Planning for tranquil spaces in rural destinations through mixed methods research

Abstract

There is a view that applied researchers produce more relevant findings for practitioners in the tourism industry if they use quantitative methods. This paper claims that findings relevant to industry can be produced through the use of qualitative methods of data collection, and indeed a unique perspective is offered by qualitative research that a quantitative approach may not produce. Furthermore, a mixed methods approach to research combines the advantages offered by both qualitative and quantitative research, and is advocated as an appropriate way forward when both types of data are needed. Using a unique mixed-methods study of the meaning of tranquillity to visitors to and authorities and residents in Dorset, Southern England, this paper illustrates the value of both qualitative and quantitative data to tourism planners. The study reveals that tranquillity was most commonly aligned to the natural environment whereas non-tranquillity concerned both sounds and sights of manmade origin.

Key words

1. Introduction

Their review of the top tourism journals (until 1996) led Riley and Love (2000) to conclude that quantitative research dominated the tourism literature, despite a growing recognition of the value of qualitative research. Furthermore, in journals aimed at solving industry problems, such as Tourism Management, there were fewer qualitative-based articles; these were more prominent in journals with a social science orientation and mission, such as the Annals of Tourism Research. Riley and Love (2000) found that applied researchers were more likely to use quantitative methods or to use qualitative research simply as a precursor to subsequent quantification; there is a view that qualitative methods could not produce findings that would be useful to industry. The tourism industry requires findings that can translate into action and there is mistrust of case-study, non-generalisable findings (Riley & Love 2000), despite their use in generating theory in emergent fields of research (Riessman 2008).

A careful review of two leading tourism journals indicates that the state of tourism research and the methodologies used has changed somewhat. Tribe and Xiao stated in 2011 that 60% of papers in the Annals of Tourism Research embrace a qualitative or interpretive design. The two most dominant methods used by researchers continue to be interviews and participant observation though in more recent volumes of the journal, the following approaches have also appeared: grounded theory, focus groups, phenomenology, photography, nethnography, autoethnography, and feminist memory work. In addition, Tribe, Xiao, and Chambers (2012) point to a 15% contribution of conceptual/review articles to the journal in 2011–2012. As Xiao and Smith (2006) observe, the Annals of Tourism Research is dedicated to promoting theoretical constructs. The journal also sees the development of methodological sophistication as part of its remit, and indeed, recent issues point to a shift towards a radical, postmodern perspective on data collection, analysis, display and authorial position. Furthermore, the journal now accepts the use of the first person, if this is consistent with the method used (Tribe & Xiao, 2011). Such a decision will facilitate

32 the publication of reflexive research accounts, which are still lacking in the tourism

33 literature (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Pocock 2015).

34

35 Riley and Love (2000) indicated an under-representation of qualitative-based studies

36 in Tourism Management until 1999, with only 5% of articles being based on

37 qualitative research: a review of the journal shows that this situation persisted for

38 some years. However from Volume 26 the journal would start to reflect the diversity

39 of approaches used by tourism qualitative researchers. There has been a move

40 towards diversity in method, as advocated by Ryan in his editorial to mark the

41 journal's 30th volume (2009). In fact, the division between quantitative and

42 qualitative papers is now more or less even in many issues, with roughly a third of

43 papers based on quantitative research, a third on qualitative research and a third on

44 mixed methods research. Furthermore, one could argue that this journal's

45 representation of the diverse methods used by tourism researchers is more fair than

46 that of the Annals of Tourism Research.

47

48 The notion that Tourism Management is reluctant to accept papers based on more

49 radical approaches because of its mission to address industry issues appears to have

50 shifted. The following approaches have been used in addition to interviewing,

51 observation and focus groups: netnography, grounded theory, autoethnography,

52 phenomenology, narrative inquiry, hermeneutics and scenario planning. Also of note

53 is that the first person is occasionally used to report qualitative findings, in keeping

54 with the importance attached by qualitative researchers to reflexivity. Indeed, in their

55 paper on constructivism Ryan and Gu (2010) call for a more reflexive voice in

56 tourism research. Thus, there appears to be some convergence between Tourism

57 Management and the Annals of Tourism Research towards acceptance of the

58 authorial presence in tourism research papers, bringing the field in line with other

59 disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. As Xiao and Smith assert (2006) and

60 Cohen (2013), tourism is a young field that is keen to achieve the rigour associated

61 with more established disciplines.

