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Research Paper

**The Slow Food Movement and Sustainable Tourism Development: A Case Study of
Mold, Wales**

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Abstract

Purpose

The contribution of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements to the success of a tourism destination is evaluated by determining local stakeholders' perceptions of the meaning of these terms and views on their benefits. Stakeholders' understanding of sustainable tourism development and their experiences regarding the contribution of these movements to sustainable tourism development are discussed.

Design/Methodology/Approach

A case study approach used semi-structured interviews to collect data from 11 purposively sampled local stakeholders. The interview questions spanned knowledge, membership and perceived benefits of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements and the contribution of these Movements to sustainable tourism development. The data were analysed using framework analysis.

Findings

Varying levels of familiarity with the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements were evident. Clear economic and personal benefits from membership were acknowledged. It was confirmed that the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements have contributed to sustainable tourism development and that public-private partnership is key to its success.

Research limitations and implications

The specific research context and limited purposive sample suggest great caution in any generalisation of the results.

Practical implications

Close and continued involvement of stakeholders plus membership of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements can contribute strongly to promoting sustainable tourism development in rural areas.

Social implications

It is recognised that the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements make a substantial contribution to local economies and add value to sustainable practices.

Originality/value

Involving local stakeholders in public-private partnerships can contribute to the success of rural tourism destinations when the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements are considered as alternative approaches to sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Slow Food, Sustainable Tourism Development, Wales, Stakeholders

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Introduction

Most tourism destination organisations tend to focus on marketing and promotion; they are not closely involved in resource conservation and planning and this approach can have serious consequences for destination sustainability (Jamal and Stronza, 2009). In 1993, Owen, Witt and Gammon researched tourism initiatives in Wales including the Garden Festival Wales in Ebbw Vale (horticultural tourism), Project Conwy (heritage tourism) and Mid-Wales Festival for the Countryside (environmental tourism). All of these case studies were initiated not only in order to improve the contribution of tourism to the local economy in their respective areas but also to provide better quality experiences for the visitors, to protect the environment and to enhance quality of life for the host communities, while ensuring local involvement in decision-making processes (cf. Gray, 1989; Araujo and Bramwell, 2002; Sautter and Leisen, 1999; Wang, 2009) and they determine that sustainable tourism could be successful in Wales. Such project initiatives are mirrored in the idea behind the Slow Food Movement (http://sloweb.slowfood.com/sloweb/welcome_eng.lasso) which purports to improve the local economy, protect local culture and traditions, and support local traders, while providing an education about food (Miele and Murdoch, 2002). Although the concept of the Slow Food Movement began in Piedmont, Italy in 1986, it was not founded officially until 1989 by Carlo Petrini to hit back at the fast food industry, catalysed by the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in the Piazza di Spagna, Rome (Miele and Murdoch 2002). Following the Slow Food Movement, the Cittaslow Movement was created, based on the idea that as local communities develop they need to establish a clear identity through recognising and celebrating their unique qualities (http://www.cittaslow.org.uk/images/Download/cittaslow_charter.pdf). These Slow Cities must prove that they are ensuring optimal use of their regional resources and that they are implementing policies to enhance the lives of the local community, while pursuing quality excellence and promoting traditional agricultural processes (Nosi and Zanni 2004). Mayer and Knox (2006) noted that the Cittaslow Movement offers towns and destinations an alternative approach to sustainable development designed to promote environmental conservation and improve urban life through incentivising local food production that employs natural and environmentally-friendly techniques.

The notion of Slow Food was not introduced in the United Kingdom (UK) until 2005. Gazzoli, chief executive of Slow Food UK, explained: "Slow Food is about the universal right that good, clean and fair food should be available for everyone. Good, because food should taste good; clean, because it should be produced in a way that fully respects the environment, human health and animal welfare; and fair, because the workers at all stages of production should be paid a fair and honest wage" (Kuhn, 2009, p.1). Byrd (2006) remarked that the stakeholders within the host community should not only be aware of, but also take responsibility for, the existing and potential effect of tourism on the destination. In order for sustainable tourism to be achieved, there needs to be a balance between the associated positive effects that support and emanate from tourism sustainability alongside a recognition, understanding, and subsequent resolution of any negative effects (Byrd and Gustke, 2007). As the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements are considered to be alternative approaches to sustainable tourism development, the involvement of stakeholders in a local tourism destination may be the key to their success. However, there is little published research in this area, in particular, from the perspective of the local stakeholders. Therefore, the present paper focuses on the notion that the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements can contribute to the achievement of this success. The aim is to explore the ways in which local stakeholders define Slow Food and the Cittaslow Movement and how they perceive the benefits of Slow Food UK/Cittaslow membership. Further, it examines stakeholders' understanding of sustainable tourism development and elicits their perceptions on the contribution of Slow Food and Cittaslow Movement to sustainable tourism development in Mold, the first Slow City in Wales.

