

Gutic, J. (2023) Tourism recovery plans by UK Destination Management Organisations (DMOs): a new sustainable chapter, or a return to business-as-usual? Chapter 27 *in*

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A) Chapter abstract:

This chapter evaluates the extent to which sustainable principles have been included on the destination recovery plans implemented by British Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in response to Covid-19 and their subsequent quarantines during the period 2020 – 21. The aim of the chapter is to explore if this pause in activities created by the Covid-19 crisis was used by UK DMOs as an opportunity to develop sustainable destination management plans, or alternatively, led them to prioritise financial income as the key driver in their recovery. The chapter also identifies the goals, motivations, performance indicators and strategies applied by those DMOs which developed post-Covid tourism destination recovery plans, with particular focus on those which have decided to include sustainability elements in their plans. The chapter concludes by developing a set of principles that other Destination Management Organisations could apply when intending to develop sustainable management plans for their destinations in response to future major operational disruptions.

Keywords: sustainable destination, recovery plan, DMO, destination management, crisis response, VERB Model.

B) Research significance:

According to Goodwin (2017), one of the management issues being recognised by destinations back in 2005 was an excessive number of tourists, with the word ‘overtourism’ becoming popular as a social media hashtag in 2017.

Furthermore, prior to the occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the negative effects from tourism on destinations in general, and the linked issues of over-

tourism and excessive economic over-dependency in particular, have led to both local residents and authorities to demand changes in the way the industry was operating, with the cities of Venice and Barcelona often mentioned as representative examples of the worst effects that overtourism could create (Hospers, 2019). Most of these demands focused on the need for tourism to become more sustainable by regulating their contribution to climate change, prioritising the social wellbeing of residents and protecting destinations' natural, cultural and social assets, while still providing a fair and equitable livelihood to all stakeholders involved in the industry (Gowreesunkar & Seraphin, 2019a), (Gowreesunkar & Seraphin, 2019b), (Kennell, 2020), (Shing & Ling-Hin, 2019), (Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020).

However, the unprecedented impact created by Covid-19 on tourism destinations, along with the restrictions placed by governments on both visitors and the industry, forced the global tourism industry to grind to halt and eventually, come to a complete stop. According to the UNWTO, worldwide international tourist arrivals fell by 70% between January to August 2020, equating to 700 million fewer tourists travelling and a global loss of US\$ 730 billion in revenues (UNWTO, 2020).

This impact was equally felt in the United Kingdom, with Visit Britain reporting a 73% decline in 2020 in visit levels compared with 2019, along with a decline of 78% on inbound visitor spent compared with 2019 results (VisitBritain, 2020a). Similarly, in August 2020 the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) reported that more than 90,000 jobs had been lost in the UK tourism industry and its associated supply chain (ABTA, 2020a), while by November of the same year they estimated 134,000 potential job losses and a 93% reduction in bookings compared with the same period in 2019 (ABTA, 2020b). Even after the end of the third UK nation-wide lockdown had been announced in June 2021, a third of businesses had only partially reopened, while 47% of businesses still had more than half their capacity available for the summer period and more than half of businesses were expecting that it would take them more than a year before their business turn a profit again (NCTA, 2021).

Along with the significant economic shock and job losses created by the enforced pause in most tourism destinations, the notable absence of negative impacts did not escape the attention of many academic practitioners, local communities and tourism management bodies, for whom Covid-19 acted as a trigger that led to renewed demands for a 'reset' in the relationship of visitors with destinations and the implementation of more sustainable forms of tourism, such as calls for national governments to support local business entities rather than multinationals, and the promotion of small to medium tourism enterprises (Brouder, 2020), (Cheer, 2020), (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, 2021), (Lew et al., 2020), (Sigala, 2020). The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent significant disruption to tourism business operations across the globe has also led to calls for regional tourism authorities and DMOs to develop more sustainable forms of travel that consider the views and provide benefits to local stakeholders, and protect the environment on which both locals and tourists depend (Montvydaitė & Labanauskaitė, 2021).

Understandably, confronted with the widespread collapse of their national tourism industry and its effect on their national economies and economic growth, many national governments took the decision to prioritise small tourism businesses for economic support, with many EU countries focusing on providing liquidity and fiscal reliefs to businesses that operate on a smaller scale (Korže & Škabar, 2020). However, it would seem that in the rush to provide economic support, the demands for re-establishing the tourism industry in a more sustainable and 'kinder' manner have been either bypassed; co-opted into non-binding, oftentimes vague statements of good intent to take sustainable action in the future (ABTA, 2020c); or even labelled by some academics as a 'war on tourism' which seeks to damage the purpose and welfare of the industry (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2021).