62

63 Despite the analysis offered above, there is an enduring view that the bias towards

64 quantitative studies still exists (Wilson and Hollinshead 2015). Tourism research is

65 still hampered by a bias towards 'hard science' with which quantitative research is

associated, and against the 'soft' science associated with qualitative research. Dolnicar and Ring (2014) also indicate a continuing bias towards quantitative methods given their utility to managers, especially in the area of tourism marketing, which occupies a third of content in the leading tourism journals. Lynch (2005) meanwhile claims that qualitative research continues to be under-represented in hospitality research, as reflected in the leading hospitality journals. Ren et al. (2010) and Pritchard and Morgan (2007) state that the characterisation of the tourism research field as a divided community, based on those who are oriented towards or against a business management approach, is restrictive and naïve. Perhaps however concerns over the value of and editorial receptivity towards qualitative research explain why mixed methods research is so attractive to researchers and practitioners alike. Indeed, in Tourism Management, there has been a discernible increase in the publication of mixed methods research since 2005.

The aim of this paper is to advocate the use by tourism researchers of mixed methods research (MMR) to address contemporary issues and challenges in the tourism industry. This paper will reveal that applied researchers can produce useful findings for industry practitioners if they use both qualitative and quantitative research. Using as an example an MMR-based study on the meaning of tranquillity to authorities, visitors and residents, our paper will show that the findings from this project that are of wide industry relevance and applicability could not have been produced by one research approach alone. Only a series of in-depth focus groups with representatives of authorities, community groups and local residents was able to yield the data on the meaning people attach to tranquillity. Such valuable insights fed into the household questionnaires and visitor onsite surveys subsequently used, and the resulting sets of data led to the creation of a planning tool for destination planners. We will thus argue that only the qualitative approach could deliver key findings in this research project, which would not have been completed without its incorporation into the methodological approach. Meanwhile the quantitative phases of the project offer statistical evidence to support the both the development of the planning tool and the direction of further research required. Combined together, we will show that the findings produced in this project have industry relevance, and that they can be used to improve practice.

2. Mixing methods and matching practice

Ren *et al*. (2010) argue that the challenge is for tourism researchers to adopt methodologies that reflect multiple positions, practices and insights. It is for this reason that a mixed methods approach is often viewed as the way to improve the validity and utility of findings, as well as to appeal to editors and reviewers, and practitioners. At the heart of MMR is pluralism, thus regardless of whether a qualitative or quantitative method dominates, its foundation is based on its 'central premise that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone' (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008 p.5). Hence, through the mixing of methods, research design, analyses, interpretation and data presentation (Fielding, 2012), the values of each approach are embraced with the result that qualitative data inform quantitative outputs and/or vice versa.

The pluralistic stance of MMR reflects the multiplicity of perspectives available to tourism researchers, and the approach might well appear obvious given the make-up of the industry that cuts across sectors. Tourism represents an increasingly interconnected world of enquiry that can be researched through various ways, from numerous starting points, leading to diverse outcomes hence it is 'characterised by equifinality and multifinality' (Burke Johnson, 2015 p.700). Taking this perspective, the use of one research method 'is not adequate for answering complex questions'. Instead, opportunities to expand and deepen our knowledge are realised by coming 'at things differently' (Hesse-Biber & Burke Johnson, 2013 p. 103), through MMR that crosses the so-called methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The convergence of data on a topic leads to increased confidence in results and ultimately in the ability to overcome the weaknesses of any single method (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Dandekar, 2005; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008) for which triangulation is a 'core justificatory principle underpinning mixed method approaches' (Torrance, 2012 p. 113).

