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Policy decisions and tourism: unintended consequences or deliberate neglect – Reactions to the ban on term time holidays in the UK's South West

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Policy decisions and tourism: unintended consequences or deliberate neglect – Reactions to the ban on term time holidays in the UK's South West

This study explores reactions of the tourism industry in the UK's South West to a change in regulations governing term time leave. It serves as an example of the impact of non-tourism specific policy making on tourism. Data were collected from 260 tourism firms via an online survey. Findings confirm a largely negative response to the change in regulations. The study illustrates divergent reactions to the regulations within one stakeholder group, here the tourism sector and by implication highlights the limitations of a naïve application of stakeholder theory. The study also offers insights into the nature of resilience within the sector. Avenues for further research are offered.

Keywords: tourism policy; stakeholder theory; tourism SMEs; resilience; tourism governance; tourism planning

Introduction

The history of the public sector's approach to tourism in the UK as described by Kerr (2003) is largely one of antipathy interspersed by glimmers of hope, followed by disappointment. Looking back, the introduction of the Development of Tourism Act (1969) did not result in a dedicated tourism minister, for example. The Thatcher era (ca. late 1970s to early 1990s) was characterised by a neo-liberal, i.e. hands-off approach to government (the legacy of which continues to this day), which included a hands-off approach to the management and marketing of tourism at a national level. The Labour Party while in opposition promised much support for tourism and yet failed to deliver when it came to power in 1997 (Kerr, 2003). Public policy in the UK in the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2007/08 was characterised by austerity and a reduction in public sector expenditure that also affected tourism despite attestations on the part of the then Cameron Government of tourism's importance to the UK economy (Kennell and Chaperon, 2011). In fact, since 2008, public

funding for domestic tourism has decreased from £197m to £71m due to the abolition of the regional development agencies, the reduction in Council funding and the merger of VisitEngland into VisitBritain (Tourism Alliance, 2017).

Based on the above, it would be fair to describe the relationship between the state and tourism in the UK as difficult. Upon this backdrop, what this paper aims to do is to review how a change in guidelines, introduced in 2013, governing school pupils' absence from school during term time, affected tourism. Specifically, the focus is on the South West region of the UK (frequently referred to as the West Country) which comprises the counties: Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset and Bristol (a unitary authority). Based on largely anecdotal data, the change in guidelines had a dramatic impact on the region's visitor economy, even receiving its own label, the so-called 'Gove Effect' (after the minister responsible for the change, Michael Gove).

As well as seeking clarity from tourism firms in the region as to how they perceived the impact of the change in regulations on their businesses, the study also gathered qualitative data to get a better understanding of how significant the change in regulations were to individual firms. In doing this, the paper seeks to illustrate some of the difficulties inherent in the relationship between policy making and tourism, specifically with reference to stakeholder theory. To the author's knowledge, it is the only study of its kind and scope that sought to collate the views of the tourism industry on this matter.

The paper is structured as follows: Initially, to provide context, the change in regulations and how this has been represented in the media is described, along with implications for tourism in the South West. The literature review then discusses the relationship between public policy and tourism, before reviewing the literature surrounding stakeholder inclusion in tourism development. The paper then describes the method used to collect data from a sample of 260 tourism firms in the region, before discussing the survey's

findings. The conclusion draws together key insights and provides recommendations for further research.

Literature Review

The Term Time Ban on Taking Children out of School – a Chronology

Section 444.1 of the 1996 Education Act includes the following stipulation: “If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence.” However, the Act also makes provision for absence, including leave (444.3), as long as this is reasonably justified and has been authorised ‘by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school’ (444.9). The Education Act (1996) does not then rule out all absence on the grounds of ‘leave’, and an amendment to the regulations in 2006 established that head teachers were able to grant leave of up to 10 days during term time in “special circumstances”.

In 2012 the then Education Secretary Michael Gove voiced concern at rising figures of term time absence in primary schools (twice the rate of that in secondary schools) followed in September 2013 by new guidelines that made provision for term-time absence in ‘exceptional circumstances’ only, as well as removing all reference to family holidays from the regulations (BBC, 2017). The new regulations also tightened procedures for fining unauthorised absence. According to Pells (2017) the school year 2015-2016 saw 150,000 families fined a total of £8.8m for taking children out of school without permission.