The use of economic incentives in an attempt to 're-start' or return tourism to 'pre-Covid-19 normal' levels in destinations is also observed by Punzon & Pastor (2020), who noted that from nearly 170 countries who have registered national recovery plans to alleviate the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, almost 150 have implemented economic and financial strategies to support tourism employment. Furthermore, their detailed analysis of the policies undertaken by

Spain, Italy and France evidenced that fiscal and monetary policies are almost exclusively being adopted as the only measures for restarting tourism, without consideration for sustainability issues (Punzon & Pastor, 2020). Some authors have even equated the concept of sustainable destination recovery with the idea that DMOs should market to, and increase the number of, high-spending visitors that were visiting prior to the Covid-19 disruption (Tsai, 2021).

The United Kingdom has not escaped this trend of either focusing the recovery of the tourism industry through an economic and fiscal lens, or couching the focus on economic recovery into wider references to sustainable changes, but with a notable absence of demands for policy reform, and with the expectation that destinations will become more sustainable through the implementation of voluntary actions and by making others actors aware of the need for sustainability (ABTA, 2020c), or by the government supporting increased sustainability through additional financing and transition to green technologies that support, rather than replace, the tourism industry status quo (DCMS, 2021a). An example of the focus on financial support is the Covid-19 Destination Management Resilience Scheme launched in early 2020 by the UK Government through the national tourism authority (VisitBritain, 2020b), which solely focused on helping DMOs to continue to pay employees to adapt their communications to tourism businesses in relation with the COVID-19 outbreak. More nuanced calls for sustainable reform of the UK tourism industry but without any firm policy commitments are represented by ABTA's 'Tourism for Good' recovery plan (ABTA, 2020c), while the UK Government published "The Tourism Recovery Plan", which included a sustainability section consisting of a collection of disparate, punctual and sometimes contradictory policies relating to the environment and sustainability, again without any targets or commitments to challenge the industry's continuous growth model (DCMS, 2021a).

Given the contradiction between the calls for taking advantage of the Covid-enforced pause of the tourism industry as an opportunity to reset it into a new sustainable paradigm, and the fact that most recovery plans available at the time of writing were concentrating on economic recovery through the provision of estate intervention, financial support and renewed marketing efforts to bring destinations back to their former 'normal', it is this pertinent to ask how these seemingly

contrasting policy directions are being played out at destination management level. More specifically, this provides the opportunity to examine if UK DMOs are recognising their responsibility to 'manage' their respective destinations by taking advantage of potential access to unprecedented sources of funding and an industry on a standstill in order to deliver meaningful sustainable change in the way their destinations operate, or instead are being driven by economic imperatives to return into consumptive, economic-driven, unsustainable forms of tourism. This is a novel contribution in the research of tourism responses to Covid-19, as the limited research on the role that DMOs have adopted to respond to this crisis has to date focused on either evaluating the effectiveness of their marketing and competitive responses as the sole aspect of their recovery strategies (Filippo, Bencivenga, Colangelo, & Pepe, 2020), or the impacts that Covid-19 will have on both tourism research projects and the performance measures used by DMOs (Johnston-Laberge, 2020).

The aim of this chapter is thus to explore if UK DMOs have used Covid-19 as an opportunity to make their destinations more sustainable, or instead has led to the prioritisation of economy-driven, 'business as usual' approaches to recovery, with this aim explored through the following research objectives:

- Does the effect that Covid had on UK destinations and the subsequent review of tourism operations by their DMOs has led to recovery plans that prioritise sustainability or economic recovery?
- What are the specific factors that have led UK DMOs to prioritise sustainability in their post-Covid destination recovery plans?
- For those DMOs choosing to prioritise sustainability, is it possible to identify strategies and tools that can be exported to other destinations recovering from operational disruptions?