There are also limitations to MMR. The transformation of qualitative responses into numerical forms are 'a staple of MMR' (Sandelowski *et al.,* 2009 p. 208), enabling their analysis from quantitative perspectives. Yet this process of quantification can

134 be complex. When quantifying the qualitative, compromises will be made in terms of
135 'what and how to count' fundamentally qualitatively informed data and trying to
136 'balance numerical precision with narrative complexity (Sandelowski *et al*., 2009 p.
137 208). A further concern relates to the sample size derived from qualitative studies
138 which are commonly considered too small to enable statistical analyses (Driscoll *et*
139 *al.,* 2007). Nevertheless, the value of MMR lies in researchers' ability to generate
140 research findings that have a pragmatic use. Indeed, the very philosophy of
141 pragmatism is associated with MMR, (Creswell & Clark 2007), sometimes referred to
142 as the third research paradigm (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2009).

143

144 This is highly pertinent in the area of planning policy related to tourism development
145 where the use of MMR is common in professional practice. Public consultations, key
146 processes used to collate public views and subsequently inform planning decisions,
147 tend to be formed on focus groups and surveys when decisions are to be made on a
148 destination's tangible assets such as infrastructure and spatial considerations. Indeed
149 driven by critiques of Euclidian designs of planning in favour of relational notions of
150 space as social constructs (Healey 2004), planning policy has increasingly placed
151 emphasis on qualitative methods and public engagement in order to capture local
152 communities' views on what they consider as the special qualities of their local
153 environments (c.f. DCLG 2012).

154 One such case is presented in this paper, using research that aimed to identify the
155 perceptual quality of tranquillity in the protected landscape of Dorset, Southern
156 England. Consideration of context is fundamental in planning projects of any design
157 (Engwall, 2003). In recognition of geographical nuances and national biases, we will
158 next focus on the implementation of landscape management directives in the UK
159 since they are relevant to the project carried out in Dorset.

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3. Collaborative planning: moving views from consultation to evidence

Professional planning is directed by strategy, principles of project management and pragmatic concerns that are usually related to time, cost and considerations for human resources. These will influence the choice of methodology used, whether primarily qualitative, quantitative or MMR (Dandekar, 2005). Baseline information is generally informed by two broad lines of enquiry. The first is primarily of quantitative orientation and relates to spatial and geographical parameters, economic forecasts and tourism specific data. The second and most complex concerns an attempt to understand the social reality of communities and to use this information to shape planning decisions made. Thus an attempt using various modes of communication is made by authorities' to consult with local communities (Healey, 2004; 2006; Hewlett & Edwards, 2013).

Research designs will invariably combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to generate the data required to formulate and inform the implementation of planning policy. Both the research framework and its outputs need to be robust enough to provide tourism planners with 'good information…and facts that can be communicated', 'and that are amenable to translation by policy makers and elected officials', whom are often non-planners 'working in highly politicized often turbulent and changing environments' (Dandekar, 2005 p. 130). In reality, the demands of this working environment encourage outputs of a quantitative design, relegating the views obtained from the public during focus groups and public meetings to secondary and contextual considerations. This sits alongside the rhetoric espoused by planners and local politicians who promote the importance of communities deliberating with planners and participating actively in informing planning practice (Ledwith, 2005). As Cornwall argues (2008 p. 279), 'it is even more common for rhetoric about involving people in decision-making to boil-down to engaging them in marginal choices when the real decisions are clearly being made elsewhere'. Yet increasing political attachment to identifying the key qualities of public spaces according to local communities' views is progressively being reflected in planning practice.

4. Qualities of space: the case for tranquillity and its multiple values

In Europe, perceptual qualities are most commonly aligned to landscape characterisations, which relate to the European Landscape Convention (ELC, 2000). Whilst purely a protocol for informing landscape management amongst EU member states, the ELC does emphasise a requirement on the part of planners to broaden their understanding of how landscape can be interpreted, so that the public's views on the physical and aesthetic aspects of the landscape are incorporated into their planning strategies. Amongst the key characteristics considered to be inherent in natural landscapes is the highly subjective notion of tranquillity (Natural England, 2009a). References to the term tranquillity appear for the first time in the UK's National Planning Policy Framework (2012) through which a statutory duty is placed on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to work with local communities in their identification of tranquil spaces (DCLG, 2012).

