Tourism as a Sustainable Industry in the Rural Community of Arisaig, West Scotland

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SUMMARY

Before being able to assess the role that tourism can play as a sustainable industry in a rural community, it is useful to have developed a clear understanding of the present situation. This study employs an empirical base for its research in an attempt to identify the possible problems inherent in the future development of sustainable tourism in Arisaig. This follows a broad review of the literature pertaining to sustainability and the way the concept has evolved throughout recent years which served to highlight the need for more specific information on the destination. Arisaig was chosen as the study area due to its unique position as part of the 'road to the isles' and owing to the fact that it is due to be bypassed in the near future.

The primary research involved a survey of visitors to Arisaig - both general and those involved in the boat trip to the Small Isles - alongside a survey conducted amongst the local population. The data was collected using either face-to-face or self-administered questionnaires and is collated and discussed to give an indication of the current position with regard to tourism. General background information was gained by undertaking informal interviews with key people in the local community.

Additional information was gathered using a postal questionnaire, aimed at marine mammal tourism operators throughout Scotland, to establish an overview of the market and enable suggestions to be made on the potential for the development of this type of tourism in Arisaig.

The study concludes with a discussion of the data, making recommendations for the way in which the tourism industry in Arisaig could overcome certain barriers to sustainability, with particular reference to the problem of seasonality.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Using Arisaig in the West of Scotland as a case study, the main purpose of this research is to investigate the role of tourism as a sustainable industry in a rural community, its potential and pitfalls. In an age of growing environmental consciousness and the decline of many traditional industries all eyes are on tourism to help redress the balance. The new improved sustainable eco-version has, amongst others, been offered up as a means of providing jobs (Honey, 1999), enhancing local economies (McCool, 1995; Wight, 1998), protecting destinations (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996), instilling pride in communities for their heritage and land (Scheyvens, 1999; Goodwin, 1996) - in short a miracle hangover cure for the overindulgence of a materialistic, hedonistic past - but can it live up to its frenzied hype? This study looks at the global development of sustainable tourism and at general tourism trends and markets and enquires as to how these transfer to a small, rural area.

Following a brief overview of the history and current position of sustainable development and the resultant emergence of sustainable tourism, the study moves from the global to the national providing a snap-shot look at tourism in Scotland in order to set Arisaig in context. After identifying the possible problems associated with tourism in peripheral destinations, the main body of the project focuses on primary research undertaken in Arisaig in July of this year. This was intended to provide a deeper understanding of the position of tourism in the area, including general perceptions of locals; visitor motivations and profiles. Additionally, the main tourism operator, Arisaig Marine, was identified and separate research was conducted into its current operations and future possibilities under the auspices of eco/marine mammal tourism.

Since the 1987 *World Commission on Environment and Development* (WCED) and the ensuing Bruntland Report *Our Common Future*, the concept of sustainability and '(d)evelopment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED,1987) has been at the forefront of Western societal thinking. At a time of Local Agenda 21, Biodiversity Action Plans and Tourism Strategies with a sustainable bent, localised research of this nature may provide an interesting insight into the reality of tourism as a sustainable industry. The relevance of this project is in its ability to move the concepts and principles of sustainable tourism and market trends from the general to the particular in a rural community not necessarily regarded as being of significance as an ecotourism/sustainable destination.

Thus, this study combines a thorough review of the secondary material available with the results of fieldwork undertaken in Arisaig in order to address the primary aim:

> **to investigate the role of tourism within the rural community of Arisaig and examine its potential for development as a sustainable industry**

To aid in the achievement of its aim, the study further attempts to address the following objectives:

- to establish a visitor profile for Arisaig, using data related to demographics and motivations, to ensure market supply and demand are compatible
- to explore the perceptions of the local community as to why tourists visit Arisaig and the importance of tourism in the area, and to gain a basic understanding of the general feeling towards visitors, using both quantitative and qualitative research
- to examine the position of marine mammal tourism in Scotland and to use this information to suggest ways in which Arisaig could maximise the growth and potential of this type of activity

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY

2.1. Sustainable Development

‘Sustainable’, the buzz word of the decade and most over used pre-fix, shuffled into the centre of the world’s stage following the *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (the Earth Summit) in June 1992. Attended by the leaders of 178 countries, the summit covered three main areas (Beaumont et al, 1993). The *Rio Declaration* offered an outline for sustainable development based on 27 principles - subsequently known as *Agenda 21*. In addition the summit put forward frameworks on biological diversity and climate change.

The Earth Summit may be the most recognised purveyor of the concept of sustainability but concern regarding accelerated population growth and the depletion and destruction of the Earth’s resources began a long time before. In 1962 the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* alerted Western society to the destruction of wildlife through the use of pesticides and created a heightened awareness of the environment. Ten years later the issue of whether the Earth could support a rapidly growing population was discussed on an international level following the publication of *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) - an ongoing consideration since the last 70 years have seen the world population treble from an estimated 2 billion to a massive 6 billion (Elliot, 1999) with the suggestion that by the year 2020 the population will top 8 billion (Buckley, 1994).

The aforementioned publications paved the way for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to voice their own concerns regarding depleting natural resources and in 1980 they produced a *World Conservation Strategy* (IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1980). This led directly to *The Bruntland Report* and as a result the idea of sustainability received global recognition (Bramwell & Lane, 1993).

Thus sustainable development appeared to arise as an antidote to the growing fear that the materialistic comfort enjoyed by many could not be maintained on a global level at current rates of population growth (Pirages, 1994). In order to ensure the success of sustainable development there would have to be some form of paradigm shift away from materialism towards a more altruistic society - in itself not a new concept as it was exactly this type of movement being advocated in popular fiction with stories of self-fulfilment at no monetary cost and without compromising the needs of others (Bach, 1972; Fynn, 1974; Redfield, 1994) becoming the new 'cult classics'.

However, it would appear that one of the barriers to attaining sustainable development lies in the apparent contradiction of economic growth and environmental conservation (Gupta, 1988; Elliot, 1999). After all, it would seem highly improbable to have economic growth without some type of environmental, and presumably also social, impact.

Further, there is much concern about the interpretation of sustainable development - 'a creatively ambiguous phrase ... an intuitively attractive but slippery concept.' (Mitchell, 1997: 28) This is borne out in the literature, with several writers suggesting that it is an almost indefinable concept (Honey, 1999; Suzuki, 1993; Lele, 1991) and even that the relentless attempt to find a suitable definition by academics has led to general disenchantment (Gupta, 1988). The most widely cited and accepted definition is provided by the WCED (as quoted in the introduction), promoting development that addresses present needs but not at the expense of future generations. In itself, this definition appears to be fundamentally sound yet it fails to identify what the 'needs' are - those of the developed or developing world; it is unclear what exactly should be passed on to the next generation; and it further gives rise to questions about changes in the needs of one generation to the next. Its general ambiguity in interpretation and definition prompts also the questions relating to, sustainability of what, where, when for how long and for whom? (Luke, 1995 in Hall & Lew, 1998) Perhaps with over 70 definitions currently on the go (Holmberg & Sandbrook, 1992), the goal should be to limit the impacts of economic development, both socially and environmentally, to an acceptable level, particularly in such pleasure orientated industries as tourism.

2. Sustainable Tourism

In response to the Earth Summit - and specifically to the words of the Secretary General, Dr Maurice Strong, who urged the travel and tourism industry to be conscious of environmental impacts (Harris & Leiper, 1995) - the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) alongside the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and the Earth Council developed *Agenda 21 for the Travel and Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development.* This recognised that the survival of the industry was dependent on clean and pristine natural environments and culturally diverse destinations (www.wttc.org, 2000). Unfortunately, within its guiding principles it apparently relates sustainable development with free trade, government deregulation and privatisation:

> 'nations should cooperate to promote an open economic system in which international trade in Travel & Tourism services can take place' (WTTC, 1995)

In light of the strong public reaction against these very issues at the World Trade Organisation in Seattle at the end of last year, this is evidently not the most popular way forward.

As with sustainable development, the definition of sustainable tourism is fraught with difficulties (Swarbrooke, 1999; Murphy, 1994; Clarke, 1997; Sharpley, 2000) with earlier definitions positioning it at the opposite end of the scale to mass tourism (Butler, 1991; De Kadt, 1990) - a 'small is beautiful' ideal. Considering the rapid growth of tourism - 463 million international tourists in 1992, rising to 594 million in 1997 and predicted by the WTO to double between 1990 and 2010 (Honey, 1999) - the idea of small scale tourism replacing mass tourism in order to be sustainable is optimistic to say the least.

Author and tourism expert Dr Victor Middleton, in addressing a conference on sustainable tourism (Cumbria, May 2000), suggested that it is more difficult for small tourism concerns to stick to sustainable principles. Working to tight profit margins, smaller concerns may often forgo environmentally friendly factors if the more destructive alternative is cheaper (Middleton, 2000). On the other hand, it may be easier for mass tourism operations to make a difference, any small move towards sustainability on their part may contribute to making a huge difference globally (Honey, 1999; Weaver, 1999). The real strength with regard to smaller concerns lies in their ability to collectively undermine or underpin the sustainable objectives put forward for sustainable development of the tourism industry - refer Appendix I for an overview of the principles of sustainability for the travel and tourism industry. In a country such as Scotland this is an important point as much of the population is geographically displaced, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, and in order to introduce a working framework for national sustainability it would be necessary to ensure the collective understanding and cooperation of many different concerns.

The significance of sustainable tourism would appear not to be in its definition, or lack thereof, but in its ability as a concept to continually evolve, moving the industry in the right direction (Clarke, 1997). A feeling echoed by other writers who feel that 'the inherent ambiguity of the concept is, paradoxically, its strength' (Sharpley, 2000: 2) - whether it's mass tourism with a conscience or small scale tourism collectives, the idea should be to propel the travel and tourism industry forward keeping the principles of sustainable development and the needs of future generations clearly in mind. In order to succeed there must be shift from short to long term thinking (Cooper et al., 1998; Holloway, 1998; Swarbrooke, 1999); time to sit back, view the Earth as an holistic entity and take stock of the situation before making a move - instead of shipping in, stripping clean and moving out.

2.2.1. Ecotourism and Nature Tourism

Travelling the road of responsibility brings encounters with so-called 'alternative' forms of tourism, the most popular, and therefore the most oft misused, being ecotourism (Honey, 1999; Cooper et al., 1998; Barkin, 1996; Bottrill & Pearce, 1995). Accused of being elitist (Lane, 1995), destructive (Swarbrooke, 1999) and simply a way of attracting new markets through 'ecotourism-lite' and 'greenwashing' (Honey, 1999), ecotourism is often confused with the less scrupulous nature tourism. There are less than subtle differences. Nature tourism focuses on the use of natural resources in an 'untouched' state including flora, fauna, water features and general 'scenery'. Frequently indiscriminate, it may also involve activities such as adventure sports and hunting (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996) which don't necessarily use natural resources in a sustainable way (Butler, 1992). Reflected in popular culture it would be the tourism equivalent of Hollywood blockbuster *The Beach*, based on the novel by Alex Garland (1996), which describes the thirst for adventure, the search for an unspoilt destination and the ultimate destruction of a paradise ideal.