Slow Food and Cittaslow Movement

Slow Food International is a non-profit eco-gastronomic organisation with a voluntary membership which comprises a network of over 100,000 members in 153 countries (cf. Nilsson *et al.*, 2011). Related activities, projects and events are developed at local, regional and global levels, including: more than 5,000 Slow Food initiatives annually in which 10,000 small producers are involved in 314 projects; promotion of 1,000 products at risk of extinction through the Ark of Taste catalogue which embraces biodiversity in a world-wide collection of small-scale quality productions threatened by industrial agriculture, environmental degradation and homogenisation with descriptions of forgotten flavours and products at risk of extinction that could be rediscovered and returned to the market (<http://www.slowfood.com>); 1,300 food education activities and 350 school gardens in 100 countries; and Terra Madre network activities, which involve 2,000 food communities, 1,000 cooks, 500 academics and 1,000 young activists (<http://www.slowfood.com/>). The latter brings together groups of contributors to the food chain process, who collaborate in the responsibility for “sustainable agriculture, fishing, and breeding with the goal of preserving taste and biodiversity” (See for further information <http://www.terramadre.info/pagine/organizzazione/?-session=terramadre:5211B5BA1afaf201AEnrD8B36E25>).

The Slow Food Movement seeks to educate consumers about traditional and local foods, while also protecting food and agricultural heritage. In turn, consumer demands, driven by environmental, ethical, social and health concerns continue to move towards the Slow Food processes of natural farming and agriculture, as suggested by Nosi and Zanni (2004). A content and discourse analysis of consumers’ responses, undertaken in Australia by Germov, Williams and Freij (2010), revealed themes, metaphors and imagery pertaining to Slow Food including: ‘conviviality’ (social pleasures of sharing ‘good food’); ‘localism’ (social, health and environmental benefits of local produce); and ‘romanticism’ (of idyllic rural lifestyles as an antidote to the time-poverty of urban life). In the same vein, Spiller (2012) considered the effect of farmers’ markets on UK consumers’ evaluations of the taste of foods, focusing on whether their descriptions of taste were metaphor-laden or based on beliefs and values emboldened by food knowledge and opinions; the paper highlighted the importance of place in cultivating the taste of food.

Spin-off activities of the Slow Food Movement include arranging food fairs, educational programmes and providing support for farmers and artisans around the world through financial awards (Parkins 2004). Sims (2009) argued that food plays an important role in tourism and local food can provide a tourist with a bond to the area and to local culture and heritage, thereby improving the quality of the tourist experience. Sparks *et al.* (2003) also stated the importance of dining and wine experience to attract tourists to tourist destinations. Slow Food’s current shift towards issues such as economic growth, access to resources and environmental protection was considered by Sassatelli and Davolio (2010, p. 97) who reviewed Slow Food as the ‘right to pleasure in the face of a tension between inclusion and exclusion running through contemporary consumer culture’ in the context of current debates on the scope of alternative food networks and the political investment of the consumer. Slow Food seems to play a role in what has been defined typically as ‘critical’, ‘alternative’, ‘ethical’ or even ‘political’ consumption. These labels occur in a great variety of situations including the following: extended supply and demand for organic and fair trade products; ethically and morally induced actions of individuals against private corporations or governments to express dissatisfaction with their actions, ranging from boycotts to more extreme actions such as naming and shaming; or alternative commerce activities such as barter trade and farmers markets (Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010). Then Pearson *et al.*’s case study (2011) focused on eliciting the profiles and behaviour of consumers with respect to their expectations in relation to local food. The resulting consensus was that incentives encouraging and enabling the development of local food webs have the ability to contribute in several areas; examples of such are the encouragement of a higher degree of food self-sufficiency, increased robustness and strength of the local food system to overcome problems, reduction of carbon and environmental footprints due to reduction of food miles and the increased awareness of the sources of food with its consumers (Pearson *et al.*, 2011).

Cittaslow is a growing international network of over 140 towns in 20 countries across the world that have adopted a set of common goals and principles to enhance their quality of life for residents and visitors. In

simple terms, Cittaslow towns aim to be great places to live, work and visit. They aim to support local businesses, foster local traditions, protect the environment, welcome visitors, and encourage active participation in community life (<http://www.greenguide.co.uk/node/1450>). Each Cittaslow town commits to working towards a set of over 50 goals and principles that aim to improve its quality of life. These goals and principles provide tangible benchmarks against which a town can measure its progress and act as a mechanism to bring local people from all walks of life together to work collectively for the good of their town. (<http://www.cittaslow.org.uk/page.php?Pid1=2&PLv=1>). There are currently six Cittaslow towns in the UK. Their aim is to recruit further members in all geographical areas of the UK in order to create a truly national network that acts as an effective voice for smaller towns and provides tangible benefits for all member towns (<http://www.cittaslow.org.uk>).