The political importance of including such an abstract quality as tranquillity in planning policies is easily explained. There are concerns over the UK's overall population growth, an increasingly urban population (Champion, 2014) and an evident clash is gaining momentum between the goals of infrastructural growth and constraints of space and land-use (Gosden, 2016). This context sits alongside the diminishment of green spaces in urban areas and additional concerns over encroachments of infrastructure in and increased visitor usage of protected areas (Benjamin & Adu, 2016; Swinford & Riley-Smith, 2016). This will invariably result in fewer opportunities to experience tranquillity in either urban or rural spaces. Concurrently, concerns for a financially ailing National Health Service being able to continue to meet increasing demands for treatment of the public's health and mental wellbeing is encouraging renewed attention on strategies of prevention rather than cure (NHS England, 2013) that are being progressed through place-based decision making (NHS England, 2015). Subsequently, there is a resurgent interest in the benefits to be gained from the public's experiences of green spaces and tranquil environments, in order to assist in enhancing their physical and mental health and overall sense of wellbeing (e.g. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1988; Natural England, 2009b; Ulrich *et al*., 1991). Thus, there is increasing support for what is generally coined as

230   a Natural Health Service, engineered to result from collaboration between the Health

231   Services, Planning Officers and Environmental Managers. The quality of green

232   space provision, where tranquil spaces are notable, is the responsibility of the State

233   and its managing agencies (DCLG 2012). As such, rural locations and particularly

234   protected landscapes are important and are generally considered to be relatively free

235   resources to capitalise upon (IUCN, 2015).

236

237   Recognition of the bank of tranquillity found in protected areas as a freely obtained,

238   natural resource is exploited in tourism marketing literature (Pieraccini, 2015). The

239   term tranquillity is liberally promoted synonymously with such equally abstract

240   descriptors as peace and quiet, free from disturbance, calmness, used to refer to both

241   a rested state of mind and the experience to be had in rural and protected area

242   destinations. In the UK, tranquillity is identified as a key motivating attractor for

243   visitors to rural areas (Jones, 2012). Internationally, tranquillity has been recognised

244   as a special, fundamental quality of protected areas (e.g. Balasinorwala, 2014;

245   Phillips, 2002). Indeed, in the United States, 72% of visitors to National Parks

246   reported their key purpose for visitation was to experience natural sounds, views and

247   peace (Haas & Wakefield, 1998).

248

4.1 Tranquil perspectives: approach and diversity

250

251   Whilst attention is drawn to its importance in national and local planning, guidance is

252   completely lacking on just how to identify and determine tranquillity in any given

253   area. The traditional approach to decisions on local plans and development strategies

254   being taken by professional planners has been rational, linear, founded on

255   quantifiably fixed parameters of land-use and depicted on tangible characteristics of

256   place (Legacy 2010). However, due to the National Planning Policy Framework's

257   emphases on the meaning and values attached by communities to their special places,

258   a far broader approach is warranted that is capable of not only capturing, analysing

259   and interpreting the number and range of views collated but also for integrating these

260   into planning decisions taken. Consequently, broad public engagement should be

261   expected with local residents. Yet mindful of the allure of tranquillity for visitors,

262 any consultation on the concept might also reasonably be expected to include visitor

263 perceptions and expectations.