Unsurprisingly, the new regulations caused consternation for some, particularly for many parents, who were aggrieved at what they interpreted as government ‘meddling’ in the personal/family sphere. Several campaign groups were established as a result, such as Parents Want a Say. One of the key concerns and reasons given by parents who opposed the new regulations was the price hike of holidays during peak holiday time. Estimates of the extent

of peak season holiday price increases vary, but they are substantial according to an article in The Guardian (2017) that referred to data from the travel currency website FairFX. Here it was suggested that every single holiday (of the nine reviewed) cost more in August (peak holiday time), with the average holiday costing £905 more than in July and £1,310 more than in June.

Tourism is critical to ~~tourism in~~ the South West of the UK (also frequently referred to as the West Country). Based on 2015 Great British Tourism Survey data (VisitEngland, VisitWales, & VisitScotland, 2015), the region tops the table in terms of domestic overnight trips and expenditure. A frequently cited figure of £87m in lost revenue has been estimated as the impact of the change in regulations on the tourism economy in the South West (e.g. Morris, 2015). Understandably, representatives of the tourism industry similarly expressed consternation. Visit Cornwall (a regional destination management organisation) offered a 'win, win, win' solution to the issue (Visit Cornwall, 2015), its tone more conciliatory than many others'. Bourne Leisure, the owner of Butlins (a chain of holiday parks), reportedly allowed the campaign group Parents Want a Say free use of its PR agency (Davies, 2017). The issue was also taken to parliament by the Member of Parliament for St Austell and Newquay (Cornwall), Steve Double on the 26th October 2015. Despite protestations on the part of both the tourism industry and aggrieved parents, the government has to date made no further changes to the regulations.

Public Policy and Tourism

Some such as Kerr (2003) claim policy makers fail to appreciate the economic and social significance of tourism. While this is debatable, whether the state manages or mismanages tourism, its importance to tourism is undeniable (Elliott, 1997). Furthermore, it is recognised that the state is a complex structure that intentionally and unintentionally produces policy outcomes (Davis, Wanna, Warhurst, & Weller, 1993). Here it is important to

recognise that generic, i.e. non-tourism specific, policy can have a significant impact on the sector and as such is worthy of further enquiry (e.g. Hall, 2009; Shaw and Williams, 2010 who both reflect on SME policy). A fairly recent example of this that has received some attention in the tourism literature is the government's reaction to the Foot-and-Mouth disease, which indicated ignorance on the part of policy makers- in relation to consequences for the visitor economy (e.g. Bennett, Carroll, Lowe, & Phillipson, 2002; Miller and Ritchie, 2003) .

It is argued here that the term-time ban on taking children out of school demonstrates all of the above characteristics: It is a non-tourism-specific piece of legislation, which nonetheless demonstrates a very direct and yet, arguably, unintentional impact on tourism. It also serves as an example of Kerr's (2003) notion that governments frequently underestimate the social and economic significance of tourism (this is one interpretation admittedly, the policy makers behind the legislation would disagree with this interpretation one imagines).

Stakeholder Theory and Tourism

As Jafari's (2001) platform model exposes, most governments today will have moved beyond an 'advocacy platform' that regards tourism as a wholly benign avenue to economic development. Currently, we are more likely to find policy makers adopting one, or a combination of, Jafari's (2001) other platforms: cautionary (that recognises tourism's negative impacts), adaptancy (the offer of 'alternative' forms of tourism to mass tourism) and knowledge-based (a holistic and systematic approach to tourism that draws on a sound evidence base of what works in a particular context). One of the consequences of these shifts in perspective is the acceptance ~~Consequently, it is widely accepted~~ that tourism development needs to take into account a multitude of stakeholder views and needs (Goodwin, 2011; Krippendorff, 1987; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Swarbrooke, 1998).

Stakeholder Theory as originally discussed within a management context by Freeman (1984) was soon adopted by others, including the sustainable development movement (e.g.

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) with the recognition of three key stakeholder groups of community, government and industry (Khazaei et al. 2015). Arguably, from a tourism perspective the bulk of scholarly interest surrounding stakeholder theory has been afforded host communities precisely because these have traditionally been most disenfranchised in the tourism development process. While this development is then understandable, it does not mean that the concerns of other stakeholder groups should be ignored. Indeed, this paper offers what might be regarded as a marginalised view, that of the typical small domestic tourism firm (as mentioned, to the author's knowledge this is the only study that has directly explored industry's response to what is a policy that has had major implications on the sector).