C) Methods:

According to the UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2021b), there are "an estimated 150 DMOs in England", but it would appear there is no central register or contact list for DMOs in Great Britain, so the total population size

of UK DMOs is uncertain, nor there seems to be an accessible way to contact them. Instead, the researcher contacted the national tourism boards for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and requested the contact details of their respective DMOs. All tourism boards replied except for Wales, but only the Northern Ireland Board supplied full contact details, while the representatives of the English and Scottish Boards provided partial public lists of names without contact details due to data protection restrictions. The names of 15 Destination Management Partnerships for Wales were obtained from a Business Wales webpage (Business Wales, 2021). Once the names of DMOs were identified, potential contact details were obtained from their individual websites or any other public sources available on Google. The composition of the sample of DMOs used for this research is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: number of DMOs that were invited to provide information about their destination recovery plans, by UK country.

Country	Number of contacted DMOs
England	50
Scotland	49
Wales	15
Northern Ireland	3
Total	117

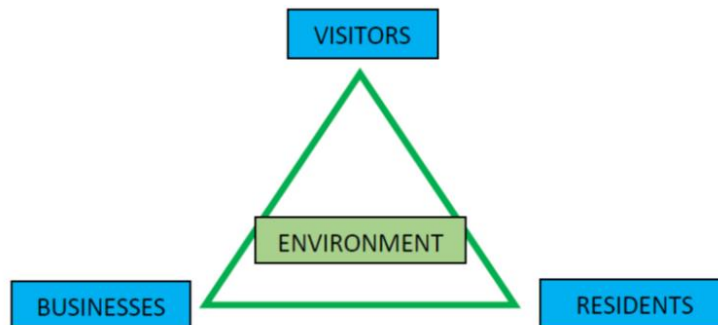
All identified participants were contacted via email, which included an explanation of the research purpose and a web link to an online survey. In addition, a representative of the English Tourism Board, VisitBritain, kindly agreed to post a link to the survey on a Slack online message board subscribed by English DMOs. When clicked, the link opened on an informed consent page which restated the research purpose and asked respondents to identify if they had developed post-Covid tourism recovery plans, and if so, the expected outcomes for these, the performance indicators used to measure destination recovery and the recovery strategies and motivations that guided the goals of their recovery plans. Although participants were offered the opportunity to name their organisation, this question was optional and the wording instructed respondents to leave it blank if they wished to remain anonymous. The online questionnaire was piloted by the CEO of a DMO, who was requested to indicate areas for clarification or additional questions that

should be included on the survey, but no significant changes were made after the pilot.

From the 117 DMO organisations that were contacted, 28 provided responses during a period of two weeks, after which the survey was closed. This equates to a response rate of nearly 24%. In terms of the respondents' location, apart from four anonymous responses, nine respondents were English DMOs and the remaining 14 were Scottish. The questionnaire results were exported from the JISC Online Surveys webpage into an Excel database and analysed.

For the purpose of defining sustainability in a tourism destination, the questionnaire used the VERB Model of sustainable destination management (DCMS, 2009) to define the concept to respondents (Figure 1). The VERB model illustrates the interaction between visitors, the tourist businesses that serve them, the community that hosts them and the environment. The underlying assumption from the VERB model is that for sustainable tourism to succeed, the following four conditions must be met: the **visitor** must be satisfied with all aspects of the tourism product; tourism **businesses** must be sufficiently profitable to allow for reinvestment and growth; the host **community's** present character and future aspirations must be accounted for; and tourism must be developed and operated within the limits the **environment** can support. Tourism can only be regarded as sustainable if its interests do not conflict with any of the four VERB components and to guarantee this, the management of a destination should deliver satisfying and fulfilling experiences to visitors; a healthy economy and profitable businesses; a satisfied community which sees its culture enriched and appreciated; and a natural and built environments that are protected and enhanced (DCMS, 2009).

Figure 1: the VERB Model (DCMS, 2009, adapted by the author)



D) Results and discussion:

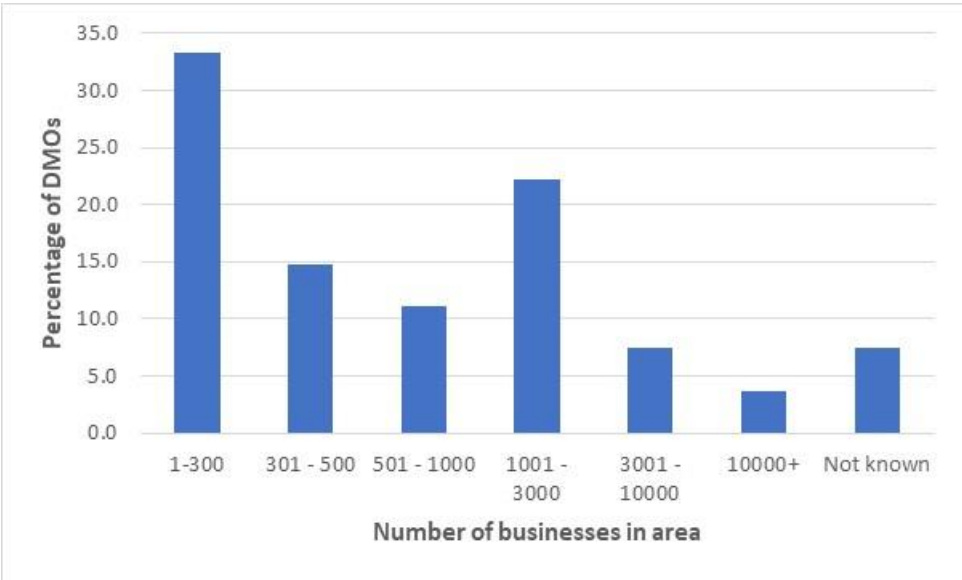
From the 28 responses received, a third (67%) of the DMOs were long-established organisations with more than 10 years in operation, with the second most frequent operational lifespan being between 6 to 9 years (22%). None of the participating organisations had less than 3 years in operation, which suggests that most of these DMOs have both enough experience and understanding of their destination to recognise their needs, and also the ability to formulate appropriate management plans in response to these.

In terms of their size, 13 DMOs (46%) have areas of responsibility equivalent to a UK region or county, while interestingly, two declared that their management area was an island. The remaining 12 organisations (45%) were operating on the smaller administrative areas of council, district or parish in equal proportions. A crosstabulation of survey results suggest that a positive correlation exist between a DMO's size or area of operations and the likelihood they have engaged with post-Covid recovery actions, with all large DMOs having developed recovery plans, while three out of the four parish-sized organisations, the smallest possible size of a DMO's area of responsibility, not having done so.

In contrast, the participating DMO's were much more varied in terms of the approximate number of tourism and hospitality businesses in their area of operations, as evidenced by Figure 2. The majority of DMOs (33%) had fewer than 300 tourism and hospitality businesses in their area of operations, with the second most frequent response being between 1001 and 3000 businesses (22%).

Considering that in 2019 there were more than 241,000 tourism businesses in the UK According to the Tourism Alliance (2019), and taking the lower and upper values on each response bracket, the participating DMOs have responsibility over between 24,000 to 56,000 businesses, equivalent to a 10% to 23% of the country’s tourism industry, which indicates that in spite of the small response rate, the participating DMOs oversee a significant proportion of UK tourism and hospitality businesses. However, it is likely that the Tourism Alliance (2019) 241,000 businesses figure for UK tourism firms is a considerable underestimate, so these figures must be approached with caution.

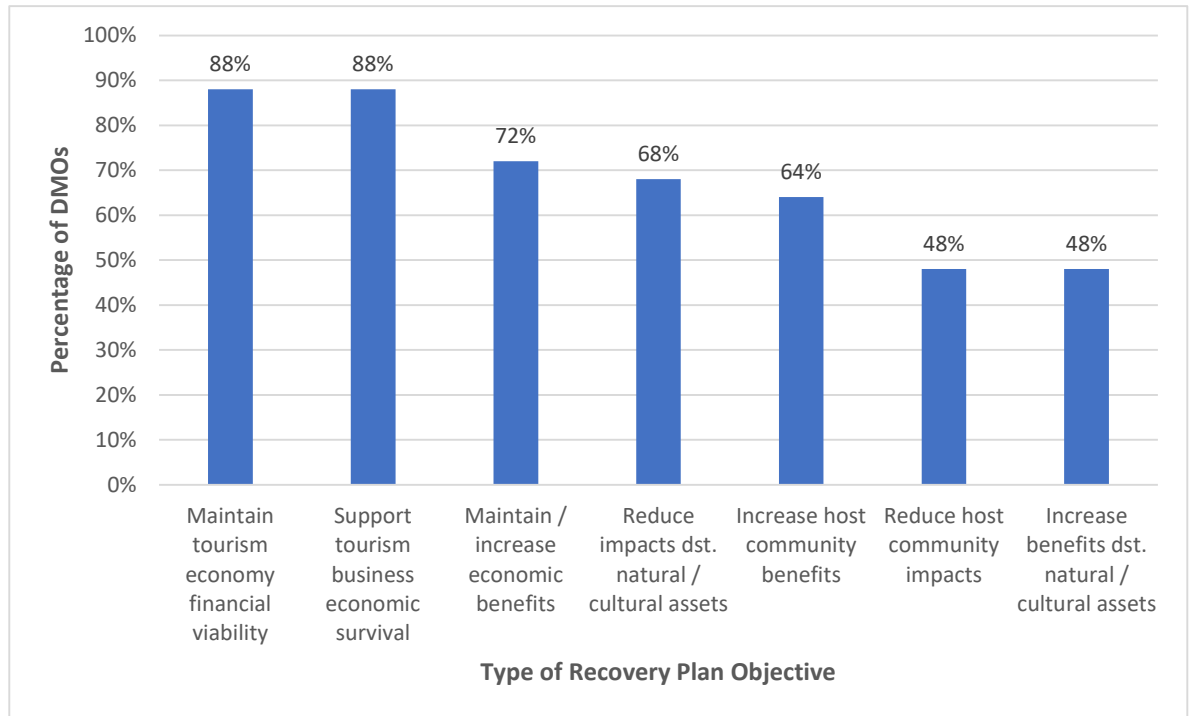
Figure 2: Number of tourism businesses in DMO’s area of operations (%)