In contrast ecotourism, in its purest form, supports very definite ideals:

> "... responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people." (Epler Wood, Executive Director, The Ecotourism Society, in Lane,1995)

Concerned with minimising the negative impacts of tourism - social, economic and environmental (Mathieson & Wall, 1982) - ecotourism aims to sustainably utilise resources. By providing long-term security and returns to the local community and instilling pride in the natural and cultural heritage, ecotourism hopes to encourage local people to see their heritage as an investment and thus work to protect it (Goodwin, 1996). By educating the traveller, ecotourism hopes to contribute to a change in perspective and development of an environmental and cultural consciousness (McCool, 1995).

2.2.2. Marine Mammal Tourism

Wildlife viewing is one of the areas where the boundaries between ecotourism and nature tourism become blurred. Using the case of marine mammal watching as an example, it has been suggested that the main motivation of the tourists is to get as close as possible to the creature in question, setting it firmly within the realms of nature tourism. Contradictory reports suggest that customer satisfaction is not necessarily reliant on the geographical proximity of the whales (Orams, 1999) and that if undertaken properly, this form of tourism fits very much within the definitive 'sustainable use of resources' (IFAW, WWF and WDCS, 1997; Baxter, 1993).

The main difference between whether marine mammal watching is ecotourism or simply nature tourism seems to hang on the issues of management and regulation. That it can be educational and provide a basis for scientific study is obvious but only if handled in an appropriate manner that compromises neither the needs of the animals nor those of the viewer (IFAW et al., 1995). In order for it to be conducted in a sustainable way it is therefore necessary to implement some form of framework or guidelines for operators in this field. In Scotland the *Dolphin Space Programme* (Arnold, 1997) was developed to provide just such guidelines for operators within the Moray Firth Area in North East Scotland with other organisations offering similar guidelines for operators and tourists alike.

Difficulties with the use of guidelines arise in their lack of universal application, interpretation and acceptability, in the same way a lack of definition may hinder the development of sustainable and eco tourism - where as in the case of regulation the problem is often in the policing (Barrow, 1999).

Further, some problems may be unavoidable until other industries sign up to the sustainable development remit. The habituation of marine mammals to boats which follow a regular and predictable pattern in their operations, has been offered as moving part way towards responsible behaviour on the part of operators (Young, 1998). Though this may ease the disturbance and have a positive effect on pinnipeds, in the case of other species the very same habituation may contribute directly to their death. In *Food for Thought* an article featured in the *Big Issue in Scotland* (Roe, 2000: 15), Andy Ottaway, director of Campaign Whale reminds potential whale watchers that "(t)he same friendly whales that approach boats in Scotland, approach boats in Norway and get a harpoon in their guts". While the article was damning the whalers and not the whale watchers, it is worth considering that negative impacts from even the most conscientious forms of tourism may happen. In the end, as long as problems occur despite, not because of, ones best efforts, then the industry is progressing in the right direction.

2.3. The Scottish Perspective

2.3.1. Scotland and Tourism

The significance of tourism in Scotland has increased over recent years particularly in light of the decline in the more traditional industries of agriculture and fisheries. In 1998, almost 12 million tourists took overnight trips in Scotland, spending £2.5 billion and providing support for approximately 8% of employment (StarUK, 2000). Without a doubt tourism makes an important contribution to the Scottish economy yet it is a contribution that is on the wane - as at July 2000, the Scottish Tourist Board (STB) were reporting a decline in foreign visitors (down 11%) and less tourist spend (an estimated decrease of £123 million especially from the European market). On the plus side, more Scots seemed to be taking holidays at home (7% increase in domestic market) and spending around 14% more year on year (STB figures as announced on BBC Reporting Scotland - 7 July 2000).

The reason for the downward curve in Scottish tourism may be attributed to several factors - certainly a strong pound, high domestic petrol prices, perceived poor weather (StarUK, 2000) and a fragmented geographical distribution of attractions (both built and natural) may have something to do with it - or there may be inherent problems in the management of Scotland as a destination. Dr Brian Hay, Head of

Research at the STB Tourism Futures Department, recently proffered that research from his department indicated that the way to 'sell' Scotland was through 'tartan' and that the Scottish environment should be used as a 'backdrop rather than a driver' in marketing and promotion (Hay, 2000). Interestingly, when questioned, Dr Hay admitted that the cited research was conducted at and around establishments that courted the tartan image and only those tourists buying tartan products were targeted.

It seems strange then, at a time when 'green consciousness' is riding high, with 1 in 9 of the UK population being members of a conservation organisation (Tourism and Environment Forum, 2000), 86% of overseas visitors rating the Scottish scenery as the prime 'pull' factor for visiting Scotland (StarUK, 2000) and 29,000 (full time equivalent - fte) jobs supported by tourism based on the natural heritage (Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), 1998), that the environment should be put on the back burner. In *A New Strategy for Scottish Tourism*, launched with high hopes in March of this year, the development of Scotland as a prime sustainable tourism destination is identified, yet there is no mention of the importance of the environment and the concept of ecotourism is given only cursory mention - little wonder that it was referred to as 'splendiferous bumpf' by members of the opposing political parties (Bargeton, 2000).

2.3.2. Tourism and the Environment

What makes the views of Dr Hay and the objectives of the new strategy most interesting, is that they seem to be at odds not only with world trends and statistics, but also with the 1992 report *Tourism and the Scottish Environment: A Sustainable Partnership.* Launched in response to the 1990 Government White Paper on the Environment, *This Common Inheritance,* the report surmised that the environment was indeed Scotland's greatest tourism asset but that care should be taken to address the pressures caused by tourism, and both tourists and visitors should be encouraged to become more environmentally aware. An action plan based on sustainable ecotourism principles appeared to be the logical next step and in April 1994 a Tourism and the Environment Manager for Scotland was appointed and consequently set about establishing a framework of national and local initiatives (refer Appendix II for an outline of the Implementation Process of the Scottish Tourism and the Environment Initiative). Perhaps in the case of the Scottish Tourist Board (STB), the problems lie in a feeling of being out of touch with the grass-roots - a feeling obviously shared within the industry, as more and more local tourist boards, business collectives and marketing groups go it alone (Davidson, 2000).

Since 1994 interim reports have been produced by the Tourism and the Environment Task Force identifying the need for 'increased awareness and positive action on environmental issues' (Tourism and the Environment Initiative Review and Future Direction, 1996) as being essential on the 'route to maximise sustainable tourism development' (ibid). In addition, as a response to the new strategy for general tourism, the initiative produced an operational plan for 2000 - 2003 whose mission statement is

> 'to bring long term business and environmental benefits to the Scottish tourism industry through encouraging sustainable use of our world class natural and built heritage' (Tourism and Environment Forum Operational Plan 2000 - 2003)

The aims of the Task Force recognise the motivations and perceptions of locals and visitors alike and are working towards developing Scotland in a sustainable way. Taking into account the principles of sustainable development in tourism and the emergence of the more responsible forms of the industry such as ecotourism, Scotland, its heritage, culture and displaced communities, are well placed to embrace these issues.

With the UK ranked 2nd with 14% of the outbound European market, yet only 7th with 4% of the inbound European market (Travel Industry Monitor, 2000), it is time that the tourism industry looked to diversifying both its product and market. With over 60% of Scottish tourism revenue being generated from within the UK (Scottish Parliament Information Service, 1999), this is of particular significance in relation to the Scottish product and market. A poll carried out by Mori in 1997 indicated that general perceptions on damage to the environment by the tourism industry showed that 30% of respondents believed it did 'little or no' damage; 37% said it did 'some' damage and 27% perceived tourism to cause a 'fair amount' or 'major' environmental damage (Travel and Tourism Analyst, 1999) - an indication that there is still a long way to go in the raising of awareness in relationship to tourism and the environment. More reassuring were the figures that indicated that respondents would be willing to pay extra for holidays if they knew their tour operators were taking steps to conserve the environment (ibid). This is in keeping with research from the US and Canada where 20% of Americans and 38% of Canadians indicated that they would pay more for products and services that were environmentally friendly (Wight, 1997) - though whether this would be borne out in reality remains to be seen.

Taking into consideration all of the above, a look at these issues relating to tourism as a sustainable industry within the setting of the small rural community of Arisaig is timely and in keeping with the principles of the Task Force and may also help clarify the concept and importance of sustainability within Scotland.

2.4. Arisaig

2.4.1. General Background

Arisaig is located on the main A830 Fort William to Mallaig 'Road to the Isles' (see Appendix IV for map) but is due to be bypassed next year (Roads & Transport, Highland Council, 2000) which is an issue with obvious implications with regard to tourism, as Arisaig often attracts return visitors who have 'discovered' it as they drive through on their way to Skye. The village of Arisaig lies just North of the boudaries of the 'Sound of Arisaig', an area designated as a Marine Special Area of Conservation (Sound of Arisaig Draft Management Scheme, 2000). The population is approximately 253 of which there are 71 retired, 195 of working age and 87 children (informal census, 2000). Of the 172 households included in the census, the economic demographics of the population roughly translate as:

Table 1 - Economic demographics of households in Arisaig

Main Income	No of households	Percentage
Private	78	45.4%
Retired	42	24.4%
Public	16	9.3%
Unemployed	14	8.1%
Holiday Homes	11	6.4%
Rented	2	1.2%
Empty	3	1.7%
Not Known	6	3.5%

Source: Informal survey supplied by Anne Martin, Rural Outreach Community Worker

Of those working in the private sector the highest employment is in the fisheries industry (29.5% including creel fishing/diving, fish farming, sea fishing and whelk collecting), with construction (11.5%) and hotel work (10.3%) being the other main employment providers. In the public sector the highest percentage is in education where 31.25% are employed (ibid) - for a more comprehensive interpretation of the census refer Appendix III. At 8.1%, unemployment is approximately twice the Lochaber average for the year 2000 (based on the average unemployment figures in Lochaber - January to July 2000 - ONS, August 2000).

Although fisheries are the main employers in the village, it is fair to say that there isn't an overall sustainable industry in Arisaig. However, taking employment on a whole and calculating the number of people whose work may be directly connected to tourism, 35.7% of the working population is accounted for. Add to this the number of people with a secondary income in B&B and caravan and chalet rentals (16.45%) and the overall total for those involved in tourism is above 50%. This is a good indication that the development of appropriate sustainable tourism in the area may well have a positive economic impact on the community, making the tourism £ worth more using the multiplier effect (Mathieson & Wall, 1982) which estimates the true value of each £ spent using a calculation based on

$$\frac{\text{primary + secondary income}}{\text{initial expenditure}}$$

At present access, other than by road, is by way of rail via the 'West Highland Line' and by local coach service operated by Shiel Buses. There is a problem with integrated transport about which the local community are presently lobbying the appropriate authorities in an attempt to rectify the situation. The steam train also passes through Arisaig in the summer but unfortunately passengers can neither board nor alight at the village.