Slow Food and Cittaslow Movement in the Mold Area

The Cittaslow Movement allows only towns with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants to join and requires compliance with certain criteria within the areas of “environmental policies, infrastructural policies, technologies and facilities for urban qualities, safeguarding autochthonous production, hospitality and awareness” (Robinson *et al.*, 2011, p. 116). Mold, a small town with a population of around 10,000 inhabitants in North Wales, started to pursue the concept of becoming a Slow Food destination in 2006 and it was the first Welsh town to be accepted into the Cittaslow Movement, dedicated to promoting traditional local food and drinks (<http://moldtowncouncil.org.uk/>). Robinson *et al.* (2011) pointed out that the Cittaslow Movement extends the philosophy of Slow Food to all areas of urban living by incorporating the whole community. Consequently Mold, being a Cittaslow town, not only supports local producers, cultures and traditions but also integrates the whole community into a more sustainable and healthy way of living in order to achieve the ultimate goal of becoming a sustainable town and destination (http://moldtowncouncil.org.uk/moldtc/index.php?Tourism:Mold_Food_Town; Robinson *et al.*, 2011). Interestingly, the latter authors considered that Cittaslow and Slow Food should not just be tools to promote tourism but they should play important roles in the development of tourism success and community led destinations. In this vein, Mold does not support the promotion of mass tourism but encourages sustainable tourism development. The Mold Farmers’ Market was first held in 2006 and since has taken place on the first Saturday of each month with a full range of local food products on offer, all sold by the producer or someone involved in the operation so customers can enquire as to how the vegetables are grown or the animals reared. Most of the produce is from within a 20 mile radius to reduce food miles, global pollution and domestic road congestion. Included in the array of stalls are beef, pork, lamb, buffalo meat, sausages and award winning burgers, bread, hand-made cheese, Cilcain honey, fruit, fruit juices and vegetables, home-made pies and cakes, organic meat, vegetables and eggs, local beer and smoked products (http://moldtowncouncil.org.uk/moldtc/index.php?Tourism:Farmers%27_Market_Comes_to_Mold). In order to raise awareness of Mold’s Slow Food sector, the annual Mold Food Festival was successfully created in 2006. Mold Food Festival figures have shown a steady increase in numbers. In 2006, 4500 visitors attended the festival and there were 39 local producers with stands, rising to 51 in 2008. By 2013, there were over 100 exhibitors and stands from the food and drink sector, primarily from the Mold area, resulted in more than 13,000 visitors to the festival attracting not only locals but also tourists (<http://www.moldfoodfestival.co.uk/>). Both Mold Farmers’ Market and Mold Food Festival are managed by a committee comprising local stakeholder non-paid volunteers with the responsibility organisation and management of these events being undertaken on a rotational basis.

Slow Food Movement and Sustainable Tourism Development

For destinations to ensure a sustainable approach to tourism development, consideration needs to be given to the nature and development of their tourism product. In turn, the importance of food to the marketing of destinations is acknowledged by Sparks *et al.* (2003) who proposed a great dining experience, embracing food and wine, can play a key role in the appeal of a tourist destination. For destination managers, marketing is of course of fundamental importance but so too is the requirement for a sustainable approach to tourism

development. In ensuring the latter there is a need to acknowledge the importance of the underlying principles of sustainable development: holistic approach; equity; and futurity (Sharpley 2010). The marrying in of these principles, that is, the ethos of Slow Food and sustainable development should help to facilitate sustainable tourism development. Indeed in researching local food and sustainable tourism, Sims (2009) discovered that food plays an increasingly important role in tourism and the availability of “authentic”, local foods for the tourist market can have a large impact on the environmental, cultural and economic sustainability of a destination, while benefiting both the visitors and host community. As the Slow Food Movement endorses local specialities in order to mark a unique regional identity, this indirectly turns rural destinations into fashionable places to visit (Slow Food International, 2008; Gyimothy and Mykletun 2008), and as it does so, the mechanisms for managing this increased attraction and subsequent increased visitor numbers need to be present. To devise effective and sustainable food tourism strategies, Henderson (2009) identifies the need for destination marketers to appreciate the food tourism resources of the places they are promoting and the particular demands of diverse tourist markets, and to work to raise standards. Further, according to Mayer and Knox (2006), the Cittaslow Movement gives towns and destinations an alternative approach to sustainable urban development with the overriding goal of “environmental conservation, the promotion of sustainable development, and the improvement of the urban life [by providing] incentives to food production using natural and environmentally-friendly techniques” (Pink, 2008, p.176).