Out of 27 DMOs, 22 (82%) revealed that they had implemented a review or a recovery plan for tourism in their area in response to Covid-19 and the associated lockdowns, while another two considered that their management plans were flexible enough to deal with Covid-related disruptions. When asked to identify the objectives that their tourism recovery plans aimed to achieve, virtually all respondents (88%) mentioned that maintaining the economic viability of the tourism industry, or supporting the economic survival of tourism businesses, were their two key priorities. This was closely followed by a desire to maintain or increase benefits from tourism to the local economy (Figure 3). This economic-focused approach is justifiable given the profound economic shock caused by Covid-19 and the subsequent mobility restrictions that affected the tourism industry, and correlates

with the use of economic incentives and financial strategies widely observed by Punzon & Pastor (2020) as a mechanism to support tourism employment.

Figure 3: Type of objective included in DMOs recovery plans for tourism (%)



However, more than half of the DMOs took advantage of the pause created by Covid-19 and also included recovery objectives that fit the principles of Sustainable Tourism according to the VERB model, with the reduction of impacts to the natural and cultural assets (68%), and the increase of tourism benefits to host communities (64%) being at the forefront of these sustainable goals (Figure 3). The sustainable vision of some of these DMOs is encapsulated by the additional comments made by two respondents, one stating that their plan aimed to “*spread tourism geographically away from honeypot locations, promote all year-round opportunities, promote trend in experiences*”, while another stated that they wished to save “*some places for local community and not promoting them to tourists*”. As the comments reveal, there is a clear desire to avoid visitor overcrowding and damage to popular tourism sites, protect local communities from overtourism and develop more sustainable and meaningful tourism experiences for visitors.