2.4.2. Arisaig and Tourism

2.4.2.1. The Supply Side

The village of Arisaig offers a selection of amenities (for a full resource audit refer Appendix V) and throughout its limited tourism season (June - September) there are a number of events and activities targeted at visitors. During the summer months the Coastal Ranger offers an assortment of ranger led walks twice a week; in the final week of July the Arisaig Highland Games take place, 3 miles outside the village (the same venue for the Mallaig & Morar Highland Games in the first week of August) and this year the first Arisaig Regatta was held in the second week of August.

The main tour operator is Arisaig Marine who operates the mv Shearwater, an inter-island day cruise service to the small isles of Eigg, Rum and Muck and one of the main attractions for visitors to the area. Owned and run by Mr Murdo Grant the Shearwater has been in operation for around 24 years, sailing daily at 11.00am and returning between 5.30pm - 6pm in time for passengers to catch the train to Fort William if necessary. A flexible ticketing system is available which allows passengers the opportunity to choose which island they want to see and also the chance to stay on the islands and return at a later date. The Shearwater also serves as a local ferry service for residents of the small isles and is often used to carry provisions and other things as required.

Additionally, although the Shearwater does not offer whale-watching trips specifically, whales, dolphins, porpoises and seals are often sighted from the boat thanks primarily to an experienced skipper. During the summer months the sightings occur almost daily with members of the crew pointing the wildlife out to the passengers, helping them to identify the species and answering any questions. Photographs of the animals taken by the crew are often displayed in the ticket office. The arrangement works well as the main motivation for the trip is to see the small isles, so any sightings of marine mammals constitute an exciting bonus for the passengers.

Arisaig doesn’t have a Tourist Information Centre (TIC) but the *Land, Sea & Islands Centre*, a community project opened last July, serves to provide local information. Previously the old smiddy, the centre was developed in order to provide a wet weather attraction to add to the amenities in an attempt to counteract the perceived negative effects of the proposed bypass (Martin, pers com, 2000). Aside from minimal grants attained for help with its initial development (Scottish Office; Rural Grants Scheme; Community Land Unit; Lochaber Limited (LEC); Highland Council, PESCA - a fishery related grant which is no longer in existence) the project is self-financing. The centre comprises a gift shop selling primarily Scottish arts and crafts and an exhibition detailing the history of the area, its unique war-time connections with the Special Operations Executive (SOE), its relationship with the film industry and an overview of local wildlife. There is also a stock of leaflets promoting various local ventures and the staff employed are from the village.

4.2.2. The Demand Side

Arisaig falls within the geographical confines of the Highlands and Islands Tourist Board and specifically the Lochaber Area. In the absence of any detailed figures for Arisaig itself, trends in market demand can only be looked at in the context of a bigger picture. Table 2 illustrates the most recent data available.

Table 2 - A comparison of tourism statistics for the Highlands and Scotland

Highlands incorporating Lochaber	Scotland
• £373 million in holiday visits - approximately a third from overseas visitors & two thirds from the domestic market • 15.5% of total Scottish expenditure	• £1536 million from domestic market £863 million from overseas market
• 20% market decrease (1998 - 1999)	• 11% decrease in overseas market • 7% increase in domestic market (as at July 2000)
• over £1,600 tourism receipts per head of population	• £473 tourism receipts per head of population

Source: Scottish Parliament Information Service, 1999; StarUK, 2000; Scottish Affairs Committee report on Tourism in Scotland, 1999; Lochaber Tourism Action Plan, 2000-20003

The importance of tourism to the Highlands is obvious and is further exemplified by the knowledge that it supports 13,000 jobs in the area and is responsible for more than 30% of the GDP in the Lochaber region alone (Lochaber Tourism Action Plan, 2000-2003). For tourism to be sustainable in a peripheral destination such as Arisaig it is not sufficient simply to undertake a SWOT analysis (refer Appendix VI), it is necessary to identify specific market demands in order that supply matches demand and vice versa - it may be useful to look to visitor motivations in Scotland as a whole but they may not portray the complete picture. It would also be interesting to investigate whether the product could be diversified and thus demand created in another market, for example marine mammal ecotourism, or whether it would be worth marketing the unique SOE connection. To these ends, research into visitor motivations and market demographics specific to Arisaig, would be valuable when looking to the potential for the promotion of tourism as a sustainable industry in the area.

2.4.3. Problems of Tourism in Peripheral Areas

Rural destinations are often faced with problems that other, more centralised urban destinations, are not - although some problems naturally apply to both. The over-riding problem with tourism is the propensity for it to be confined to limited periods of the year (Allcock, 1995). Seasonality, as it is so referred (Cooper et al., 1998; Murphy, 1991), may lead directly to other problems associated with the industry - lack of investment, inconsistency of quality (Baum, 1998) and undue stress on resources and host communities (Swarbrooke, 1999; Butler, 1994). In peripheral destinations these problems may be exacerbated by simple geographical and infrastructure restraints.

Seasonality may be rendered the villain of the piece on which to hang the blame for many tourism ills yet, though several people have offered potential solutions for the problem (Baum & Hagen, 1999; Allcock, 1995; Grant et al, 1997), few have been able to fully explain why it happens. Butler (1995) suggests that there is definite room for further exploration into the causes of seasonality - beyond the obvious weather/industrial holidays scenario - claiming the relationship between motivation of consumers and seasonality has never been fully researched. Little is known of whether '... dissatisfaction with conditions in the origin region or the attractions of the destination play a greater role in shaping the seasonal patterns of tourism.' (Butler, 1995: 338)

Consequently, research into market motivations and perceptions of destinations, is important and necessary if seasonality related disorders are to be addressed. This should then be analysed in relation to changes in societal trends, the influence of popular culture and other factors which may alter motivational factors. Of particular significance to areas such as Arisaig is the idea that there should be a shift from being regarded as a 'commodity area' to that of a 'status area' (Gilbert, 1990). By analysing the market, key motivations may be highlighted and these can be used to develop a quality product with an element of uniqueness (Buhalis, 1999).

The table in Appendix VIII sums up some of the other problems, perceived or otherwise, considered relevant to Arisaig, which should be considered alongside research results when attempting to make proposals for the development of tourism as a sustainable industry in the area.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Introduction

Taking an empirical approach, this study attempts to examine the pertinent issues surrounding the possibility of tourism being developed as a sustainable industry in the rural community of Arisaig. By sampling general tourists, separately from those tourists taking boat trips, it hopes to identify patterns in motivations, market demographics and levels of satisfaction. It emphasises the need for a destination to understand its market in order to aid its development and thus it also takes into consideration the views of the local community with regard to tourism and takes a closer look at the main tour operator, Arisaig Marine.

It is important for Arisaig to cultivate a clearer comprehension of the profiles of its tourists so that any development is appropriate and can meet visitor demands and aspirations. By studying the present market it will be easier to understand how Arisaig fits into the Scottish, and on a larger scale, global picture, and will help it develop as a unique destination. It is essential that Arisaig realises its strengths, using them to produce varying yet focused strategies in order to be sustainable - '... only those destinations that adapt their products to what tourists want will survive.' (Font & Ahjem, 1999: 74).

In light of the growth of whale watching (Hoyt, 2000) and the potential for it to make a significant economic contribution especially to rural and peripheral destinations (Warburton, 1999), the study investigates the Scottish position in this field. This is in keeping with the fact that the mv Shearwater has regular sightings of marine mammals and uses this in its marketing.

The study employs both quantitative and qualitative research (Bell, 1993), rejecting the strict polarisation of the two paradigms, in an attempt to provide a more rounded comprehension of the current situation in Arisaig. This approach is believed to be particularly appropriate as no study of this type has previously been conducted in the village. By not adhering strictly to one method or another the validity of the study may be enhanced (ibid), particularly with regard to the local community where important anecdotal information was obtained by not sticking rigorously to a pre-defined framework.

The data collection took place in July, one of the busiest months of the season in Arisaig, with the report being based on a sample of 210 general tourists, 69 boat tourists, 60 locals and 40 marine mammal tour operators. Arisaig was chosen because of the proposed bypass and the potential impacts this may have on the community with regard to tourism.

3.2. Quantitative Methods

3.2.1. Data Sharing

At the same time as the research was being undertaken for this study, a larger study into the social and economic impacts of whale watching in Scotland for the Department of the Environment (DETR), in association with the Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust (HWDT), was also underway. Subsequently, the researcher undertook to collect the data for the DETR report in exchange for using any information relevant for this report and as such, some of the information on the local, general tourist and boat tourist questionnaires was surplus to requirements.

In addition, another researcher for Edinburgh University was looking at the development of marine mammal tourism in Scotland. Acknowledging the need for similar data and in an attempt to minimise disruption to the operators, a further questionnaire was devised incorporating questions relevant to both studies.

It was felt that the advantages of 'data sharing' far outweighed the disadvantages as the researchers concerned were conscious that the goodwill of the public may be stretched by answering questions for multiple studies.

All questionnaires were piloted prior to the data collection taking place and the researcher was given the chance to offer comments on the questionnaires designed for the DETR study - all comments were considered and some amendments were made as a result.

3.2.2. The DETR Study

The questionnaire for the tourists on the boat adopted the form of self completion with the researcher handing them out and explaining the study prior to the boat leaving and meeting the boat on its return to collect them. This was felt to be the most effective method in that it was easier to persuade people to take part in the survey if the research could be explained, and a time and place for collection of completed surveys were identified. The general tourist and local questionnaires were administered by the researcher to avoid any misinterpretation, answer any queries and ensure all questions were answered.

3.2.3. Tour Operator Survey

Postal questionnaires were sent to the tour operators as limited time and resources ruled out face to face interviews, email interviews were rejected as not all operators were on-line and telephone interviews would have been too difficult whilst undertaking field research due to lack of access to a private ‘phone.

3.2.4. Sampling

The general tourist questionnaires were sampled at the Land, Sea and Islands Centre in lieu of a TIC, as this was felt to be the most logical place to gain a good cross-section of visitors to Arisaig and the only safe place for people to stop without causing a disturbance to other visitors and traffic. It was also thought that visitors to the centre would be more inclined to spend a few extra minutes answering questions. The centre was deemed far enough away from accommodation and eating establishments and the marina so as not to skew the data. The post office was identified as being the best place to administer the local questionnaire as many locals pick up their mail and daily newspapers on a morning.

3. Qualitative Methods

In an attempt to provide a broader appreciation of the present position in Arisaig, certain members of the local community were pinpointed as being of importance to the study and informal interviews were conducted. Extra background information was provided from the coastal ranger, the tour operator, the skipper and other members of the crew of the boat, the employees of the Land, Sea and Islands Centre and Mrs Anne Martin, Rural Outreach Community Worker and general ‘pillar of the community’.

3.4. Limitations of the study

Although it was felt to be more advantageous to share the data, as stated in the previous section, this obviously has its limitations. With regard to the questionnaires, the researcher identified the following areas which may have either influenced the results or skewed the sample selection.