Managing to engage key stakeholders and to foster a collaborative approach, as much as this is desired and beneficial for a destination (d'Angella, De Carlo, & Sainaghi, 2010; Fyall and Garrod, 2005), is not an easy endeavour, which is implicit in Jafari's (2001) knowledge-based platform in its recognition of the complexity and situated nature of tourism development. Goeldner and Ritchie (2009, p. 414), for example, list nine different stakeholder groups at a tourist destination level (excluding 'sub-groups', e.g. local/municipal/regional/provincial and national governments' within the public sector domain), and contend that "Tourism policy seeks to ensure that visitors are hosted in a way that maximizes the benefits to stakeholders, while minimizing the negative effects, costs, and impacts associated with ensuring the success of the destination." The difficulty, of course, is that in maximising one stakeholder group's benefits, an other's may be curtailed. The challenge in stakeholder theory goes beyond ensuring relevant stakeholders have a voice, it extends to whose voice carries over into decision-making.

Calls for more sustainable or responsible forms of tourism regularly raise concerns about the impacts and (lack of) benefits accruing to the host community (early examples

include Krippendorf (1987) or Turner and Ash (1975). However, destination governance is intertwined by power relations between numerous stakeholders (Coles and Church, 2007) including between different elements of the host community itself. In fact, there is some naivety regarding the notion that everyone should, or indeed can, have equal access to power in destination development (Timothy, 2007). Thus, although not wanting to stifle voices that call for greater attention to the needs of the local communities affected by tourism, local communities will comprise a diverse range of interests and power imbalances. As Miller and Aiken (1995, cited in Hall, 2007, p. 249) aver: ‘communities are not the embodiment of innocence...decision making at the local level can be extraordinarily vicious, personal, and not always bound by legal constraints’.

To summarise, there is some evidence that the impact of the change in regulations on the region’s visitor economy is substantial and yet research here is extremely limited. Beyond anecdotal evidence from the industry (for example quotations in the media) this is the only study to the author’s knowledge that has tried, systematically, to gather industry’s views. Moreover, the study serves to demonstrate the sensitivity of the sector to policy makers’ decisions which relate to domains outside of tourism (here education). Finally, the study seeks to illustrate practical difficulties inherent in implementing stakeholder theory, by reviewing reactions to policy decisions within nominally homogeneous groups.

Methodology

Because of the perceived negative impact of the regulations on the sector, a regional tourism association, the South West Tourism Alliance (SWTA), was keen to scope its members’ views on the matter of the change in regulations. In collaboration with the SWTA as well as members of the Tourism Society Westcountry, the author compiled a survey to understand both the impact of the legislation as well as scoping potential solutions (we focus here only

on the former). Once a final version of the survey had been agreed upon, it was distributed via a link in an electronic newsletter to 9,028 members of the South West Tourism Alliance and via a link in an email to 218 members of Farm Stay members in the West Country. A follow-up email was sent to members of SWTA.

Overall, 260 responses were received ($\approx 3\%$ response rate) which at first glance is very low. However, it was possible to establish that 1,018 individuals had opened the SWTA newsletter and on this basis an effective response rate of 21% was calculated¹.

Figure 1 provides an overview of respondents by type of business where we can see that the majority of respondents come from the accommodation sector, whereby the dataset also included a minimum of thirty attractions (not everyone answered the question as to type of firm). As is typical for the sector, the vast majority of businesses (88%) were micro-businesses employing fewer than 10 people. Only 2% of responding firms employed more than fifty people.

We recognize that a key limitation of the study is the non-random sampling method. Although it is not believed that members of the South West Tourism Alliance (to which the majority of respondents belonged) should differ from other regional tourism businesses that is in any way relevant to the issue here, it is likely that those with strong feelings towards the regulations were more likely to respond to the survey, than those who were impartial towards it. This is a perennial problem with surveys, especially when emotive or sensitive topics are being explored (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). Nonetheless, as detailed above, the effective response rate is reasonable, and a range of tourism businesses by size and type are represented in the data that is reflective of tourism in the region.