Method

In order to explore the extent to which local stakeholders perceived the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movement had contributed to sustainable tourism development in Mold, the first Slow City in Wales, a case study approach was adopted. Over an eight week period, semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from 11 purposively sampled stakeholders, whose profiles are summarised in Table 1. The sample comprised five business owners (BO1, BO2, BOC1, PB01, PB01) of which two were members of local partnerships, including Cittaslow, Mold 2000 and Mold Business Forum, alongside two further interviewees (P1, P2). BOC1 was also a councillor as was C1. LA1 and LA2 were employed by the local authority whilst E1 worked in education. All of the interviewees were local residents who were involved in local tourism and some of them had more than one stakeholder role. They represented businesses, the town council and local authority, education, training and various partnerships. The interviewees have been coded in order to represent the category/sector within which they operate (See Table 1).

Table 1. Interviewees’ Categories, Codes and Stakeholdings

Interviewee Code	Category	Stakeholdings
BO1	Business Owner	Caravan park
BO2	Business Owner	Bed and Breakfast
BOC1	Business Owner; Councillor	Business Manager; Local Council
C1	Councillor	County Council
E1	Education	College Lecturer
LA1	Local Authority	Tourism Officer
LA2	Local Authority	Town Centre Manager
P1	Partnership	Cittaslow
P2	Partnerships	Mold 2000; Mold Business Forum
PB01	Partnership Business Owner	Flintshire Tourism Association (FTA); Business Manager
PB02	Partnership Business Owner/Trainer	Director (Consultant); FTA

Based on the literature review, the interview questions comprised four sections, namely: 1) definitional issues and knowledge of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements; 2) the benefits of Slow Food UK/Cittaslow membership, 3) understanding of, and responsibility for, sustainable tourism development; and 4) the contribution of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements to sustainable tourism development. In the first section, there were general questions to assess the respondents' awareness of Slow Food, Slow Food UK and Cittaslow in each instance. These were followed by some probing questions, with prompts as appropriate, to elicit their understanding of the meaning of Slow Food, including their perceptions of any differences between Slow Food and locally produced food, their awareness of the local sources and availability of Slow Food Movement and the extent to which they promoted Slow Food and Cittaslow in their stakeholder roles. The second section comprised questions relating to stakeholders' perceived benefits of Slow Food UK/Cittaslow membership. The third section comprised questions relating to stakeholders' understanding of sustainable tourism development. In the last section, the interviewees were asked for their views on the contribution of Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements to sustainable tourism development. The interviews were recorded digitally then transcribed word for word and cross-validated with the audio recordings by a researcher. Next, each interviewee was emailed his/her transcript and invited to approve the content and make any editorial changes that they desired. The majority made no changes and a minority changed a few words, usually making grammatical corrections to the spoken words. The interviews were analysed using framework analysis. The five steps used to determine the codes were: familiarisation; identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting; and mapping and interpretation (Ritchie and Spencer 1994). This multi-step process, as suggested by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), allowed for the development of codes and sub-codes as applied to the interview transcripts and as presented in the results section.

Results

Definitional issues/Knowledge of Slow Food

Varying levels of knowledge and familiarity with the term Slow Food were acknowledged and there were different levels of sophistication offered in defining Slow Food. Exceptionally, in one case, an interviewee admitted honestly that he had no knowledge of the concept: "no idea" (BO1), whilst another needed the prompt of the impending interview to research it on the internet in advance (BOC1). At the most basic level, one interviewee saw Slow Food as the polar opposite to fast food (P2) and in another case an actual reaction to fast food (PB02). The distinguishing characteristics of Slow Food not only encompassed being the opposite of fast food, but also related to quality, time, sourcing foods locally, promoting the local food chain, encouraging local producers and encapsulating a distinctive philosophy. The specific and more sophisticated knowledge of E1 and P1 regarding the slow food concept was to be expected as P1 was actively involved in setting up the organisation in Mold and E1 in training and educating people in the Mold area about Slow Food. C1 presented a comprehensive consideration of the term: "Slow Food is a different cultural viewpoint, where quality and experience are valued; doing things in more of a localised or slower way is appreciated. It is approaching things from a completely different viewpoint".