3.4.1. General Tourist Questionnaire

- this began by asking if the person had been on a boat trip - which was often the case. If they answered no, part B then asked if they were planning to go on a whale watching trip which is obviously not the same - therefore the researcher substituted it to read ‘boat trip’
- the section entitled ‘Your Holiday’ could have been made easier, for both completion and analysis, had tourists been given boxes to tick for the question ‘how many times have you visited before?’ ie less than 10. As it was, respondents often offered ‘a few’, ‘several’ or ‘loads’ as an answer - the results were fitted into general categories devised by the researcher to aid analysis.
- Question 12 relating to local tourism was difficult to answer as there isn’t really a ‘most important’ industry in Arisaig. Subsequently there were often multiple answers given - this also applied to the corresponding question on the local questionnaire.

3.4.2. Boat Trip Questionnaire

- the length and density of the questionnaire was discouraging for a self completion survey and this was something which was commented upon prior to the study taking place and by several respondents.
- the possibility of a bias towards English speaking visitors was identified as the language and some of the abbreviations would be difficult for non-native speakers.
- dating the questionnaire would have helped when analysing the propensity for sightings of different species throughout July.

3. 4.3. General Comments

- comparative analysis may well have been made easier if corresponding questions on each of the different questionnaires had appeared in the same order.
- the question relating to visitor motivation factors (no. 6 on the boat and general tourist questionnaire) may also have biased the survey as it's possible that the order of the statements may have implied descending order of importance.

While the above points have to be cogitated when analysing the results, it is considered that they are but a small part of the study and as such should be regarded in context.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

For ease of reference, the results are presented in the order in which they correspond to the objectives cited in the introduction section at the beginning of the report.

4.1. Establishing a Visitor Profile (Objective 1)

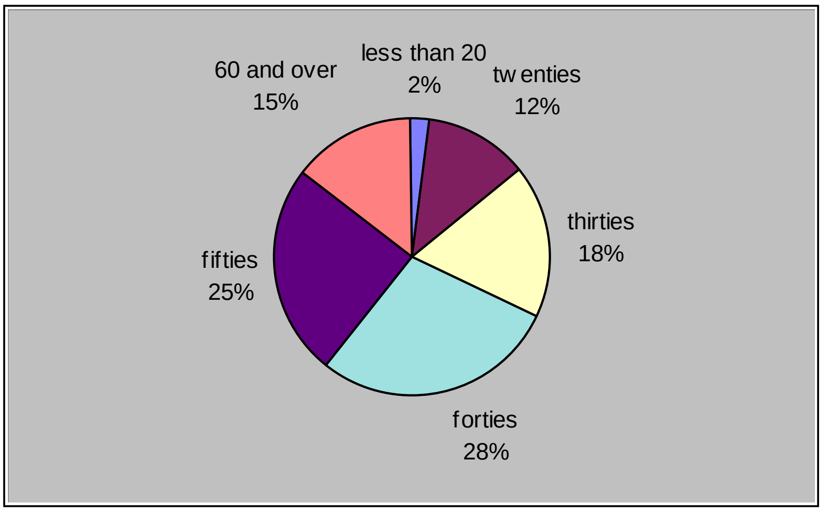
4.1.1. Visitor Characteristics

Daily throughout July a total of 279 questionnaires were distributed in Arisaig - 210 to general tourists and 69 to those taking a boat trip. Of the 210, 28% of respondents had already taken a boat trip, 20% intended to and 16% considered it a possibility. Therefore, due to the high crossover between the two groups, it was thought to be more beneficial to combine the results in order to obtain an overall profile of visitors to Arisaig. The split between male and female was remarkably even, 45.5% male and 54.5% female (n=279).

4.1.1.1. Age of Visitors

The majority of visitors tended to be older with the biggest group, 28%, being in their forties (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Age of Visitors to Arisaig



4.1.1.2. Education

Table 3 indicates the age at which the respondents completed formal education, with more than half of the sample studying at a post-school age level.

Table 3 - Age at which respondents finished formal education

	16 years	18 years	21+ years	No Response
Percentage	27.2%	11.8%	58.8%	2.2%
Actual Number	76	33	164	6

4.1.1.3. Socio economic Groupings

Almost 90% of the sample fitted into the ABC1 socio-economic category (n=200). The breakdown of the sample is illustrated in table 4. Of the additional 79 which were unable to be categorised, around half described themselves simply as 'retired' with no further information provided, with the others being either housewives or offering no response (for socio-economic groupings refer Appendix XI).

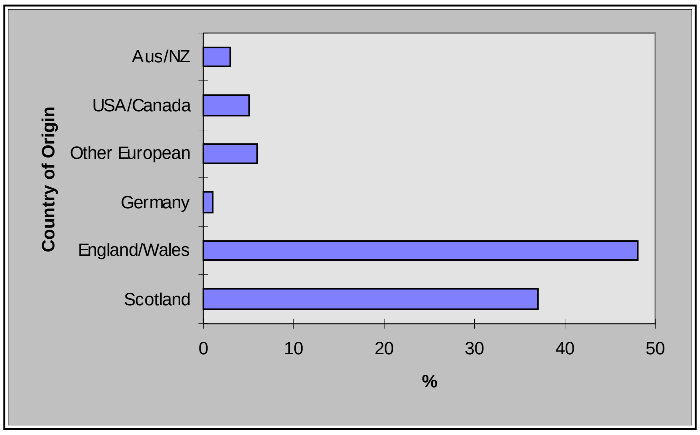
Table 4 - Socio economic status of tourists visiting Arisaig

Category	Description of Social Status	Percentage	Actual Number
A	Upper Middle Class	13.5%	27
B	Middle Class	41%	82
C1	Lower Middle Class	33.5%	67
C2	Skilled Working Class	4.5%	9
D	Semi Skilled and Unskilled Working Class	5%	10
E	Households at Lowest Level of Subsistence	2.5%	5

4.1.1.4. Countries of Origin

The vast majority of visitors to Arisaig were from the UK (85% - n=276). Only 5% of the sample were from the USA/Canada and 7% from Germany and Europe (figure 2).

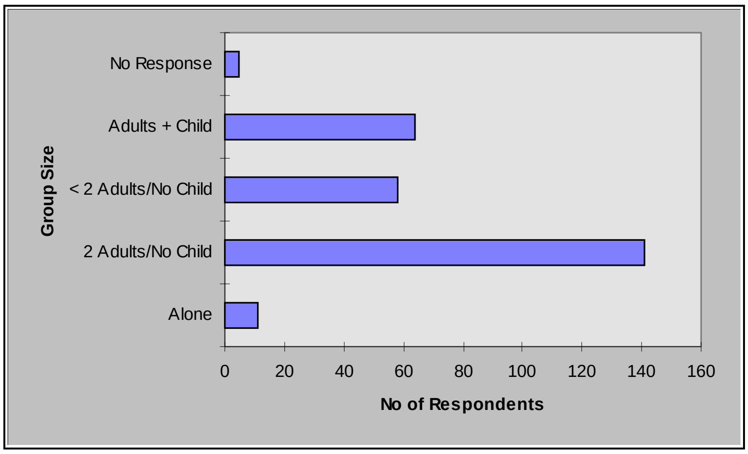
Figure 2 - Percentage of visitors to Arisaig from different countries



4.1.1.5.   Size of Group

Figure 3 shows the modal group size was two adults travelling without children (50.5%) with larger groups of adults making up 20.8% of the sample and adults travelling with children accounting for 22.9%.

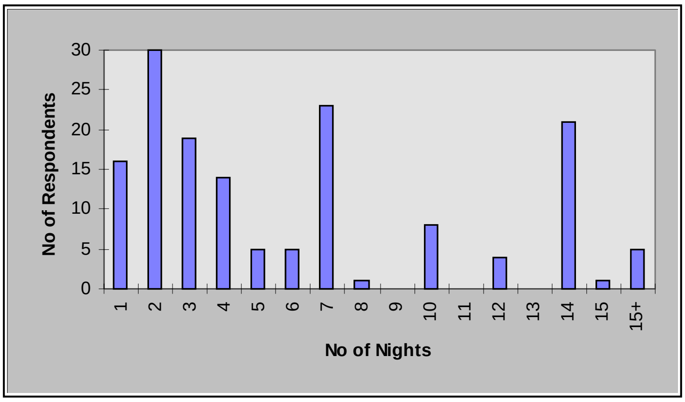
Figure 3 - Visitor group sizes



4.1.1.6.   Length of Stay

55% (n=153) of all visitors to Arisaig were actually staying there. The average length of stay was 6.2 nights (standard deviation 4.97) but the most common length of stay was 2 nights, with 7 and 14 nights also accounting for a significant number of the responses (figure 4).

Figure 4 - Number of nights visitors spend in Arisaig



4.1.1.7. Visitor Loyalty

Western Scotland has a high visitor loyalty, 71% of all visitors surveyed in Arisaig said they had visited the area before and most of those had returned on more than 11 occasions (table 5).

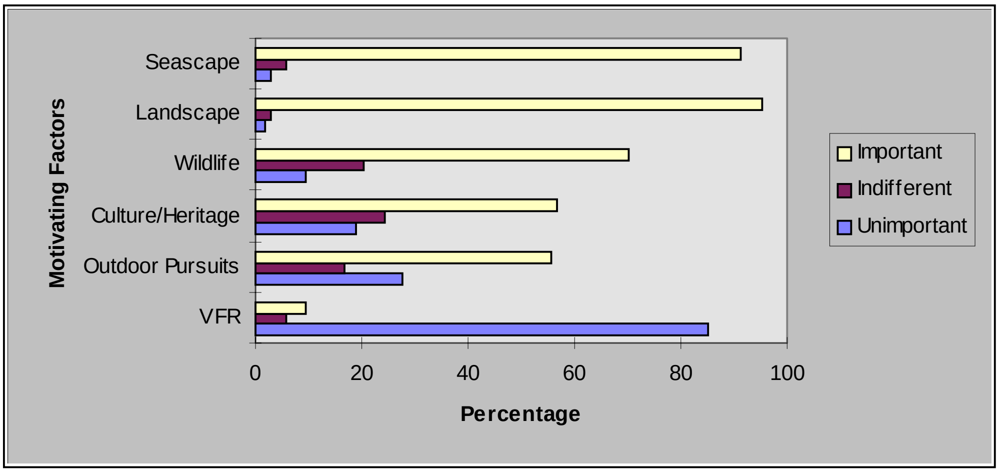
Table 5 - Number of times tourists have previously visited Western Scotland

No of previous visits	No of tourists	Percentage
less than 6	39	19.7%
6 to 10	31	15.6%
more than 10	108	54.5%
don’t know	20	10.2%
Total	**198**	**100%**

4.1.2. Visitor Motivations

Since 73% of all visitors sampled had been or were going on a boat trip, it is safe to say that the trip to the Small Isles is one of the main motivating factors for people coming to Arisaig. Others included in figure 4 are the seascape (91.4%) and the landscape (95.3%). Wildlife also scores highly with 70% and culture and heritage is important to 56.5% of tourists.