264

265 Political support for such extensive engagement and its subsequent influence on

266 decisions taken, results, at least in theory, from the Localism Act 2011 that

267 reemphasises the Statement of Community Involvement created in 2000. Together

268 these policies assert and instruct LPAs on the importance of enabling communities to

269 contribute towards shaping the places where they live. However, public consultation

270 is commonly considered in practice to result in a 'more complex socio-political

271 context for plan-making' (Legacy, 2010 p. 2707). This complexity increases in

272 tranquillity studies as any identification of 'place is more than location' (Hague &

273 Jenkins, 2005 p.4). In the case of tranquillity as a characteristic of rural places,

274 deliberations will be exacerbated by the highly subjective nature of the concept in

275 that views are informed by an individual's experiences and memories (MacFarlane *et*

276 *al*., 2004). Tranquillity is also relational, specific to a given location and 'shaped by

277 what others tells us about the place and filtered by our own socialisations as shaped

278 by class, age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, professional education etc.' (Hague &

279 Jenkins, 2005 p. 5). Consequently and specifically with reference to rural locations,

280 it will be informed by just how well acquainted an individual is with a country way-

281 of-life and with the biodiversity of nature found in rural areas (Strife & Downey

282 2009).

283

284 Tranquillity is therefore geographically and socially constructed and as a topic of

285 research, is a multidimensional concept. Interpretations of tranquillity are potentially

286 infinite and feelings about an area, about its community and what is valued in that

287 area will be highly significant (Creswell, 2015; Hague & Jenkins, 2005; Relph, 1976;

288 Williams, 2014). Thus, whilst community engagement and implementing national

289 planning policy is mandatory, in practice a diverse range of views can be expected,

290 and as yet, a universally agreed approach to researching tranquillity and determining

291 how results should influence planning practice is open to debate. This is not to

292 suggest that tranquillity is the only challenging descriptor for researchers working

293 within tourism planning and area management: the same can be said of research on

294 other commonly used yet nebulous concepts that are frequently deployed in

295 descriptions of rural and protected area environments, including *beauty*, *character*
296 and a *sense of place,* to name but a few examples.

297

298 4.2 Researching tranquillity

299

300 In the specific case of tranquillity, a broad and innovative range of methods has been
301 used to research its multivariate nature. Three key approaches can be discerned. The
302 first serves to demonstrate the use of purely qualitative designs that were led by
303 practitioners and resulted in the creation of 159 National Area Character
304 Assessments (e.g. Natural England, 2009a). The second and by far the most
305 numerous concerns the use of applied acoustic studies of primarily academic
306 initiative, founded on post-positivist designs and concerning relatively narrow
307 interpretations of tranquillity as primarily related to variables of sight and sound in
308 both urban and natural environments (e.g. Pheasant *et al.,* 2010).

309

310 The third approach, and the most relevant to our case study, involves the
311 identification of tranquil spaces and their visual depiction through maps. Initial
312 mapping activities resulted from expert-led definitions, calculations and
313 measurements of tranquillity to determine what the public perceived to be acceptable
314 levels of noise and negative visual impacts from main roads (e.g. Bell, 1999; Rendel,
315 1996). Two subsequent studies have taken a far broader and more inductive
316 qualitative approach.

317

318 The first was conducted in the north-East England by a team of academics and
319 practitioners who devised a participatory appraisal approach (*sensu* Chambers 1994)
320 to consulting with countryside users, managing agencies and LPAs on their views on
321 tranquillity in two protected area landscapes (MacFarlane *et al*., 2004; CPRE, 2007).
322 Participants were asked to openly share their perspectives on tranquillity in focus
323 groups and onsite surveys. Subsequently a prioritisation process comprising votes
324 allocated amongst the participants was conducted resulting in 44 factors identified by
325 participants as enhancing or detracting from their views on tranquillity. The final
326 stage comprised modelling participants' prioritised views into models of tranquillity
327 in a Geographical Information System (GIS). The findings contributed to the

328   production of a national map of tranquillity in England (CPRE, 2007, Jackson *et al*.,

329   2008). Yet fundamentally this was a pilot study and there are limitations to its design

330   and to claims made for its results. Firstly, engagement specifically with local

331   residents was not an objective. Secondly the GIS resolution initially of 500m and later

332   250m cells (MacFarlane *et al*., 2004; CPRE, 2007) has proven to be too broad to

333   apply in practice. Thirdly, in part due to the extrapolation of views originally collated

334   in the North of England, anomalies are evident in relation to key landmarks and

335   infrastructural developments being omitted from national maps of tranquillity.