There was an acknowledgement of the importance of local producers: "the basic premise of [Slow Food] is to encourage local producers etc in the promotion of their product" (BOC1). In further examining the aspect of local produce and Slow Food, certain caveats were mentioned by the interviewees. Whilst accepting there were similarities also considerable differences were apparent. P1 considered Slow Food and local produce as going together and BO2 perceived the concepts to be very similar and, in effect, did not see them as separate entities. LA2 and PB01 went even further to state that Slow Food and local produce were the same thing, although a value judgement was raised by LA1: "I think that locally produced and Slow Food means the same thing, rightly or wrongly". Interestingly P2, whilst recognising commonalities such as freshness, quality and sustaining and supporting the local economy, saw Slow Food as a philosophy: "Slow Food is a train of thought". Whilst C1 also equally accepted similarities, he distinguished between local produce that is of good and that which is of poor quality; local produce does not necessarily mean good quality and if so, it does not equate to Slow Food. This viewpoint was developed further by BOC1, who gave an example of a fast food manufacturer

located in Flint who would not be classed as a 'local producer' as "being a local producer is more than just being in a local geographical location." Local producers are distinguished by their producing of local produce and also as being "representative of the community" (BOC1).

Not surprisingly, those interviewees employed in tasks and roles linked to Slow Food promote it and support it in their activities; however, the level of involvement varied. For some stakeholders: it was integral to their specific job role (E1 and P1); it was a tool to promote the town of Mold through its Slow Food designation (LA1); or it was embedded in their involvement in partnerships such as Flint Tourism Association (PB02) and Mold Business Forum (P2). At a more applied level, BO2 promoted Slow Food through her-business practices: "I run a bed and breakfast and all my stuff is cooked to order. My chickens lay the eggs; my bacon and my sausages are produced by local butchers from local produce and, for instance, in the case of bacon it's home cured by the butcher; the sausages are made to order, made for me on the day that I order them if you see what I mean. My casseroles that I make out the North Wales buffalo meat I order and collect, when I need them. Even the ice creams that I make are made with Welsh milk".

Direct involvement in promoting Slow Food was also evidenced by P1 via the promotion of Slow Food on the Cittaslow website, in publications, through talks to organisations and regular market stalls, so focusing on the dissemination of information. With regards to training, E1 educates people on all aspects of Slow Food from food manufacturing through to hospitality that is from production through to consumption, and adopts a project-based approach. Interestingly E1 identified how it is not just about process, but it is also important to educate people on the ethos of Slow Food. 'Spreading the message' of Slow Food is regarded by several interviewees as important (C1, E1, LA1, P1, PB01). Named mechanisms for 'spreading the message', in addition to the work of Cittaslow, were the Flintshire Tourism Association through encouraging members to have local menus and to source locally, and the Mold Food and Drink Festival (PB01). With regards to the latter, exclusivity and restrictions to taking part are implemented to ensure quality: "We give priority to local producers as opposed to big mass producers who we don't really want in the Food Festival because we want the experience to be something very special, very different, very fresh, and very appealing" (PB01).

Whilst there was an acceptance of work being done and attempts at promotion and applauded examples of Slow Food businesses, C1 expressed a need for more action: "I think.... we're all talking about it, where are we promoting it? I know that Flintshire Tourism Association is very active in the private sector, as an independent body...push this sort of issue perhaps indirectly. I'm in the North Wales Tourism Partnership. We push this and promote this sort of thing. I don't know actually... I think that's where it needs more work actually". Whilst the interviews had focused initially upon Slow Food per se, interviewees were then asked broader questions regarding Slow Food UK and Cittaslow. Their responses demonstrated a disparity of knowledge. Six interviewees had not heard of the concept of Slow Food UK (BO1, BO2, BOC1, C1, E1, PB01), whilst two thought they had but they could give no further details (LA2, PB02). Nevertheless, LA1 understood the distinction between Slow Food and Cittaslow, Slow Food UK and particularly noted Ludlow as being an important benchmark in the development of Slow Food in Mold, emphasising the importance of local firms in the Slow Food endeavour.

For one interviewee, Slow Food and Cittaslow were one and the same (BO2). A more encompassing and wide ranging awareness of Cittaslow's impact and benefits was presented by a number of interviewees who accepted its wider application and resonance. P2 and LA2 specifically identified the importance of the broader environment and its reach beyond food: P2 stated how it focused upon "the whole town environment, the quality of life, and it's even pushing out into businesses, through the use of more low energy lighting and so forth. It's encompassing everything we've ever done if you like". The all-encompassing benefits are further applauded by LA2 and C1: C1 explained how "the benefits are wide because it's not just about food, it's about maybe a different cultural approach to things, which then empowers people at a local level and makes them start... I've

actually seen this locally in Mold... they start to configure other things, other ways for the community to get involved so the beneficiaries could be a wide range of people and groups in the local area”.