Figure 5 - Reasons given for visiting Arisaig



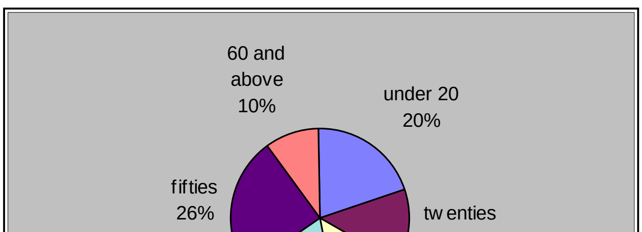
The 279 respondents were asked to rate the above categories from 1-5 (5 = very important, 3 = indifferent and 1 = unimportant). At the end of the section visitors were asked if there were any other reasons for them visiting Arisaig and 2.8% said they came for the peace and quiet, 2.2% for the remoteness and less than 1% offered business and golf.

4.2. The Local Community (Objective 2)

4.2.1 Characteristics of Sample Group

A total of 60 locals were interviewed, 34 males (57%) and 26 females (43%). The age range of the group is detailed in figure 6 below.

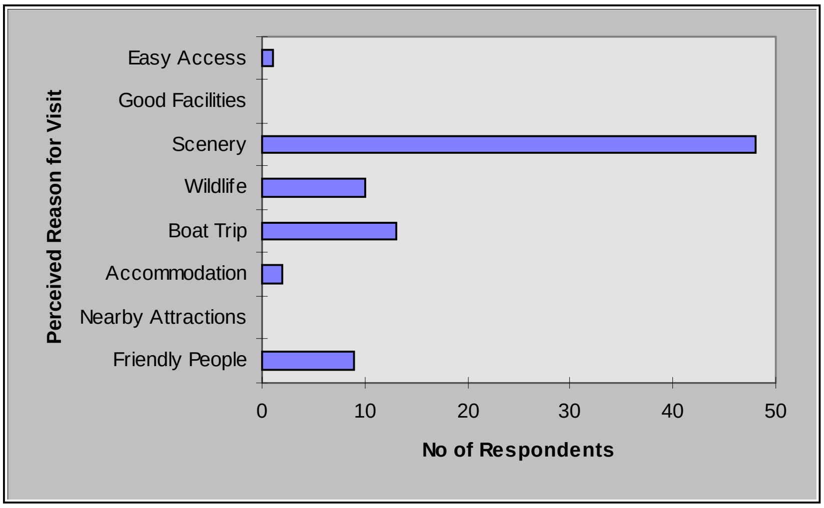
Figure 6 - Age of locals taking part in the survey



4.2.2. Local perceptions of why tourists visit Arisaig

Question 4 of the survey asked locals why they thought visitors came to Arisaig. 48 people (80%) suggested the scenery was the main attraction in the area while only 13 (22%) thought it was for the boat trip to the Small Isles (figure 7) - some respondents gave more than one answer.

Figure 7 - Perceived reasons why tourists visit Arisaig expressed by the local community



4.2.3. Local attitudes

Of the local community sampled more than two thirds admitted that they would like to see more tourists in Arisaig (table 6).

Table 6 - Attitudes of locals towards tourists in Arisaig

More tourists	Percentage	Number

Yes	77%	46
No	23%	14
Total	100%	60

In addition, several of the local respondents added other comments on whether they would like to see more tourists in Arisaig:

> *it would be good for Arisaig to have an 'attraction' which would draw in more visitors particularly in light of the bypass*

but not at any cost,

> *it would be unfortunate if even more visitors came in the peak period as it would spoil the reasons they come in the first place - the tranquillity and beautiful scenery*

Concern about the high levels of seasonality in the area were also voiced:

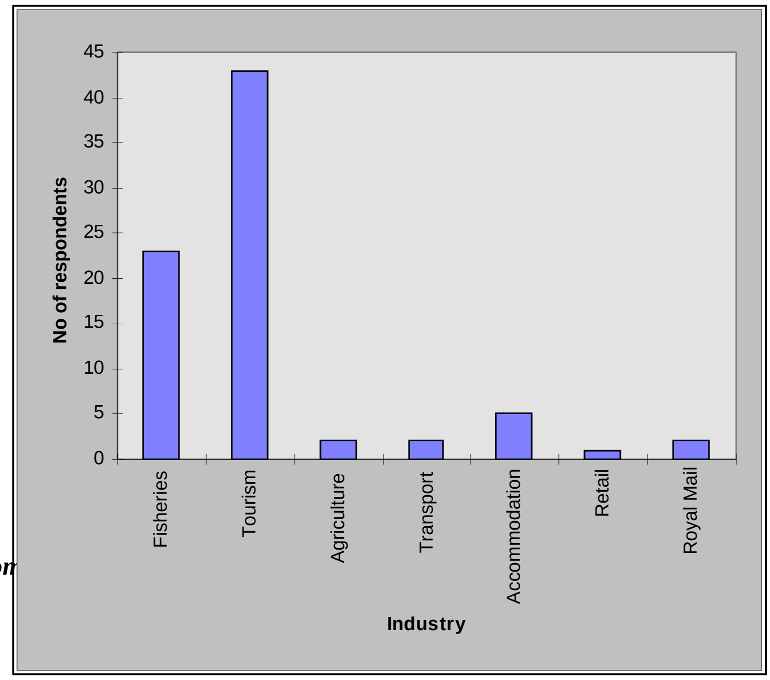
> *it would be good if the season could be extended, it's only really July and August and a bit of September if the weather is good*

4.2.4. The importance of tourism

2.4.1 Perceived importance of tourism as a local industry

Amongst the members of the local community interviewed, tourism is perceived as being the most important industry by 43 people, followed by fisheries (figure 8). Some of the respondents gave more than one answer.

Figure 8 - Perceived importance of tourism in comparison with other industries in Arisaig in terms of jobs and local economy

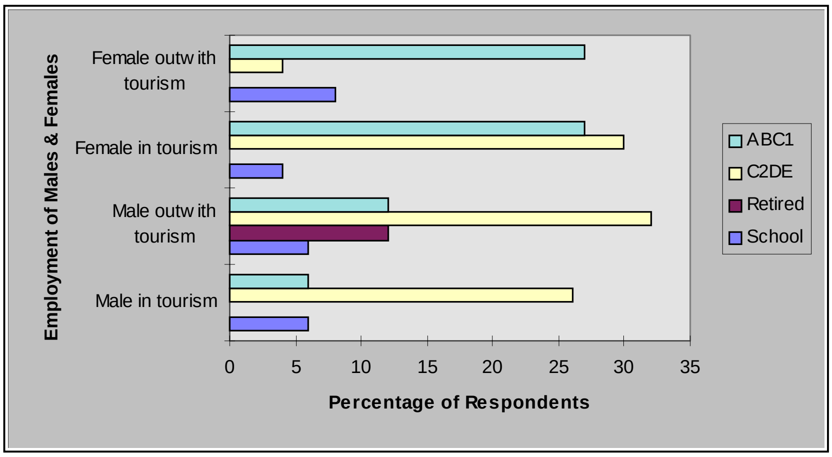


4.2.4.2. Econon

Although it is difficult to calculate the economic impact of tourism in a rural community, a rough gauge of its importance can be obtained by looking at the number of the sample employed in tourism and the kind of jobs its creates.

From the sample taken in Arisaig 38% of males and 62% of females are employed by the tourism industry. However, the type of jobs provided tend to fall into the lower socio economic groupings (as per Appendix VIII) as illustrated in figure 9.

Figure 9 - Socio economic comparisons of male and female employment within and without the tourism industry



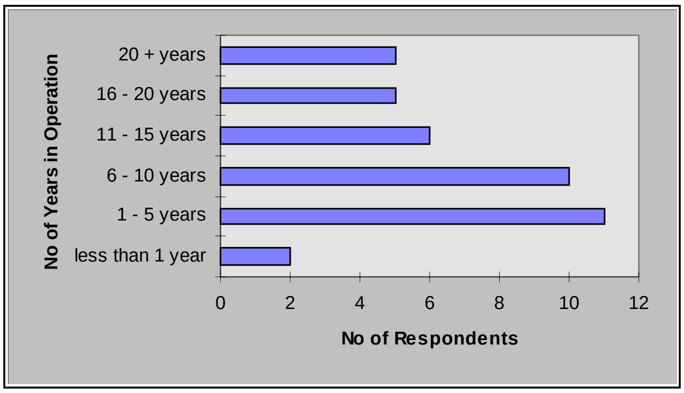
4.3. Marine Mammal Tourism (Objective 3)

4.3.1. The Scottish Position

Postal questionnaires were sent to 75 tour operators offering marine mammal watching in Scotland and 40 were returned (53%), although not all had completed every section. The season for this type of activity tends to be between April and October and the most oft sighted species are Grey and Common seal, Bottlenose and Common dolphin, Harbour porpoise and Minke whale.

This type of tourism is not a new activity with some operators being in business for up to 30 years (figure 10 - n=39).

Figure 10 - Number of years in operation for Scottish marine mammal tour operators



However only 35% of operators stated that marine mammal tourism was their main source of income (n=28) with most supplementing with other industries such as fisheries, crofting and other forms of tourism.

Three quarters of the operators surveyed were members of the Scottish Tourist Board (n=40).

4.3.1.1. Visitor Numbers

Table 7 gives an indication of the future potential of marine mammal tourism by illustrating the rise and fall in visitor numbers (n=26).

Table 7 - Visitor patterns year -on-year in Scottish marine mammal tourism

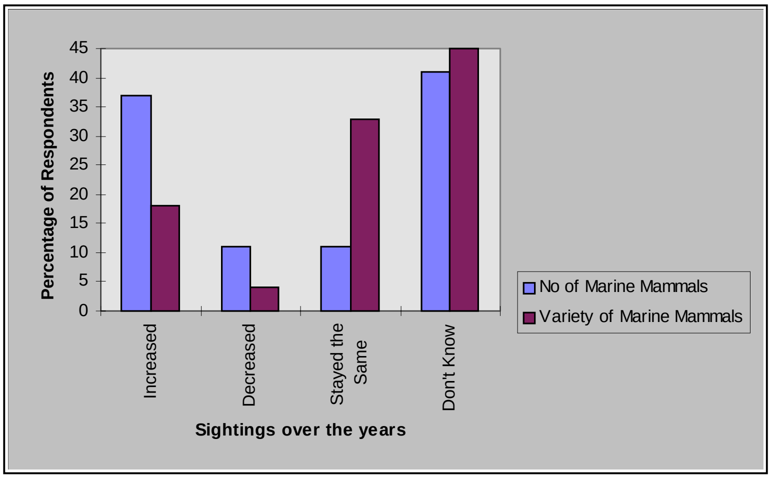
Visitor Numbers	Number of Operators	Percentage
Decreasing	11	42%
Staying the same	7	27%
Increasing by 25%	6	23%
Increasing by 50%	1	4%
Increasing by more than 50%	1	4%
Total	**26**	**100%**

4.3.1.2. Numbers and Variety of Marine Mammals

Marine mammal tourism is very precarious in that it depends on their being something for the tourists to see. Fortunately it would appear that marine mammals have become more prolific over the years, 37%

of operators say that marine mammals are on the increase (n=27), though as figure 11 shows, they are less sure whether the variety of mammals is increasing.