¹ $260/[1018+218] = 0.21035$

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Findings

The first step in the analysis was to establish whether and to what degree respondents felt the regulations had impacted their businesses. Specifically, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “Banning holidays during term time has negatively impacted my business” (Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale). They were also asked to what extent, if any, the ‘Gove Effect’ had impacted turnover. Eight response options were given, six of which related to different levels of turnover reduction (ranging from ‘down 1-10%’ to ‘down over 50%’), ‘no impact’ and ‘increased turnover’ (we did not want to discount the possibility that for certain types of businesses the regulations may have actually led to increased turnover). To enhance validity of the findings the responses to these two questions were cross tabulated, it being reasonable to assume that responses to both questions are not independent. Because of low cell counts in some categories we collapsed responses as per Table 1. As we can see, the data are unequivocal in that they confirm a vast majority of respondents perceived a negative impact on their businesses and a vast majority of businesses identified a negative impact on turnover. They also confirm a strong relationship between these two variables (perceptions of impact and drop in turnover; as mentioned, this was to be expected but testing for this strengthens the validity of response)².

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

² A Chi-Square test was conducted on the recoded variables with $p < 0.001$ and a Chi-Square coefficient of 151.934. However, three cells have an expected count < 5 and as such we refer to this in a footnote, although the low expected cell counts further demonstrate the validity of the findings.

A further question asked participants to rate business in the previous 12 months (assessed on a 5-point Likert scale). The results of this question were compared to responses to the variable on turnover via a cross tabulation. Again, the data confirm, as we would expect, that businesses reporting a fall in turnover were less sanguine about business in the previous 12 months (Chi-Square tests also confirmed this at $p < 0.001$ although footnote 2 also applies here). What is also worthy of mention is that some businesses that reported a drop in turnover nonetheless expressed positive views on business performance over the past year. This could be interpreted in relation to met expectations, i.e. it is possible even greater falls in turnover had been anticipated.

Overall, what we see therefore is an overwhelmingly negative response to the introduction of the regulations governing term-time absence. As has been documented in a report compiled for SWTA and TSWC³, a fall in income of over 30% for a fifth of respondents has been noted, and a fall in income of £87m for Devon and Cornwall, as well as a drop in occupancy levels of 19% for the Devon resort of Torbay (Morris, 2015).

A further question related to measures taken to counteract the new regulations. Here we find that quite a large proportion of those responding had introduced some measures to mitigate the impact of the change in regulations governing taking children out of school during term time (39%), demonstrating the seriousness of the issue and in accordance with responses relating to fall in turnover. Despite many businesses trying to identify ways of responding to the new regulations, demonstrating a degree of innovativeness and an ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ (e.g. rethinking target markets, adapting product offering) which appears to be a key source of competitive advantage for SMEs (O’Dwyer, Gilmore, & Carson, 2009), there were others whose responses suggested an air of helplessness, e.g. “Not

³ A report outlining key findings from the survey was provided to SWTA and TSWC in 2015.

sure what we can do to counteract this“, or “Cannot imagine what I could do“ and “There is not a lot one can do, without spending money that will not show any return.”

However, further analysis that compared business optimism with measures taken to counteract the impact of the regulations suggests a more nuanced interpretation is called for. As Table 2 demonstrates, many businesses that had not undertaken any measures to address the change in regulations were optimistic about business in the 12 months looking forward, whereas the opposite also held true⁴. Thus, it is argued that some respondents may not have seen a need to introduce counter measures, and some of those who did, did so out of necessity (which is also reflected in some of the qualitative comments).

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Additional analysis was undertaken to establish whether there was a relationship between impact on turnover and distance from major conurbations, notably London. The reason for this is the assumption that a ban on term time holidays would disproportionately negatively affect those farthest from major urban centres, as it would limit how far people would be willing to travel for just a weekend (prior to this an extended weekend (3-4 nights) would have been possible). To do this, data relating to location were segmented into three categories (Cornwall, Devon and ‘Other’ [the other category comprised respondents in Dorset, Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire]) and compared to responses to ‘perceived impact’ and ‘fall in turnover’. Because of the nature of the region’s geography this serves as a reasonable proxy for distance from major tourist generating conurbations, notably London, but also the West Midlands.

INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

⁴ The relationship was significant ($p < 0.01$, Pearson Chi-Square = 9.913; $df = 2$)

As Table 3 indicates, there is some evidence to support the contention that distance from London affects severity of impact although the relationship was non-significant based on Chi-Square test results, and it would be disingenuous to pretend the data were conclusive. The data suggest a tale of two regions ‘Devon and Cornwall’ and the ‘rest of the South West’. A possible interpretation is that the additional distance of Cornwall from London compared to Devon is immaterial for those looking for a weekend break. In other words, once travel goes beyond approximately three hours, distances are just too great in potential tourists’ minds. This is something that would need further investigation⁵.