The benefits of Slow Food UK/Cittaslow membership

Interviewees believed there to be benefits that could be acquired from membership of Slow Food and Cittaslow for various economic sectors and stakeholders (businesses, destination marketers and consumers). With regards to economic sectors, there is a perceived benefit to tourism. LA1 sees the value in the marketing of Mold as a tourism destination: “Mold...has the designation and [we try] to build on that...it’s a good selling point”. P1 also notes the value of Slow Food projects for the tourism industry to tap into, and for visitors too as noted also by C1: “Through various avenues I am promoting initiatives such as Mold as a Cittaslow town, [and] the quality of what we have got to offer visitors to the county”. The distinctiveness afforded by being a Cittaslow town was also applauded (BCO1) as it offered an opportunity for difference to be promoted, and for P1 it meant added value: “value-added from the fact they are promoting what is unique about the area”. For businesses there are also the benefits of added value and the sustaining of other local businesses by buying local: “I think for businesses it’s an ‘add on’ value....you can actually charge a bit more, and therefore you are adding value. On top of that by buying locally you are then helping to sustain other business enterprises in the area” (PB01).

For consumers, benefits are identified as guaranteed quality of produce, assurances with regards to knowing from where the food has come, knowing how fresh it is and increasing awareness of local food. “I think from the public’s point of view: a) you know where your food is coming from; and b) you know basically how old it is and more or less. There must be one or two rogue people in the middle there somewhere. I haven’t seen any yet but human nature being what it is, there must be some somewhere, but on the whole you are guaranteed quality. It’s a win-win situation really all round” (PB01). Slow Food UK membership also helps customers to understand the distinctiveness of an area; “an application to benchmarking and linking high quality products with enhancement of sense of place” (PB02). The changing consumer attitude also allows for Slow Food to be acknowledged and valued: “there’s a drive amongst most people I think now, an attitude in favour of local produced, well-produced, humanely, environmentally friendly production of food and so on and so on” (PB01). As acknowledged by LA2 and C1, the benefits are broad as it is not just about food, but Cittaslow allows for the broader perspective and implications by creating the right sort of environment and a “different cultural approach to things” (C1). P1 discussed these broader benefits also: “It’s a movement that has a set of goals which cover all aspects of the town, not just food, but also the environment, hospitality, the community so it really suited Mold”. Critically, PBO2 commented upon the need for further work in order to maximise and capitalise on the benefits of Cittaslow accreditation: “There’s very little public awareness of Cittaslow...and what it means”. PBO2 identifies the way forward as requiring infrastructure: “I don’t think there’s a strong enough alignment between suppliers, retailers, cafes and restaurants”. However, Mold’s Cittaslow status has allowed access to European funds and, P1 argues, for the extent of the accreditation being applied to the town and so the whole town can be involved. E1 further praises the Cittaslow status and the benefits it brings: “It’s almost like a centre of excellence for bringing the community together as a whole and it is very good brand and label to earmark the town, that they are part of the Cittaslow Movement”. An important strategic role of Cittaslow is mooted by LA1, as an important part of destination management: “a selling point for the town”.

Understanding of sustainable tourism development

The levels of understanding of sustainable tourism development varied. In the main, interviewees interpreted the concept as an application of operational practices, a mechanism for visitor management, but for some it was an unfamiliar term. There was a lack of confidence and uncertainty amongst some interviewees when they were asked what they considered sustainable tourism development to be: “I am not familiar with it as a term” (P1); and “not really sure on that one” (P2). Business owners, PBO1 and BO2, both referred to items at the enterprise level relating to water management aspects at their business or designing of new buildings to

extend existing businesses. The link to physical infrastructure development was also raised by BOC1. Ideas such as incorporating a visitor management programme, minimising the potential harm of visitors and ensuring host community engagement (PBO2) were put forward. Importantly, the elements of longevity and time were mentioned by BO1, BOC1, LA1 and LA2: "Tourism which can go on effectively without damaging what is there" (BO1). Only one aspect was focused upon by LA1, that is, just the environmental aspect and ensuring futurity with no neglect or worsening of situations by actions. No interviewees were able to show a full and considered understanding of sustainable tourism development, with it being perceived negatively and narrowly. Sustainable tourism practices though are clearly identified as being embedded within particular businesses in the area. BO2 discussed her approach to her bed and breakfast establishment and attention to saving energy with water saving devices on the shower and reminders to guests to switch off electrical appliances such as TVs and kettles rather than leave them on standby. Recycling measures at his business were detailed by BO1 and the importance of the council in supporting and facilitating recycling.