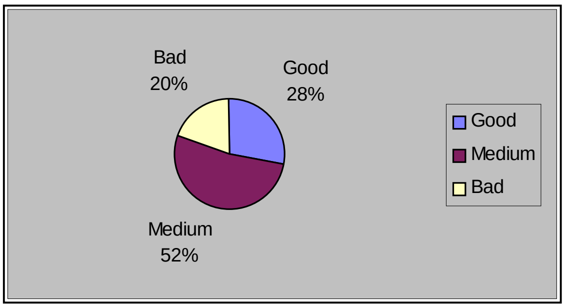
Figure 11 - Trends in the number and variety of marine mammals sighted in Scotland



4.3.1.3. Future Potential of Marine Mammal Tourism

Operators were asked to assess the future viability of their business over the next five years and, as figure 12 shows, the majority were hedging their bets and taking a middle of the road stance (n=25).

Figure 12 - Assessing the future viability of marine mammal tourism operators in Scotland



4.3.2. The Position in Arisaig

4.3.2.1. Arisaig Marine and the mv Shearwater

The mv Shearwater has been in operation for 24 years and is run and owned by Mr Murdo Grant. The venture essentially offers day cruises to the Small Isles (Eigg, Rum and Muck) and acts as a ferry service for locals. The concept of marine mammal watching is used in its advertising and marketing but is seen more as an ‘add on’ to the main trip. Table 8 provides an overview of other issues pertaining to Arisaig Marine.

Table 8 - An overview of the mv Shearwater/Arisaig Marine operation

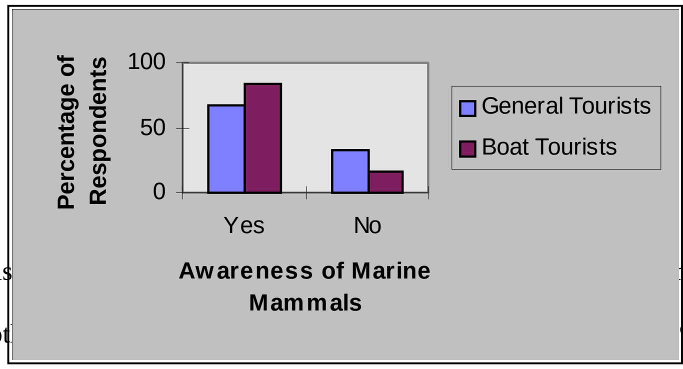
Employees	Visitors	Future Viability	Marine Mammal sightings	Variety of Marine Mammals
5 - all local	Increasing by 25%	Good	Increasing	Increasing

Arisaig Marine is also registered with the Scottish Tourist Board and the Scottish Marine Wildlife Operators Association.

4.3.3. Awareness of Marine Mammals

By looking at the levels of awareness of the fact that marine mammals live off the west coast of Scotland, an indication of whether there is room for growth or development in marine mammal tourism in Arisaig can be established. Figure 13 illustrates the general awareness levels of all visitors in the Arisaig sample - both general visitors and those taking a boat trip.

Figure 13 - Prior awareness of marine mammals in western Scotland demonstrated by visitors to Arisaig

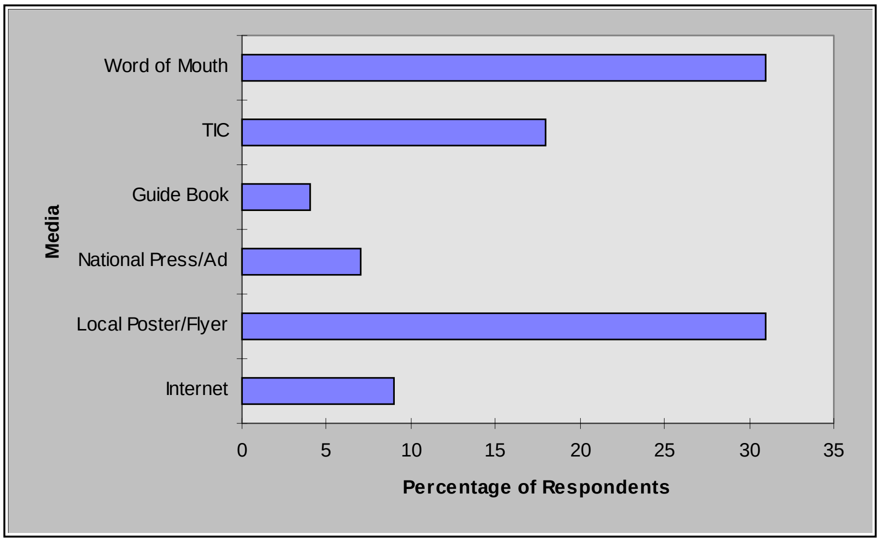


Overall, 72% of all vis ammals living off the west coast of Scot % of boat tourists claimed that the presence of marine mammals had influenced their decision to come to the area.

4.3.4. Awareness of Boat Trips to see Marine Mammals

From the sample of all visitors to Arisaig, 123 (44%, n=279) said they had heard of trips to watch marine mammals before their visit to the area. The most popular media being 'word of mouth' (31%) and a local poster or flyer (31%, n=67) - figure 14 shows the other ways in which people heard about the trips.

Figure 14 - Ways in which visitors to Arisaig learnt about boat trips to view marine mammals



A discussion of these results, and how they relate to the aims and objectives of this report, follows.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

To enable tourism to become sustainable in a rural community such as Arisaig, it is important to draw on a combination of factors. There is a need to look not only at the general principles of sustainability advocated in *Agenda 21,* and the wealth of resultant words of wisdom from the gurus of sustainable tourism (WTTC, 1995; Bramwell et al, 1996; Swarbrooke, 1999), but also at the destination itself, its strengths and weaknesses, how it fits into the surrounding area, the feelings of the local community and the demographics and aspirations of the tourists themselves. It is not enough to hoist up ones skirt and jump on the ‘green’ bandwagon, there must be a conscious commitment from all stakeholders to steer the wagon in the right direction (Honey, 1999).

The local community is the essential underpinning of the sustainable approach and as such should be directly involved in all stages (Murphy, 1991). Fortunately, in Arisaig there is a strong sense of community - there are community run events (Highland Games); self-funding community projects *(Land, Sea and Islands Centre (LSIC),* renovation of the community hall) and a community magazine (*West Word*). There is also strong integration with the Small Isles and Lochaber and established partnerships through groups such as ‘Voluntary Action Lochaber’. The Arisaig Community Council is very much involved in the general area with local representation on management forums like the Sound of Arisaig conservation scheme. Further there are a number of community led schemes which are moving the village towards a more environmentally friendly way of thinking - the promotion of composting bins being just one such venture.

Further, tourism will not be sustainable as an industry in Arisaig unless the season is extended and other problems and potential barriers are counteracted (refer Appendix VII for a summary). It is necessary to take a more lateral approach, the answer may not be to attract significantly more visitors but to increase the spend and lengthen the stay of the current market. It may also be more beneficial to target markets that don’t stick rigidly to the traditional holiday period, after all Arisaig is not likely to have constant sunshine for half the year - unless researchers such as Harrison et al. (1998) are right. It could diversify its product to either attract markets where wet weather is not perceived as a problem (outward bounds, team building holidays) or develop wet weather options (film shows in the *LSIC*, an indoor games competition in the community hall, local speakers on the natural heritage and culture). Other barriers to sustainability in tourism may be overcome by further market diversification, integrated marketing and promotions with other areas - particularly the Small Isles - and an innovative approach to tackling the more political problems - the formation of a petrol buying cooperative in the Highlands?

5.2. Understanding the Market

To aim towards diversification of both the market and the product, it is first necessary to understand ones market to enable informed decisions to be made. There is little point in wrapping an old product in new packaging and hoping that more people will buy it. Therefore, for Arisaig to develop as a destination of the future, an indication of the type of market it attracts along with main motivating factors and levels of satisfaction, will lay the foundations for a sustainable future.

5.2.1. Profile of Visitors to Arisaig

This study discovered that the appeal of Arisaig is not really that of a ‘young’ destination. The vast majority of visitors were over 40 (see previous chapter, section 1) travelling as a couple or with other adults with 88% belonging to the ABC1 socio economic bracket. The tendency was to stay for 2 nights and as 85% of the visitors came from the UK , it would suggest that Arisaig attracts visitors on weekend breaks - people with a higher disposable income and little spare time (this would be in keeping with the findings on social status and lack of children). The fact that over half of those surveyed had undertaken higher education further supports this theory.

5.2.2. Arisaig Visitor Motivations

It is apparent that the boat trip to the Small Isles is a big draw for visitors to Arisaig as over 70% undertake the trip, which is particularly telling in an area with such pronounced visitor loyalty. It comes as no surprise though to find that the seascape and landscape scored the highest ratings for over 90% of all visitors. Even allowing for a possible bias due to the ordering of the question on the survey, this is a significant finding. It is a proportionally higher percentage than industry statistics for Scotland (StarUK, 2000) and again begs the question as to why Dr Brian Hay and the STB Tourism Futures Department, along with the new strategy for Scottish tourism, seem to underestimate the importance of the environment in relation to tourism in Scotland (Hay, 2000; Scottish Executive, 2000).

5.3. Diversifying the Product

As mentioned previously, one of the main problems with tourism in Arisaig, and indeed in Lochaber and Scotland, is that of seasonality (Lochaber Tourism Action Plan, 2000-2003; The Scottish Parliament, 1999b). One of the ways to address this issue would be to look towards extending the season through appealing to other markets. The profile of visitors to Arisaig suggests that there are many groups that are not being reached or simply don't find Arisaig an attractive option when making decisions on where to go on holiday. It also suggests that the type of visitor it does attract may be interested in different tourism experiences.

5.3.1. Development of Marine Mammal Tourism and Ecotourism

According to Honey (1999: 64) most ecotourists fit into the 31 - 50 age bracket, are well educated professionals, with either grown up or no children. This is mirrored in the survey sample of visitors to Arisaig. Add to that the main motivating factor of scenery and with wildlife being rated as being of importance to 70% of the sample and there is almost a ready made market upon which to target ecotourism ventures.

The most obvious form of ecotourism which could be promoted in Arisaig is that connected to wildlife and specifically marine wildlife. *Arisaig Marine* already attracts a high number of visitors, yet even though the numbers are increasing by an estimated 25% year on year, throughout July the mv Shearwater was rarely fully booked. Additionally, as marine mammal sightings usually begin around April/May and are often seen until October, the potential 'season' is considerably longer than the traditional two months.

The problem with promoting tourism of this kind lies not only in its reliance on actually seeing the mammals but, in the case of the Shearwater, the fact that it also serves as a ferry service for locals could lead to conflicts of interest in the use of the resource (Bramwell et al., 1996).