336   Finally, a key concern centres on the validity and representativeness of the research.

337   One wonders just how representative views derived from research initially

338   investigated in one area; in this case the North of England, can be representative of

339   those in another. As discussed previously, tranquillity is a perceptual quality and the

340   value placed on an environment is highly subjective, socially constructed, relative,

341   and influenced by specific geographic landmarks of any given location (Hewlett *et*

342   *al.,* 2017).

343

5. Broadly Engaging with Tranquillity: a practical application of Mixed Methods Research

346

347   To address the above limitations whilst building on the progress made by MacFarlane

348   *et al.*, the second and most recent study is the *Broadly Engaging with Tranquillity*

349   project (BET) that was commenced in 2013 and conducted over 12 months through

350   funding awarded by the Economic and Social Science Research Council. Full details

351   on the project's findings resulting from each stage of the quantitative and qualitative

352   research conducted are reported elsewhere (see Hewlett *et al.,* 2017; Hewlett 2015:

353   Hewlett & Harding 2015 a; Hewlett & Harding 2015 b; Wilkinson & Terradillos

354   2015) whilst the research design, the case study area and an overview of key findings

355   are reported below.

356

357   The case study area comprises the Purbecks in the Dorset Area of Outstanding

358   Natural Beauty (DAONB) in southern England (see Figure 1). A primarily rural area,

359   it neighbours the Bournemouth-Poole conurbation of 465,000 people. It has a range

360   of culturally important and natural features that are protected under EU, international

361 and national legislation and directives, and a coastline comprising 76km of the Dorset

362 and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site. As one of the major tourist destinations in

363 the South of England, in 2014 it attracted 2,132,000 overnight stays, and 434,000 day

364 trippers, who spent £113 million (South-West Research Company Ltd., 2015; Hewlett

365 *et al.,* 2017). The area is managed by a number of authorities led by the team of the

366 Dorset AONB whose remit includes managing the area's 'special qualities' as part of

367 its protected area status, inclusive of maintaining and enhancing tranquillity in the

368 national interest (Phillips, 2002).

369

370 **Fig. 1: Location of case study area in the UK and in Dorset.**

371

372 The BET's project aims were threefold: firstly to identify and broadly engage with

373 the widest range of stakeholders in the Purbecks; secondly to test a framework that

374 would collate and make sense of a range of views; and thirdly, to explore how

375 tranquillity is best spatially depicted for practical use.

376

377 The focus on practicality and pragmatism was informed by working in partnership

378 with staff from the Dorset AONB and from Dorset County Council (DCC) GIS

379 teams as early as the research design stage. The first research objective was achieved

380 through our partners' ability to facilitate broad stakeholder engagement. Access to

381 more than 300 representatives of authorities, to the most current householder

382 database and to visitors to the area was facilitated directly through our partners'

383 networks. The first primary data collection stage, involved eight focus groups,

384 comprised of representatives of authorities, managing agencies and local community

385 groups Through a series of tasks, led by a trained facilitator, participants were

386 initially required to convey how they individually perceived the concept of

387 tranquillity and nontranquillity in general terms. Subsequently, with the aid of maps

388 of the Purbecks, additional views on how tranquillity and non tranquillity could be

389 experienced in the Purbecks was elicited from each group. The final task required

390 each group to examine all of their views previously collated and collectively agree

391 on the key factors they considered most enhanced or detracted from their perceptions

392 and experiences of tranquillity in the Purbecks. These factors were assigned by the
393 group with a set number of votes that ultimately resulted in providing the research
394 team with a prioritised list of factors each group felt most or least represented
395 tranquillity in the Purbecks.