The final part of the analysis draws on qualitative responses to a deliberately open question that asked respondents whether they had any comments they wished to make in relation to the change in regulations. More than 45% (118) of respondents completed this question, some quite extensively. This was surprising and we argue goes to demonstrate the strength of feeling on this matter. This is further illustrated by the content of the comments themselves. As previous analysis would suggest, most respondents provided comments that can be regarded as negative (the open comments were coded into positive = 16.9%, neutral = 18.6% and negative = 64.4%). A number of responses are provided here that highlight both the range of responses and the strength of feeling towards the change in regulations from, what we stress, is what theory commonly regards as a homogenous group of stakeholders, i.e. the tourism industry. The comments also indicate the complexity of the issue at hand, which we argue is (conveniently) not necessarily appreciated by policy makers. We have included participants’ scores relating to impact on turnover to help set the comments in light of a business’ situation. As the comments below indicate, and as one might expect, those whose

⁵ Cross tabulations were also explored comparing variables ‘perception of impact’ and ‘impact on turnover’ with firm size. However, as the majority of businesses were micro (87% fewer than 10 employees), which reflects the structure of the sector, no reliable insights could be gained.

turnover was not impacted negatively are more supportive of the regulations (the issue of attitudes towards tourism development being dependent on how much of a stake one has in, or benefits from, tourism has previously been recognised, e.g. Jurowski and GURSOY, 2004; Pizam, 1978):

- “It is crucial that we continue to fight this issue. As a parent who runs a seasonal holiday business we are penalised twice; firstly our income has been affected dramatically and secondly our own family holidays are now impossible to take ... as well as a 'ghost town' effect during shoulder months which visitors have commented on and not enjoyed.” (Turnover down 21-30%)
- “I strongly oppose the ideas of holidays during term time. We have to take a holistic approach. Children's education is fundamental to the future of the country... I am afraid that it is people's choice to have children and they have to accept changes in lifestyle, I should know I have three. As an industry we have to accept the seasonality of our businesses.” (No impact on turnover)
- “We ... have mostly adult guests. However, our numbers have decreased as guests know there is no specific reason to use us anymore (low season) as there are no children on other parks anyway so it is effecting our target market. (Turnover down 11-20%).
- “Great idea as the older guests would not have to suffer unruly children spoiling their holiday.” (Increase in turnover)
- “This is a storm in a tea-cup. You really should not pander to the noisy minority (who just want a cheaper vacation).” (No impact on turnover)
- “We urge the Government to rethink the whole policy as it is counter-productive to tourism.” (Turnover down 11-20%)

- “It is a short-sighted policy driven by educational targets and implemented without any recognition of the wider consequences on the tourism industry. It has reduced the earnings period, reduced the price of the shoulder weeks, resulting in a downwards impact on revenue potential, and driven up the cost of business acquisition. The guy [Michael Gove] has played a blinder in hampering the SW's [South West's] key industry - it doesn't even have support from the schools. Nice one, mate!” (Turnover down 11-20%)
- “It is not just the loss of trade during term time. It results in many of my staff and cleaners in particular, being *forced (emphasis added by respondent)* to take their holiday in high season. Expensive for them, nightmare for us at our busiest time. (Turnover down 21-30%)
- “Unfortunately I feel that this policy is more about the culture of box ticking ... than education...People who are in agriculture or the holiday business cannot take breaks in the peak times. Which means that their rights of a normal family life are being violated by this heavy-handed approach. (Turnover down 31-40%)
- “Term time holidays for school children should be discouraged as it will negatively impact on their education, which is more important than profits.” (No impact on turnover)

It should be noted that not everyone who declared no impact on turnover expressed agreement with the regulations, and similarly, not everyone who experienced a decline in turnover expressed anger and frustration. The reason for the inclusion of these quotations is to provide the reader, as far as is possible in writing, with ‘direct’ access to the strength of feeling on both sides which provides for a more meaningful understanding of the issue (along the lines of Weber’s, 1949, Verstehen tradition in the social sciences, also Rosen, 1991).