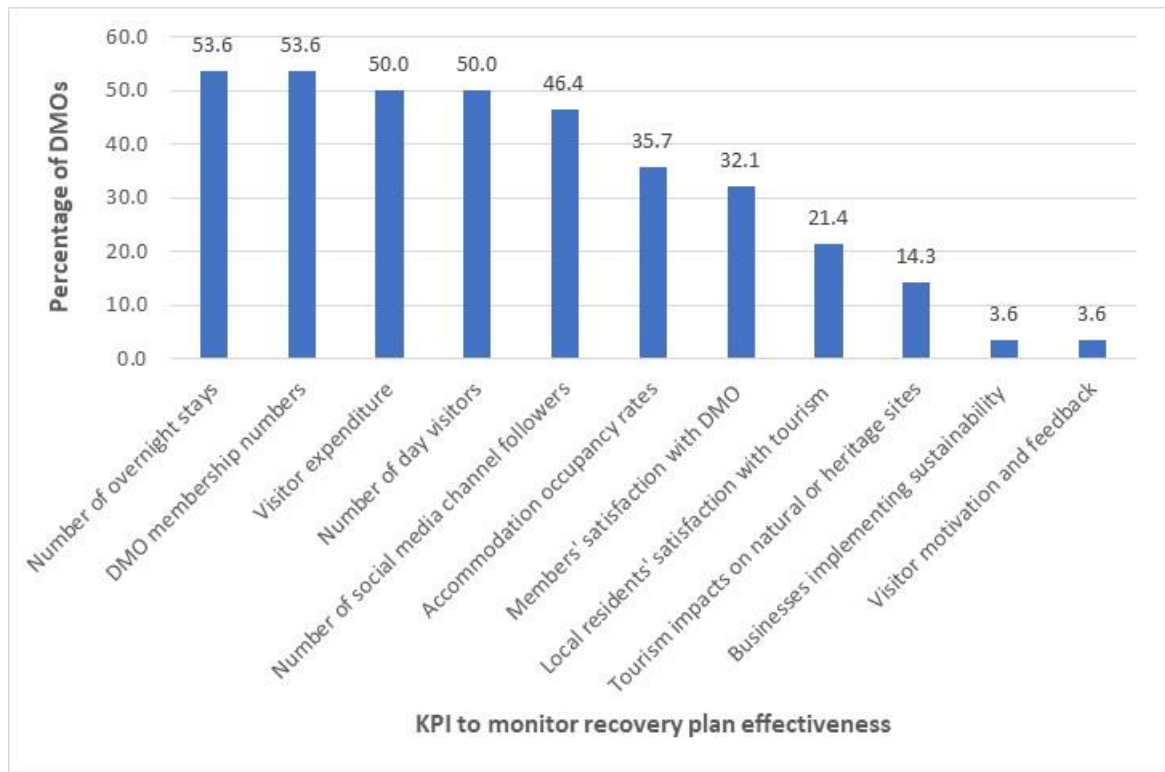
However, although Covid-19 motivated some DMOs to consider sustainability as part of their tourism recovery plans, it is clear that its inclusion is primarily a by-product, rather than a primary driver, of the planning process, as evidenced when asked what were the key motivations for their plans (Table 2), with the two most frequent motivations being either supporting the recovery of the tourism industry as a way to protect the viability of the local economy (68%), or because tourism is regarded as one of the local economy main drivers (57%). Although half of the DMOs felt that Covid-19 has enabled them to pause and reflect on the way they were conducting their operations, only a quarter decided they should be addressing tourism’s negative effects as part of their recovery plans, and less than six DMOs were aiming to specifically address the consequences of these negative effects over the community or the environment. Moreover, only one of the 28 DMOs specifically claimed their plan to be motivated by a desire to *“promote sustainable tourism as a priority and align green recovery to economic recovery”*. Interestingly and in strong contrast to the limited research on DMO responses to Covid-19 (Filippo, Bencivenga, Colangelo, & Pepe, 2020), marketing initiatives seem to have almost no relevance as a motivation for recovery plans, with only one DMO concerned with maintaining brand awareness through the pandemic.

Table 2: DMOs key motivation for developing tourism recovery plans (%)

MOTIVATION FOR RECOVERY PLAN	PERCENTAGE
Supporting tourism recovery protects local economic viability	67.9
Tourism is one of main drivers of local economy	57.1
Covid created opportunity to re-examine operations	50.0
Covid made tourism positive effects more evident	39.3
Covid made tourism negative effects more evident	25.0
To address tourism’s negative effects on environment / heritage	21.4
To address tourism’s negative effects on host community	17.9
Promote sustainable tourism / green economic recovery	3.6
Maintaining brand awareness of the destination	3.6

The fact that most DMOs were prioritising economic over any sustainable considerations is further evidenced by the key performance indicators that they are planning to use to measure the success or effectiveness of their recovery plans, with the four most frequently mentioned KPIs by half of all DMOs relating to either visitor or DMO membership numbers, or the economic effects arising from their behaviour, i.e. overnight stays and expenditure (Figure 4). In contrast with the fact that marketing was not considered a motivation in almost any recovery plan, nearly half of the DMOs (46%) consider the number of followers on their social media channels an important indicator of their recovery plan performance, clearly pointing to a dissonance between the goals that most DMOs have included on their plans and what they will measure to evaluate their success. Only one performance indicator than can be clearly linked to the VERB Model, namely host community satisfaction with tourism, was mentioned as a KPI by six DMOs (20%), and it is one the few they could use as evidence of tourism being sustainable on their destinations. Only four organisations were planning to monitor another performance indicator that can be clearly linked to sustainability, i.e. the level of impact from tourism over natural or cultural assets as part of their recovery plan performance, and two DMOs were planning to include one other sustainable measurement as part of their KPIs: the number of businesses implementing sustainability measures, or the level of visitor satisfaction and motivation to visit. Concerningly, six DMOs (21%) had recovery plans in place, but they did not provide any KPIs to measure their performance.