With regards to responsibility for ensuring sustainable tourism development, there were variable viewpoints. At the practical applied level, BO2 considered the responsibility lay with her as the owner and her having business practices which were sustainable. Other interviewees considered responsibility at a strategic level and as a shared concern. Whilst there was a lack of consensus as to responsibility and which agency should take the lead, there was an acceptance that a range of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors should be involved. P1 discussed the importance of tourism agencies at the regional level for developing strategies, whilst also suggesting the need for cross-border links with other regions such as the North West of England. Additionally, there was a need for cooperation across regions; LA1 discussed the need for cross-agency involvement with public and private sector involvement: "[ensuring sustainable tourism development is a] cross-agency piece of work really, in town councils, county council, communities first, but more importantly.....the public sector and the private sector engagement in it ...so it is really a community buy in". More specifically BO1 acknowledged the responsibility and role of local authorities in the planning process and considers, as such, they should take the lead in sustainable development due to their ability to control and restrict planning. Conversely, P2 and PBO1 concurred that the Flintshire Tourism Association should have a lead role, as a representative member-led organisation for small tourism businesses in Flint. The scale of planning and development was commented upon by P1 in isolation, as the need for cross border cooperation, with a regional approach encompassing North Wales and also working with Cheshire (an adjacent county in England). As a mechanism for change, Cittaslow is viewed as a vehicle for sustainable tourism development, at the practical business level (BO2) and also a lead agency that should take responsibility (P1).

Contribution of Slow Food and Cittaslow to Sustainable Tourism Development

Most of the interviewees saw a natural synergy amongst Slow Food and Cittaslow movement and sustainable tourism: "to bring up tourism sustainability, it has a really defined role within there" (E1). BO2 applauded the potential of Cittaslow to assist sustainable tourism development, in the Movement's ability to give appropriate advice and guidance to individuals and businesses: it is "a good a body to go to for help ... and, in some respects, a more easily identifiable body to go to". P1 agreed that Slow Food already contributed to sustainable tourism development, but there was some consideration though as to its limitations and current use as noted by LA2: "probably not as much as it potentially could really".

The suitability of Mold to the Cittaslow approach was commented upon by PB02. The nature of Mold and the qualities of the area was seen to lend themselves to its being a good Cittaslow place and so would benefit from such an approach. E1 also corroborated the value of Cittaslow for tourism: "this is a very, very good place to come, to eat, to see things and Cittaslow plays a very important part in that". For PBO1 Mold's Cittaslow status is acknowledged and seen to be an important message for people, with regards to what is then on offer in Mold. In order for Cittaslow to take on a role, P1 commented upon the partnerships (such as Mold Food and Drink Festival, Mold Town Partnership, Mold 2000, Mold Business Forum) and the need for Cittaslow to have a greater profile within these groups and to take responsibility. Its specific role could be to

facilitate sustainable tourism development through networking: “take responsibility for creating the necessary networking and to promote it within the community at large and then make sure that business to business works as well” (PB02). C1 noted the importance of the individual organiser for Slow Food and the need to commit to it in the long term. The broader remit was also praised, with Cittaslow not being solely restricted to tourism but having an importance for the wider environment and sustainable measures: “it’s not just about food, it’s about the whole environment and wellbeing of people, so yeah, Cittaslow is a good flagship for it I would suggest” (LA1).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which local stakeholders were conversant with the definitions of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements and to determine their perceptions of the benefits of Slow Food UK/Cittaslow Movements’ membership. Further, it examines the local stakeholders’ understanding of sustainable tourism development and explores their perceptions of the contribution of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements to sustainable tourism development in Mold, the first Slow City in Wales. The stakeholders employed varying levels of awareness, knowledge and sophistication when defining Slow Food. Interestingly, it was found that the characteristics of Slow Food related to quality, time, sourcing foods locally, promoting the local food chain and encouraging local producers as well as the opposite concept of fast food (cf. <http://www.slowfood.com>). When it comes to stakeholders’ level of involvement in Slow Food, it varied according to their specific job roles; some stakeholders were more directly involved in promoting Slow Food than others. This finding supports that of Jamal and Stronza (2009) who revealed that different stakeholders have different views and interests based on their job and business characteristics hence, the level of involvement within destination projects can vary. With regard to the perceived benefits of Slow Food UK/Cittaslow membership, stakeholders believed that the membership of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements could bring benefits to various economic sectors (cf. Sassatelli and Davolio, 2010), as well as personal benefits to the tourism stakeholders such as local tourism businesses, destination marketers and consumers. This stakeholder viewpoint concurs with the overall aim of the Cittaslow Movement which is to support local businesses, encourage participation within community events and welcome visitors (See <http://www.cittaslow.org.uk>). In particular, membership of these Movements was considered to be a key factor in adding value and promoting sustainability from the perspective of local tourism businesses and it could also give consumers the assurance of guaranteed quality of produce and the awareness of locally produced food. This point of view concurs with Robison *et al.* (2011) who pointed out the importance of acting in accordance with regulations and adhering to certain criteria in order to ensure that the Cittaslow Movement enhances the overall quality of living.

