from other Irish local authorities. Furthermore, due to time and access constrains the focus of this
study is on a single Irish local authority. No comparison therefore can be drawn from the involvement in tourism development of other Irish local authorities. The reason behind the choice of a single case study was outlined in Chapter Three, and as such choosing a single unit of analysis, in this case a single organisation, was reckoned to be valid.

Finally, it must also be acknowledged that the sample size of ten interviewees can be considered small. However, qualitative research generally focuses on small sample sizes in order to gain in-depth insights into phenomena (Hamel, 1993), and choosing a small sample size was appropriate as the author collected data until empirical saturation was reached.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

This study attempted to fill a knowledge gap by evaluating and examining the role of the government within tourism in a local context. Based on the analysis of data, the author of this study proposes a series of recommendations for Cork County Council which relate to tourism development. These recommendations are outlined below.

- Emerging from the analysis of data the main challenge for Cork County Council identified by this study is the need for appropriate funding for tourism development. It is, therefore, recommended that Cork County Council should create funding opportunities in collaboration with tourism-sponsoring organisations, such as Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, and others.

- Regarding local tourism product development, it can be recommended that Cork County Council should focus on and encourage innovative tourism product development initiatives. To fulfil this objective, it is recommended that Cork County Council should create networks in local communities, where there is a vast amount of local expertise to further develop new tourism opportunities.

- The significance of local-led tourism policy was highlighted. Further from this, it can be recommended that locals should be encouraged to engage with the local authority in order to advance local tourism policies. Further engagement with elected representatives, both nationally and locally should be strengthened in order to develop policies appropriate to the locality.

- The success of the Wild Atlantic Way was acknowledged throughout. It is now recommended that efforts should be focused on further developing Ireland Ancient East as the
brand covers a much more significant area of the county than the Wild Atlantic Way. This can be achieved by further negotiations with the owners of the Ireland Ancient East brand, and, more innovative marketing strategies linked with this brand should be developed.

• Apart from the recent ongoing initiative known as Visit Cork, the need for an all-inclusive marketing strategy for Cork to be branded as a single tourism destination was identified as a priority. It can be recommend that Cork County Council should take advantage of the current opportunities and allocate more resources into branding and promoting County Cork as a unique, single destination.

• Cork County Council should also gather visitor feedback which is essential for tourism policy development. Furthermore, it is recommended to work closely with the national tourism bodies in order to gather such feedback, specifically, in relation to policy development.

• The need to address sustainable tourism development was identified as an important issue to be taken into account by Cork County Council. Thus, an increased focus in this area would be recommended through identifying and learning from best practice from other national and international locations.

5.4 Agenda for Further Research

Having conducted the study, the author gained a deeper understanding into the role of an Irish local authority in tourism development, particularly by focusing on the single case study of Cork County Council. The findings from this study provide an apt foundation for further studies which could contribute to the relevant literature on the role of local government in tourism development. As this study focuses on Cork County Council, as a single unit of analysis of the case study, it would be interesting to replicate the study within other Irish local authorities by employing a multiple case study design which investigates and compares the role of a number of Irish local authorities in tourism development. It can be suggested that further research could take a more comprehensive view including the perspectives of tourists, the tourism industry or industry representative groups. It would also be interesting to repeat this investigation at an EU, or international level, given the recent global tourism boom.

The identification of the five functional areas in which the local authority is involved in tourism development, leaves room for further specific investigation into each of the functional areas: tourism product development; local economic and community development; tourism
marketing, branding and promotion; tourism planning and policy and sustainable tourism development.

The findings of this study and the extant literature also highlighted the importance of collaborations and stakeholder involvement in developing local tourism. Another interesting addition to the current literature could be made by investigating tourism collaborations and networks at a local government level, as such studies have the potential to contribute to the existing tourism stakeholder theories.

Finally, this study revealed that linking national policy with local policy represents a primary challenge that cannot be described as a straightforward process. Further investigation into implementing and linking national tourism policy with the local one could represent another area to be investigated.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge and Overall Conclusion

Despite efforts made to highlight the role of the Irish government in tourism policy and development at a national level, the number of studies that sought to understand how Irish local authorities are engaging in tourism is limited. The main aim of the research was to examine the role of Cork County Council, and its engagement in tourism development, by capturing the views of senior tourism representatives within the organisation. The study further aimed to provide recommendations for improving the tourism offering of Cork County Council. Specifically, this research argued that local government has a direct, unique and critical role in the tourism sector and examined the specific manner in which this role is enacted and performed in County Cork.