Figure 4: Type of Key Performance Indicators monitored to assess the effectiveness of DMO recovery plan (%)



After being given a definition and an illustration of the VERB Model (DCMS, 2009), 68% of DMOs stated that their recovery plan was either based on, or included elements of, destination sustainability. A further 32% stated that they have applied a specific sustainable tourism framework or guidance on their tourism recovery plan. From the 10 frameworks that were mentioned, only three could be clearly identified to their source: the European Tourism Indicator System (European Union, 2013), VisitBritain's Principles for Developing Destination Management Plans (VisitEngland, 2014) and the UNESCO Technical Guidelines for Biosphere Reserves (UNESCO, 2021). Although the UNWTO or 'UNWTO guidelines' were mentioned twice, this could potentially refer to anyone of four documents, including their Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook (UNWTO, 2013). In addition, the VisitScotland's Scotland Outlook 2030 (Visit Scotland, 2020) was mentioned as a sustainable tourism framework used for planning, although in reality this is a strategic visioning document rather than a handbook or guidance manual. The most frequent reasons provided to use these guidance documents were because they

are easy to modify to suit the characteristics and needs of different destinations, or because they are focused on key factors which are relevant to most destinations. In addition, all DMOs were invited to describe in three words the terms that best described the sustainability elements of their recovery plans. These words were matched to each of the four elements of the VERB Model, which resulted in 13 Visitor-related words, the most frequent relating to 'responsible'; 10 words relating to Business, with the most frequent being 'local' and 'collaboration'. There were 9 words attributable to Environment terms, the most frequent being 'protect', and 6 for Residents, with the most frequent being 'respect'. This indicates that the respondents could indeed make a clear connection between their plans and the four elements of sustainable tourism included in the VERB Model, with the four most common words being "respect / responsible / protect / local".

E) Conclusion and recommendations:

The aim of this chapter and one of its objectives was to explore if UK DMOs used Covid-19 as an opportunity to make their destinations more sustainable, or instead they prioritised economy recovery as the main objective. The survey results return a mixed picture, were almost all the DMOs are prioritising some form of economic recovery as part of their destination management plans, but also at least half of them also have included recovery objectives that relate to sustainable elements according to the VERB Model.

A second objective was to identify the motivations behind the DMOs' recovery plans and for most, these were economic-driven, as evidenced by their two most frequent motivations mentioned for preparing their plans, namely supporting the recovery of the tourism industry, or protecting the viability of the local economy because tourism is regarded as the main driver for it. The economic motivations behind most DMOs' recovery plans are further evidenced by the fact that the four most frequently mentioned key performance indicators that half of DMOs intend to use to measure the effectiveness of their recovery plans all relate to economic performance issues. However, there are at least eight DMOs which, in different degrees, are also giving equal priority to the incorporation of sustainable outcomes as part of their recovery plan goals; have sustainability as an important element of their motivation, or have included performance indicators that can be related to the

sustainability principles of the VERB Model. It would however seem that for most UK DMOs, sustainability issues have been at best being included as a beneficial add-on to recovery plans heavily focused on economic recovery, or at worst, as an incidental element, incorporated without a coherent sustainable tourism management strategy, or an understanding of the steps and processes required to increase a destination's sustainability.

This research did not reveal any single or clear-cut strategy or tool being used to develop management plans among the eight DMOs (29%) that have included sustainable indicators as part of their recovery plans' KPIs, but in trying to identify communalities in characteristics and approaches, the evidence indicates most of these DMOS are located in Scotland, with only three based in England. Furthermore, medium-sized DMOs based on 'periphery' locations, such as coastal areas, peninsulas and islands, located away from major cities and transport infrastructure hubs, seemed to be the ones with greater focus on implementing integrated sustainability plans that balance the importance of economy recovery with the preservation of the environment and the protection and enhancement of the local community. One of the participating DMOs, VisitArran, provided a copy of an extensive plan which they have helped to design as part of a larger group of community organisations, and which is focused on achieving a systematic and integrated sustainable recovery of the island (Arran Recovery Group, 2021). This plan is the result of the collaborative working of more than 14 groups with responsibility over the island and it is based on the wishes of the whole community, gathered through extensive surveys, which have been used to develop a plan "*that aims to balance the three strands of island life: Community, Environment and Economy*" in order to develop a whole-island sustainable management plan to lead the recovery from Covid-19 (Arran Recovery Group, 2021, p.3).