396 The top five factors on tranquillity and a further top five on nontranquillity informed
397 the construction of the second stage of research, a household semi-structured survey
398 from which householders were invited to choose which factors they felt most or least
399 represented their own perceptions of tranquillity. An additional open question
400 introduced the survey to the householders and simply required the respondent to
401 convey how they perceived the notion and experience of tranquillity. A final task
402 required respondents to review a map of the case study area and identify spaces on
403 the map they considered most or least reflected their idea of a tranquil/nontranquil
404 space in the Purbecks and why. This survey was distributed to 2,100 residents, 15%
405 of the total population in the study area, who were identified through a stratified
406 random sample of households in the area. This survey tool was useful in three ways.
407 Firstly, unlike McFarlane *et al*.,'s study, through our receipt of 457 completed and
408 usable questionnaires (a 21.9% response rate), the survey ultimately provided an
409 opportunity to engage directly with residents and collate their opinions on the views
410 previously identified during the focus group research on how much/little tranquillity
411 could be experienced in the Purbecks. Secondly, we aimed to incorporate in the
412 BET views from residents commonly classed as being hard-to-reach in that they do
413 not engage in local community groups, do not ordinarily engage in planning
414 consultations and therefore those whose views could easily be excluded through their
415 disengagement from civic matters (Lyons, 2006; Hewlett, 2010; Hewlett & Edwards,
416 2013; White, 2006): more than half of the questionnaires received (55.3%)
417 comprised the hard-to-reach (Hewlett & Harding 2015). Through the breadth of
418 residents involved in the BET, and quality of its findings, we have been able to
419 increase the legitimacy of decisions taken by local authorities post research
420 subsequently encouraging practitioners use of the BET and its data in practice.
421 Thirdly, due to the Data Protection Act (1998), direct access to householders could
422 not be facilitated by our partners. Thus a question was included in the survey asking
423 respondents to volunteer to take part in a third stage of research involving a second
424 series of focus groups formed specifically of residents. These focus groups took the

425   same format as those conducted during the first stage of research with institutions

426   whereby the twenty residents who attended, were directed to collectively agree on a

427   prioritisation of factors they asserted most/least represented their views on

428   tranquillity in the Purbecks.

429

430   The final and fourth stage of primary data collection comprised a series of onsite

431   surveys with visitors to the case study area. In recognition that visitors have wide-

432   ranging interests that are addressed by the diversity of attractions in the Purbecks, six

433   of the key tourism hotspots in the area, including natural environments, heritage

434   sites, and coastal locations, were sampled. Timing was also important in a

435   seasonally dependent location, thus the surveys were conducted during the busiest

436   month of the summer and on the August Bank Holiday Weekend. As new visitors to

437   the area were expected to have limited knowledge of the Purbecks, this group was

438   asked simply to state five factors respectively that most and least represented their

439   views on tranquillity and to prioritise these in order of personal importance. In total

440   309 surveys were used in the compilation of the GIS maps created.

441

442   Views collated from each stage of data collected were initially examined to identify

443   the presence of views being repeated subsequently enabling the researchers to

444   determine the point at which theoretical saturation of the data had been reached

445   (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Subsequently, views from each of the four data collection

446   stages were analysed discretely in order to facilitate a comparative study. The

447   qualitative data were analysed thematically, using the guidelines produced by Braun

448   & Clark (2006). This led to the identification of 19 themes (Table 1). This thematic

449   listing served as a framework to which views collated throughout the research,

450   whether qualitatively or quantitatively informed, could be classified.

451   Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS V21 to explore statistically significant

452   associations amongst the data. Relationships amongst categorical variables

453   comprising of nominal and ordinal data were progressed using Pearson's chi-squared

454   test for independence. Where variables comprised but two categories, Yates

455   correction for continuity was utilised. An association between variables was

456   recorded as significant when the significance value was ≤ 0.05.