What we also find here, is a number of implications of the regulations that policy makers are either ignorant of, or wilfully neglected. Arguably, based on these comments, the issue is about more than education, or formal education, it is about peoples' lives and livelihoods. In framing the debate as that between education and taking holidays, the then government oversimplified the issue, something VisitCornwall's strategy (Visit Cornwall, 2015) explicitly tried to address (as the regulations are still in place it would seem in vain). Once government has set an agenda, backing down becomes difficult as it entails a risk (Vis, 2011), here of losing face. Decision-making in politics is manifestly not simply about the issue at hand but about political reverberations for those concerned, individuals and parties.

Arguably, far greater impact than the industry's remonstrations, in drawing attention to the issue have been legal cases brought by parents who have appealed against fines. As a stakeholder group opposed (or at least with many parents opposed) to the regulations, the parental voice it seems has been heard more loudly than that of the tourism industry.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore reactions of the tourism industry to a change in regulations governing term time leave in the UK's South West. In doing so, it serves as an example of the impact of non-tourism specific policy making (here education policy) on tourism. Using stakeholder theory as a theoretical lens, it also provides an example of the difficulty inherent in drafting and implementing tourism policy given the diversity of views inherent in what is commonly regarded as a homogenous group (Paddison and Walmsley, 2018). It is argued this perception of stakeholder group homogeneity as it relates to 'the industry' remains under-researched, although it has found greater recognition with regard to host communities (Khazaei et al. 2015)-

As was anticipated given anecdotal evidence, the vast majority of respondents expressed consternation at the change in regulations. Prior to the introduction of the regulations, most tourism firms in the South West will have benefitted in some way from children being granted leave during term time. Few businesses are entirely removed from the family market and even those that have a no-children policy may be negatively affected as their niche has been curtailed during off- and shoulder seasons. There was a mixed response in relation to measures undertaken to tackle the change in regulations, depending it seems not just on reliance on the family market, but also on the individual owner/manager's attitude to the circumstances. Frequently entrepreneurs are said to be characterised by resilience -(Hess, 2014) and promoting entrepreneurship has been regarded as a means of creating more resilient economies (Williams and Vorley, 2014). Particularly small rural tourism firms have been found to be resilient in times of crisis (Anderson, 2004), and yet our findings suggest varying degrees of resilience as evidenced in reactions to the regulations, especially with regard to counter-measures taken.

As Thomas, Shaw and Page (2011) have argued, policy making for tourism can be jeopardised by the diversity of tourism SMEs, as well as in the diversity of owner/managers that run tourism SMEs. This was certainly evidenced in the diametrically opposed views offered by some in response to the regulations. Tourism policy may aim to facilitate collaboration for stakeholders of a destination (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2009) and yet here it was clear that a consensus is hardly likely to be reached. This is most likely in part down to the framing of the issues as a choice between 'holidays or education' (Visit Cornwall, 2015). The study echoes concerns (e.g. Timothy, 2007) that stakeholder theory is frequently regarded naively in calls that everyone should, or indeed can, in equal measure be represented in policy decision-making.

Finally, this study offers avenues for further research. Firstly, research on tourism policy, and non-tourism policy affecting tourism, might usefully review conflicts within the ‘tourist industry’ stakeholder group. Very often studies amalgamate different groupings within the sector into one whole, i.e. ‘the industry’. This study has very clearly demonstrated that within ‘the industry’ interests are divided (another recent study where this was demonstrated is in the tourist city of York, Paddison and Walmsley, [forthcoming2018](#)). Just as previous studies have highlighted different reactions to tourism development within the host community (e.g. Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004; [Khazaei, 2015](#)), so there are different reactions to policy amongst tourism firms within the same region.

Secondly, future research might explore the extent to which policy makers, in drafting non-tourism policy, consider implications for tourism. This is admittedly difficult, and is likely to occur after the event (after legislation has been introduced), and yet this study indicates that the impacts of the regulations on tourism were not even recognised – and, disappointingly from the perspective of the tourism industry, there does not appear to have been much sympathy for the impact on tourism once concerns had been voiced. This would not be the first time such a thing has happened in the UK if we think of the reactions to the Foot-and-Mouth outbreak in 2001 (e.g. Anderson, 2004; Miller and Ritchie, 2003). Returning to the relationship between tourism and the state, the change in regulations governing term time absence are likely to go down as another example of government neglect at best; at worst as government ignorance.

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