As it is, it would appear that *Arisaig Marine* strikes the right balance between providing a practical service and offering and add-on extra. During they busy season this works well but it may be worth considering promoting the marine mammal side in the shoulder seasons of June and September when the sightings are still fairly regular - sightings of Common dolphins were at their peak in June of this year (Grant, pers comm). It is worthy of contemplation bearing in mind that the biggest market to Arisaig is the kind that is well educated and as they are generally travelling without children, they are not restricted by the school holiday periods. It is also the kind of market that would respond well to some educational input about the marine environment and would probably be willing to spend extra money for a 'quality' experience - especially if some of the money was seen to be reinvested in conservation and community issues.

A further development within the ecotourism context would be to capitalise on the ranger-led walks. Again the type of market Arisaig attracts lends itself to this type of holiday activity and it could be a good money raising venture which could later fund the development of a series of organised walks to attract people to the area.

5.4. Appealing to Other Markets

Aside from the suggestions offered above, there are obvious gaps in the market, in particular from overseas. Though this could simply be a reflection of what is happening in the whole of Scotland, it is possible that the overseas markets are not being reached. Several potential solutions could be offered to this problem, yet the most straightforward and inexpensive way would be to form internet links with other areas. The STB may charge to be linked to their system but there are many other destination 'co-operatives' which market themselves via the internet - a collective of businesses in Speyside and Moray are launching themselves on the internet under the heading of 'Undiluted Scotland: Quality Around Speyside' (Davidson, 2000). As some members of the Arisaig community have been invited to help the island of Eigg institute its own ecotourism profile (Martin, pers com) this would be an ideal opportunity to forge new partnerships.

There is also a surge in the growth of ‘alternative’ thinking, not only in literature but in health, exercise and the general way of life. According to Swanson, 1992 (cited in Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996: 26) this is part of a much bigger paradigm shift toward environmental consciousness and long term thinking. People are dissatisfied with the short term, materialism of the previous decades and are looking to redress the balance. Arisaig is the sort of destination which could easily lend itself to some form of ‘alternative’ festival - combined with a cultural/musical experience it could initially take place at the beginning or end of the main season and be gradually moved out, again helping to lengthen the season. It is also the sort of event that is likely to attract certain sections of the American and Australian market.

Finally, the other notable exceptions from the Arisaig market were those of the youngster and of business. Though it would be neither feasible nor appropriate to suggest that Arisaig become the Ibiza of the north, there are other areas that it could investigate. The SOE connection lends itself to capitalising on the outdoor activities market and with an abundance of camping facilities this could add to the experience. This could also be developed and aimed at business, promoting team building exercise weekends which may then lead to repeat visitors, as it seems that once Arisaig has been experienced it is not often forgotten.

5.5. The Local Community

It is befitting to draw attention to the fact that, of those questioned, the vast majority of locals would welcome more visitors. This is likely to be linked to the high unemployment in the area and the decline of the more traditional industries. It is not sufficient however, to develop tourism at all costs and offer only low paid, temporary positions to the local community which is how it stands at the moment. It is the local community who can invariably make or break a visitor experience, ‘... the quality of social interaction between the provider of the service, such as the waiter ... and the consumers, is part of the ‘product’ being purchased by the tourist’ (Urry, 1990: 40). Conversely, it is worth remembering that equally, the visitor and the tourism industry can make or break a community.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

When making any conclusions from this study, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the study was limited by time and available resources. Ideally the study would have been conducted over a much longer period of time in order to gain a more informed view of the current position and market in Arisaig. However, it has managed to highlight some of the main problems, alongside areas for potential resolution and in doing so has provided some insightful ideas for the possibilities for tourism becoming a sustainable industry in Arisaig.

It is evident that changes in social consciousness have led to the development of some of the present trends in tourism - this is something that has happened gradually over a period of time, picking up speed and gaining momentum since the *Earth Summit* and *Agenda 21.* Urry (1990: 102) goes one stage further suggesting that changes in holiday patterns are related to the consumer perception of the holiday which has itself developed over time 'what now is tourism and what is more generally culture is now relatively unclear'.

To close, despite the best efforts of the industry in anticipating trends, motivating factors or any other issues related to the growth of tourism as a sustainable industry, it takes only one unexpected event to skew the data, for example, had this study taken place during the recent petrol crisis the picture would have been remarkably different. Tourism may not become a completely stable and sustainable industry in Arisaig but with some effort and a long term view, it could contribute to the overall sustainability of the area. Sometimes the best that one can do may not be good enough and then again, sometimes it is. For tourism to grow in a sustainable way in a community such as Arisaig, takes only one step in the right direction, followed by another - often problems are only so if they are perceived to be, after all the flipside of a threat is an opportunity.

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APPENDIX I - PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

- Policy, planning and management are essential to counteract misuse of natural and human resources - due regard should be paid to all stages from design to implementation
- Tourism growth and development should be managed within certain limitation - environmental issues and interests of local people, their heritage and traditions, should be of paramount concern
- Thinking should be long rather than short term - education and research into impacts of tourism should be encouraged
- Sustainable tourism management should be concerned not only with the environment but also with social, political and economic issues
- Human requirements in host communities should be satisfied - there is a need for equality and fairness
- Stakeholders should be kept informed (including the local community) and should be consulted and considered in the decision making process
- Although some ideas with regard to sustainability can be implemented immediately - reduce, recycle, reuse principle - the effects may only be felt long term, don't expect too much too soon
- It is important that an understanding of the operation of market economics is established - this should include the management procedures of the private, public and voluntary sectors in addition to the values and attitudes of the general public
- Compromises may be necessary if conflicting interests in the use of resources are to be resolved - especially important with regard to local communities
- The commitment to sustainable tourism management should extend to all levels of an organisation/destination
- Costs and benefits should be weighed up against what individuals, groups and organisations stand to lose or gain

Adapted from: Bramwell et al (1996): 44 and WTTC (www.wttc.org); Murphy (1991)

APPENDIX II - THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE SCOTTISH TOURISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE

Government White Paper
This Common Inheritance (1990)

results in

Scottish Tourism Coordinating Group (STCG) asks STB to commission a review

Steering Group set up

Steering Group supervises review

results in

Steering Group produce report *Tourism and the Scottish Environment: a Sustainable Approach* (1992)

Steering Group proposals

National Focus:	Local Focus:
Tourism Management Initiative (TMI)	Tourism Management Programmes (TMP)

implementation of proposals

Task Force set up to take forward steering group's proposals

establishment of national and local initiatives

April 1994 Tourism and the Environment Manager for Scotland appointed for TMI	10 pilot area TMPs set up (1993 onwards)

Source: Tourism and Local Economic Development: Developing Sustainable Tourism V1.0: 56

APPENDIX III - INFORMAL CENSUS
OF THE POPULATION OF ARISAIG 1999

Total number of households included in the census - 172. For each household the main income has been cited. There are 16 households where there is a significant secondary earner - these are listed separately. The estimated total population is 71 retired; 195 of working age; 87 children.

Main income of each household

Main Income	Number	Percentage
Private	78	45.5%
Retired	42	24.4%
Public	16	9.3%
Unemployed	14	8.1%
Holiday homes	11	6.4%
Rented	2	1.2%
Empty	3	1.7%
Unknown	6	3.5%

Breakdown of private incomes

Employment	Number	Percentage
Fishing	23	29.5%
Construction	9	11.5%
Hotel	8 (3 seasonal)	10.3%
Transport	6	7.7%
Retail	5	6.4%
Agriculture	4	5.1%
Caravans	5	6.4%
Mechanic	4	5.1%
Restaurant	2	2.3%
Harbour	2	2.3%
Religion	2	2.3%

Of the remaining 9 employed in the private sector, there is 1 person each employed in hydro; railway; BT; army; oil rigs; home help; architecture; golf; odd jobs.

Within fishing there are 8 households dependent on creel fishing or diving, 8 on fish farming, 5 on sea fishing and 2 on whelk collecting. The construction element is mostly joinery but it also include and engineer, fencer and labourer. Transport is largely long distance haulage.

Employment in the public sector

Employment	Number	Percentage
Education	5	31.25%
Health	3	18.75%
Post Office	3	18.75%
Fisheries	2	12.5%
Coast Guard	1	6.25%
Police	1	6.25%
Planning	1	6.25%

17 households contain a significant secondary earner - largely spouses - in 5 cases they are adult children living at home. They are employed as follows:

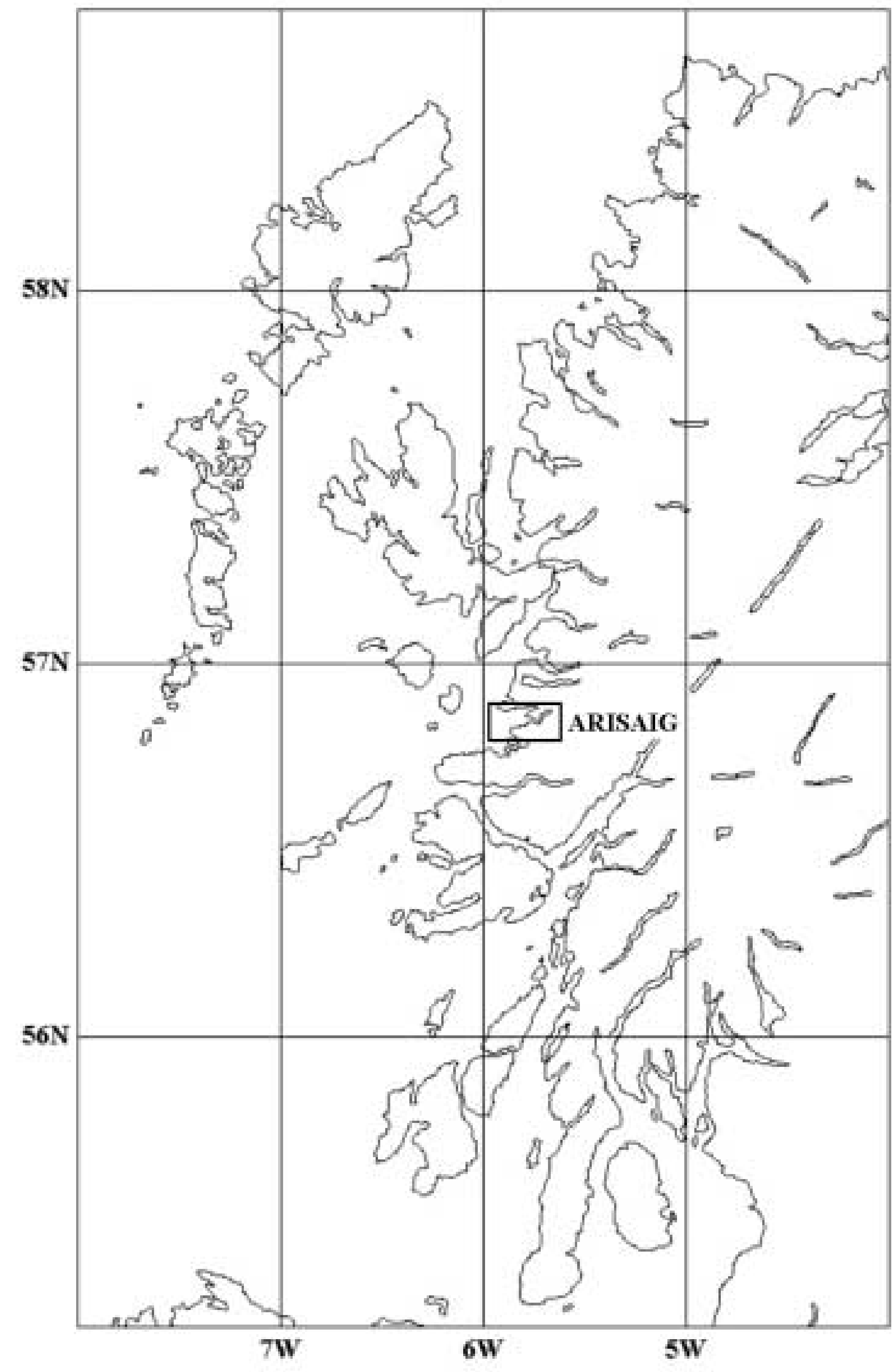
Employment of secondary earner

Employment	Number
Home Help	2
Education	2
Hotel	1
Tourism	2 (both seasonal)
Retail	1
Health	1 (part time)
Labouring	1 (temporary)
Crofting	1
Chalets	1
Engineering	1
Fish Farm	1
Mechanic	1
Railway	1
Transport	1

In addition, there are a number of people who have secondary activities - crofting (11); B & B (8) and caravan and chalet rentals (5).