The findings revealed that there were various levels of understanding of sustainable tourism development among the stakeholders, in line with Jamal and Stronza (2009) who noted that, within a destination, stakeholders have different opinions and ideas in regards to destination development. Considering perceptions of sustainable tourism development, there appeared to be a lack of confidence and uncertainty amongst some stakeholders. As the results revealed, none of stakeholders could show a full and considered understanding of sustainable tourism development even though sustainable tourism practices were identified and embedded within some tourism businesses in Mold area. Sautter and Leisen (1999) first acknowledged that different perspectives are a concern within stakeholder groups. Subsequently, Wray (2011) ascertained that stakeholders have different values and learning processes which complicate the overall stakeholder engagement, especially considering that stakeholders have different job descriptions and benefit from different activities hence have a different understanding regarding such terminology and its practical application. Interestingly, although Byrd (2006) considered that *all* stakeholders within the host community should take responsibility for the effect of tourism on a destination, there were differing views, and a lack of consensus was apparent, regarding responsibility for ensuring sustainable tourism development. However, all of the stakeholders did agree that public-private partnerships are the key to successful sustainable tourism development, as confirmed by Arnaboldi and Spiller (2011) who pointed out that destinations should have actors who are responsible for the representation of various stakeholders and facilitate the decision-making and consensus building process. When it comes to the contribution of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements to the sustainable tourism

development, stakeholders perceived that there is a synergy amongst Slow Food and Cittaslow Movement and sustainable tourism development and also recognised that the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements have contributed to sustainable tourism development in Mold area (cf. Sparks *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, Sims (2009) acknowledged the significance of movements such as Cittaslow in revealing that local, slow and authentic food is increasingly important in order to attract visitors, in turn having a major impact on the environment, businesses and the host community. This overall point of view was reinforced strongly by the stakeholders in the Mold area.

At an applied level, there are implications for the future development of Slow Food and the achieving of a sustainable approach to tourism development in Mold. There would appear to be a practical usefulness and value of slow food in facilitating and achieving sustainable tourism at this particular destination; however the evident lack of knowledge with regards to these two concepts (slow food and sustainable tourism development) may prove a barrier and constraint as by not having full knowledge and awareness it could be argued that future opportunities may be limited. Full and broad knowledge of these concepts on the part of the tourism suppliers could lead to the identification of further opportunities and new innovations, which would allow for a broader understanding and adoption of slow food. Such a positive shift could be an invaluable tool for marketers as well as benefiting tourists and locals. Responsibility in turn lies with the destination managers, business forums, educational establishments and the local authority to facilitate and promote good practise linked to slow food and sustainability so that tourism suppliers can 'buy in' and a strategic approach at a destination level is achieved. Theoretically, there have been extensive debates in the tourism literature related to sustainable tourism development and through conceptual discourse definitions have been determined, a similar debate would be welcomed within the slow food arena, as too, the development of further case studies to extend knowledge and to support slow food as a tool for sustainability.

Conclusion and Limitations

The present case study has explored the definitional issues and knowledge of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements and also examined the perceived benefits of Slow Food UK/Cittaslow membership. Further, the study investigated the understanding of sustainable tourism development by stakeholders and also explored how the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements have contributed to the successful sustainable tourism development in Mold area. It has provided some valuable, detailed evidence on the potential contribution of Slow Food and the Cittaslow Movement to sustainable tourism development.

As with many such qualitative studies, it may be argued that there are limitations associated with the size and representativeness of the sample, which was purposive with limited participation; thus, when generalising the results, great caution must be taken. The counter-argument is that the findings are rich and informative; they not only support some previous studies but also provide some local dimensional perspectives. The authors were fortunate to access key stakeholders in Mold, including local community business owners, members of the Town Council and Local Authority, educators, trainers and representatives of various local partnerships. As no other case studies on the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements in the UK were located, and only very few from Europe, there is only scant evidence for comparative purposes. Furthermore, the structured interview method is limited in its ability to identify and measure the quantitative effectiveness of stakeholders' partnerships with respect to the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements. Therefore, it would be of value to conduct a quantitative study to validate generalisability, followed by additional qualitative studies to explore further emerging issues in depth. The former could incorporate statistical time-series analysis to measure the changing perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders and the economic benefits of Slow Food and Cittaslow Movement. In addition, as the focus here is on short-term, qualitative measurement, studies set in different contexts may yield different results.

Currently, there are five other Cittaslow towns in UK and further research could be carried out on how the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements may have contributed to their sustainable tourism development

incorporating the social, environmental and economic impacts of these Movements from the local stakeholders' perspectives. In addition, this study presented the views of various internal stakeholders in the Mold area but there is growing interest from external stakeholders including Cittaslow UK, Cittaslow Europe and Cittaslow International and external stakeholder analysis for the assessment of the economic, social and cultural, environmental impact of the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movement could be considered within the context of global-local nexus.

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