In the first instance, the findings of this study brought insights in the current evolving role of Cork County Council in developing tourism. Cork County Council has increased its activity in the tourism field and has made substantial progress on a number of tourism initiatives. This study argued that Cork County Council’s role in tourism development, and the nature of its roles and functions, have changed and expanded greatly in recent years. The findings revealed a series of reasons, stages and possible consequences of the same evolving role.

The study also identified current challenges, strategies and collaborations for tourism development in Cork County Council. The challenges that Cork County Council currently faces in developing local tourism were outlined. Specifically, inadequate funding for tourism development was highlighted as a major challenge for the Council, together with the poor
competitive position of Cork as a tourism destination, and the need to extend the holiday season. Additional challenges include an expensive tourism offering, the peripheral location, the lack of regional balance and local enterprise culture, and other external factors of which the local authority has no control, such as the Brexit. The study also served to reinforce and complement the theory concerning partnerships and collaborations for tourism development, and revealed that partnerships between Cork County Council and industry stakeholders are not only important to support tourism development, but they are vital in delivering various tourism initiatives in financing tourism development projects and in maximising the visitors numbers in the County.

Overall, this study provides a clear picture of how Cork County Council engages in tourism. The research highlights that the Council is involved in various tourism development areas such as: product development, economic and community development, marketing and promotion, planning and policy and sustainable tourism development.

In summary, it can be stated that this study extended the current understanding of the role of Cork County Council in tourism development, and offers important insights of practical significance to policy makers on tourism development. Suggesting practical implications for Cork County Council, in addressing tourism development, and providing a foundation for further research, this investigation offered a new perspective for a contemporary Irish local authority.
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Appendices
Appendix A.

Interview Question Guide

Name:
Position:
Location:
Date/Time:

1. Can you identify benefits that tourism brings to Co. Cork?
2. How would you describe the tourism product of Co. Cork?
3. What role does Cork County Council have in developing local tourism?
4. What types of activities are conducted by Cork County Council to enhance and protect Cork's tourism product?
5. What are the current challenges faced by Cork County Council in developing local tourism?
6. How can economic development be strengthened through tourism in Co. Cork?
7. How can community development be enhanced through tourism in Co. Cork?
8. What involvement does Cork County Council have in implementing tourism policy?
9. What are the difficulties/challenges associated with implementing national tourism policy at a local level?
10. What involvement does Cork County Council have in tourism planning?
11. What action does Cork County Council take to support branding and marketing of the county?
12. How is Cork County Council addressing sustainable tourism development?
13. Any additional comments?
Appendix B.

Consent for participation in a research interview

"Exploring the Role of the Cork County Council in Tourism Development"

The Faculty of Business and Humanities

I agree to participate in a research project led by Prof. Margaret Linehan Head of the School of Humanities and Ms. Breda Hickey from Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) in Cork, Ireland. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.

2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.

3. Participation involves being interviewed by Ms. Monica Moisuc masters student from Cork Institute of Technology. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also may allow the recording (by audio) of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation.

4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.

5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. In all cases subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies at the CIT (2009 Data Protection Policy).

7. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

8. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

Participant’s Signature ______________________ Date _____________

Researcher's Signature ______________________ Date _____________
Appendix C.

Outline of the Coding Process

Theme 1
- Enhancing and developing the local tourism product
- Protecting and maintaining the local tourism product

The Role of Cork County Council in Developing, Enhancing and Protecting the Tourism Product

Theme 2
- Economic development through tourism
- Community development through tourism

The Role of Cork County Council in Developing Economic and Community Development through Tourism

Theme 3
- Tourism Marketing
- Tourism Branding
- Tourism Promotions

The Role of Cork County Council in Providing Tourism Branding, Marketing and Promotion Supports

Theme 4
- Tourism Planning
- Tourism Policy

The Role of Cork County Council in Tourism Planning and Policy

Theme 5
- Sustainable tourism development

The Role of Cork County Council in Ensuring Sustainable Tourism Development

Sources:
- Economic
d- National Brands
- Environmental Consciousness
- Regulations
- SPC
- LAP
- CDP
- Community Participation
- Protection
- Targeted Campaign
- Tourism Planning