Source: Anne Martin, Community Worker with Voluntary Action Lochaber's Rural Outreach Project

APPENDIX IV - MAP SHOWING ARISAIG



APPENDIX V - RESOURCE AUDIT - ARISAIG

Location

On the A830 ‘Road to the Isles’ from Fort William to Mallaig - 8 miles from Mallaig. Due to be by-passed next year.

Access

Rail - ‘West Highland Line’ to and from Fort William.

Trains from Arisaig to Mallaig	Trains from Arisaig to Fort William
09.51	06.26 - connections to Glasgow and the South
13.09	10.46 - connections to Glasgow and the South
17.32	16.24 - no connections to London
23.14	18.31 - no connections south of Fort William

Source: Scotrail Information (summer timetable - less trains in winter)

Bus - service operated by local bus company *Shiel Buses*

Buses from Arisaig to Mallaig	Buses from Arisaig to Acharacle	Buses from Arisaig to Fort William
08.14 - Mon-Fri - school days	16.08 - Mon-Fri - school days	09.30 - Mon-Fri*
08.35 - Mon-Fri - school days		
08.20 - Mon-Fri - school hols		
09.30 - Mon-Fri		
14.00 - Mon-Fri		
14.45 - Mon-Fri*		

* Also on Saturdays from 3 July to 23 September

Source: Shiel Buses timetable

The steam train also passes through Arisaig in the summer but passengers can neither board nor alight at the village.

Accommodation

- 3 Hotels - only the *Arisaig Hotel**** is actually in the village. The *Arisaig House Hotel***** appeals to the ‘exclusive’ market.
- *The Old Library Lodge* *** is a restaurant with rooms.
- 2 Guest Houses - *Kilmartin Guest House* *** and *Leven House* **
- 8 B & Bs - one with ensuite facilities - no evening meals
- Around 14 caravan/camping sites between Arisaig and Morar
- Self Catering - 4 with ***, 1 with ****, 1 with *

Eating Establishments

- *The Old Library Lodge* restaurant
- meals in the hotels
- *Upstairs, Downstairs Cafe* (also does take-aways)

General Facilities

- public toilets
- post-office
- most of the campsites have laundry facilities, shower blocks etc
- marina

Shops

- 2 gift shops - plus the *Land, Sea & Islands Centre*
- Spar shop

Attractions

Land, Sea & Islands Centre - opened July 1999. Community project developed in the old smiddy. The centre comprises a gift shop and an exhibition detailing the history of the area, its war-time connections with the SOE, its relationship with the film industry and an overview of local wildlife. There is also a stock of leaflets promoting various local ventures and the staff, all of whom live locally, help with tourist information whenever possible.

Events

- Ranger led walks twice a week (July and August) - free of charge
- Arisaig Highland Games - final week of July - Traigh Golf Course, 3 miles outside the village. Same venue for the Mallaig & Morar Highland Games which take place in the first week of August.
- Arisaig Regatta - second week of August.

Tour Operators

- *Arisaig Marine*: inter-island day cruises to the small isles of Eigg, Rum and Muck. Daily sailings at 11.00 am the boat returns between 5.30pm - 6pm (April/May - September). Also serves as a local ferry service for locals.
- *Bespoke Highland Tours, Cambusdarach:* tours start from Glasgow/Edinburgh (March - November). Self-led cycling, walking tours arranged, including accommodation. Self-drive customised tours arranged in West Highlands.

APPENDIX VI - SWOT ANALYSIS - ARISAIG

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• beautiful scenery (landscape & seascape) • safe and secure holiday destination • rich history and culture • revered Highland hospitality • area which appeals to specialised markets - marine mammal tourism; hill walkers; bird watchers; those interested in general history and particularly SOE connection • only 3 hours drive from central Scotland and from Inverness in the North • 'gateway' to the Small Isles • situated on 'Road to the Isles' • strong sense of community • good partnerships - especially within Lochaber and with the Small Isles	• high rainfall • lack of wet weather facilities • lack of clear identity/image • shortage of accommodation in winter - only one hotel stays open • high seasonality • remote - problems with high fuel costs and a public transport system which isn't fully integrated
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
• to promote Arisaig as a 'green' tourist destination • to lengthen the season and increase tourist spend • to diversify the product - connection with SOE; marine mammal tourism; ecotourism • to develop an integrated marketing package with the Small Isles • to work with other areas in Scotland to offer 'linked' holidays • to develop a fuel buying co-operative • to develop a cultural/musical event • to develop a programme of minor 'events' in the *Land, Sea & Islands Centre* and the newly refurbished village hall • to capitalise on IT - bring Arisaig to the world • worldwide growth and heightened awareness of ecotourism and 'green' issues	• competition from similar and more easily accessible destinations in the Highlands • lack of funding • lack of awareness of main tourism markets • competition from other 'whale watching' ventures • uncertainty of future of 'West Highland Line' • marginal viability of many tourism ventures • downward trend in tourism market in Scotland • carrying capacity may be exceeded if more visitors arrive in July/August and tourism season isn't extended • erosion and other negative impacts on natural resources

APPENDIX VII - PROBLEMS FOR RURAL DESTINATIONS

Potential Problem	Relevance to Arisaig

Transport - regarded as a core component of the tourism industry - the more difficult an area is to get to, the less inclined visitors may be to visit it - unless its remoteness is one of its ‘unique’ attractions (Baum, 1998).	The *Lochaber Transport Forum* is currently investigating problems concerned with lack of integration in transport services - the last London *National Express* coach arrives in Glasgow at 18.10, missing the last *Scottish City Link* coach to Fort William by 10 minutes (Strain, 2000).
Weather - obviously not confined to rural destinations, the west coast of Scotland is regarded as being one of the wettest areas in the UK and poor weather is cited as being the most unattractive feature by visitors to Scotland - though English visitors seem to be the least concerned with this issue (StarUK, 2000).	The lack of wet weather facilities in Arisaig - other than the Land, Sea & Islands Centre and the drinking and eating establishments - presents a problem for visitors in bad weather. However, if current research on global warming is to be believed, this may soon not be a problem (Harrison et al, 1998).
Carrying Capacity - relating to the amount of visitors an area can comfortably accommodate before negative impacts occur (Barrow, 1999; Honey, 1999). The carrying capacity of an area is notoriously difficult to evaluate and depends very much on the type of market the area is looking to attract and visitor/community perceptions of the destination (Swarbrooke, 1999).	In order to market itself appropriately, Arisaig needs to look at its available resources (natural and built), it’s potential market and the perceptions and aspirations of both visitors and locals alike - a rough idea with regard to the carrying capacity of the area could then be calculated. In simple terms, if there is no winter accommodation it would be pointless marketing itself as a winter destination. Likewise, too many visitors in the winter season may mean the community and resources are under constant pressure with no time to recover.
Marketing - in order for a destination to not only match supply with demand but also to diversify its product, it is essential that it markets itself appropriately (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998). This is of particular relevance to sustainable tourism as it is not enough to simply attract more visitors, they have to be the right type and at the right time. It is not unknown for a destination to de-market itself at certain times to avoid damaging resources (Buhalis, 1999), as per carrying capacity.	As part of the Highlands and specifically Lochaber, it is important that any individual marketing of Arisaig is in keeping with existing strategies for the area. Fortunately the *Lochaber Tourism Action Plan* has the issue of sustainability firmly at its core. Further, any marketing strategy adopted by Arisaig should take into consideration its position as part of the ‘Road to the Isles’ and as the gateway to the Small Isles - an integrated marketing strategy would be the most effective way forward, and the issue of partnerships should be very much at the fore (Murphy, 1991; Middleton & Hawkins, 1998).
Politics - within the tourism industry there are many different bodies with very different, not necessarily compatible, agendas. On top of this there are broader issues with regard to general politics and their possible implications for the tourism industry and individual areas and destinations.	The issues of high petrol prices - with prices in the Highlands being higher than anywhere else in the UK, increasing by 24% over the past six years (The Scottish Parliament, 1999c) - and lack of a fully integrated public transport system, may hinder its development as a competitive destination. On the plus side, integrated transport (The Scottish Parliament, 1999a) and the problems concerning rural petrol prices, are very much on the political agenda at the moment.

APPENDIX VIII - SOCIO ECONOMIC GROUPINGS

Social Grade	Social Status	Examples of Occupations
A	Upper Middle Class	Doctor, Lawyer, Accountant, Editor, Bank Manager, Board Director/Manager, Self Employed, Farmers with 10+ employees, Senior Buyer, Professor, Pilot
B	Middle Class	Minister, Teacher, Civil Servant, Journalist, Pharmacist, newly qualified Professional, Area Sales Manager, Senior Manager/Executive, Self Employed with 5-24 employees
C1	Lower Middle Class	Nurses, Bank Clerk, Student, Junior Manager, Clerk, Typist, Telephonist, Salesman, Foreman, Draughtsman, Police Sergeant, Self Employed with small business
C2	Skilled Working Class	Agricultural Worker, Bricklayer, Carpenter, Plumber, Painter, Skilled Miner, Electrician, Bus Driver, Shop Assistant, Baker, Police Constable
D	Semi Skilled and Unskilled Working Class	Fisherman, Gardener, Unskilled Miner, Cleaner, Traffic Warden, Porter, Milkman, Taxi Driver
E	Households at Lowest Level of Subsistence	Pensioner, Widow, Casual Labourer, Part time Clerical, those dependent on sickness, unemployment and supplementary benefit

Source: Information supplied by Strathearn Advertising