The type of plan in which the Arran DMO is participating, and the approach used to develop it, should be regarded as the 'gold-standard' in terms of destination recovery planning, and should be the approach that all other destinations seeking to recover from Covid should aim to emulate. However, this type of integrated sustainable destination planning is both beyond the scope and the capacity of

virtually all UK DMOs, as there are a number of limiting factors that place such planning and management exercise out of reach for most of them.

There are numerous barriers confronted by UK DMOs wishing to engage with sustainability delivery as part of their management remit, with the key one being both a state of chronic underfunding, and the mechanism by which they source their current funding. This issue did not escape the attention of at least two of the DMOs taking part on this research, with one mentioning that their capacity to deliver sustainable management was limited by *“the underfunding of our basic infrastructure”*, while another commented that there was a *“big gap between will and funding...the one factor that determines whether a DMO is effective is how well it can generate income streams”*. Due to the UK government policy of decentralisation which started in the 1990s (Gash, Randall, & Sims, 2014), tourism has increasingly become the devolved remit of local authorities, which under the guise of further decentralisation with the ‘Localism Bill’ introduced by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government during 2010 (Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2010), resulted in profound budget cuts for virtually all levels of local government, who had little choice other than either closing down their tourism management services, or turn them into revenue-generating organisations that needed to fund their way by providing services to ‘members’. This dual hit of defunding and the need to become self-sufficient revenue-generating organisations inevitably resulted in most UK DMOs being forced to abandon their management remit and for most, it has meant having to prioritise the marketing of the destination and its tourism businesses as a necessary evil to justify collection of fees from these businesses by DMOs which have now been turned into membership marketing organisations.

The economic crisis in the tourism sector brought about by Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdowns that went on to paralyze the British tourism industry brought into stark focus to the UK Central Government both the need to promote and support tourism as an important economic recovery engine for its regions, and the important role and inherent weakness of DMOs in successfully delivering that support. As a consequence of the realisation that a healthy tourism industry is vital piece to build a post-Covid sustainable economic recovery and also recognising the *“fragility of the current DMO landscape”* (DCMS, 2021b) the UK government has

now commissioned a review of English DMOs, which among its objectives seeks to ascertain whether DMOs should have different funding mechanisms; which type of structure would maximise both post-Covid recovery and sustainability of UK regions, and what should be the role of DMOs in a post-Covid world. It is the author's view that, if integrated regional sustainability is going to be prioritised and delivered, there is an urgent need to change the funding and management model of UK DMOs and this government review provides a genuine opportunity to release both the funding and the planning remit to enable more destinations to have the sustainable management now being delivered in the Isle of Arran.

If non-for-profit funding streams and a clear sustainable planning remit were enabled as a result of the UK government's DMO review, this chapter provides lessons and practical tools that should be taken onboard by DMOs in their next step to progress towards the sustainable recovery and management of their destinations:

- Although a focus on economic recovery is important as part of destination management plans, this must happen alongside an equally-weighted consideration of the needs and aspirations of their local communities, and the recovery and improvement of the natural and cultural assets on which both visitors and local communities depend.
- The best way to incorporate the aspirations of the local community in making tourism destinations sustainable is by directly consulting their views and ensuring that these are not ignored with tokenistic consultation exercises imposing an economic-driven delivery model that ignores their wishes.
- Before embarking in the planning and delivery of sustainable recovery plans, DMOs should develop the expertise and knowledge to incorporate elements of social, environmental and cultural health as both part of their planning remit and a crucial part of their performance metrics.
- As evidenced by some of the responses of the participating DMOs, even if they believe so, a destination is not delivering sustainable destination planning and management unless relevant social and environmental goals and performance metrics have been incorporated into recovery plans alongside the economic ones.

- DMOs in the UK 'periphery' regions seem more adept at recognising the need for sustainable planning and be more effective at identifying and incorporating the necessary goals and KPIs into their recovery plans. Although this lies beyond the scope of this chapter, larger and more urban-centric DMOs aspiring to deliver sustainable destination planning should learn the planning process lessons and take advantage of the best-practice approaches already being implemented by their rural cousins.

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