457 **Table 1. Thematic categories associated with Tranquillity.**

Step 1. Topics	Step 2. Thematic categories	
Natural Human/Mankind Natural and Human/Mankind	Activity (participant or of others)	Sight
	Auditory	Smell
	Behaviour (linked to mankind)	Space: Open/cramped
	Coastal (seascape and resorts)	Spiritual
	Cognitive (inclusive of values, judgements & memories)	State of Mind
	Time of day	Touch
	Mankind	Water (natural)
	Natural Environment (landscape and nature reserves)	Weather/climate
	Rural Environment (pastoral landscape)	Wildlife
	Seasons	

458

459 **Hewlett et.al (2017)**

460 Depending on the number of categories within each variable, the strength of
461 relationship between two variables was additionally tested using phi co-efficient or
462 Cramer's V. Analyses resulted in demonstrating statistical significance, albeit small,
463 purely through the household survey according to how noise/sounds were perceived
464 by gender. These instances depicted more males than females considered the
465 coastline as noisy (64.4% of males compared to 54.8% of females), thus informing
466 their perception of non tranquillity ($x2$ (1) = 3.60, $p < 0.05$, phi = 0.10) whereas
467 more females than males (54.3% compared to male respondents 45.7%) reported
468 that being able to see the coastline and hear the sea related to tranquillity ($x2$ (1) =
469 4.11, $p < 0.04$, phi = 0.10).Data from the BET project were compared with those
470 from previous studies, and ~~some~~ a strong similarity in patterns was identified,
471 contributing to convergent validation (Campbell & Fiske 1959; Fielding 2012) and
472 thus, indicating the validity of the research and its outputs (Bryman, 2004; Fielding,
473 2012: Torrance, 2012). The credibility of the results was highly important, thus
474 member-checking took place (Reason 2006; Tashokkorie & Tedllie 2005) . All
475 participants were invited to a series of road-shows at which research reports and GIS
476 models were presented in draft form to be confirmed and/or amended by
477 participants.

478 **5.1 Modelling views in GIS**

479   Data integration and modelling was facilitated with the ArcGIS 10.1 package.
480   Cartographic resources informed the bases of the models and were accessed through
481   Digimap (University of Edinburgh 2014). Our partners, Dorset County Council
482   made databases available to the research project under a licence agreement and
483   where further data was required, open source archives made accessible on the
484   internet were used.

485   All views collated were examined initially to investigate if they had the ability to be
486   geographically expressed and could be related to a mode of sensory perception
487   (sight, sound, touch or smell). Secondly to progress the views through a GIS system
488   required that they could be made quantifiable. This aspect was amply addressed
489   through in the case of focus group data, the votes cast, with householder
490   questionnaires – in the number of times a view was expressed and with the visitor
491   survey, in how the tourists prioritised their views. Thirdly, a series of algorithms
492   were created to process the information through GIS. Thus, where a participant had
493   determined that for example, the sound of church bells was a characteristic of
494   tranquillity in their opinion, this perspective could be mapped through identifying
495   churches in the case study area and its intensity on the models and maps created was
496   depicted by the amount of times this opinion on in this case, tranquillity, arose. This
497   exploration and relative comparative process of the views collated with cartographic
498   features in the area, resulted in for example, c.72% of the initial views generated
499   through the first stage of focus groups being progressed into the formulation of GIS
500   models. Full details on the progression of the GIS modelling processes and
501   algorithms used are outlined in Terradillos & Wilkinson 2015.

502

5.2 The results in brief

504

505   In total, almost 15,000 views were collated from 1,000 research participants drawn
506   from LPAs, community groups, local tourism businesses, residents and visitors to the
507   Purbecks, across four stages of primary data collection. The initial results from the
508   qualitative and quantitative stages of the research demonstrate that tranquillity in the
509   Purbecks refers most commonly to what can be seen especially in relation to open

510 spaces and natural features of landscapes such as woodlands, streams, villages and

511 fields and pastoral scenes. Conversely, non-tranquillity, again perhaps

512 unsurprisingly, is primarily related to noise, particularly resulting from motorised

513 transport, visitor numbers during the tourist season, especially in coastal areas and in

514 rural spaces, and organised cycling events. It was also found that modern built

515 infrastructure, especially road networks and renewable energy resources, were

516 considered to affect the overall sense of tranquillity expected in the Purbecks as

517 being 'wholly out of keeping' with a protected area (Hewlett, 2015). As one focus

518 group of residents argued, the natural environment of the Purbecks has become over

519 commercialised; it has been turned into 'a theme park for the sole purpose of

520 promoting tourism'– 'when visitors come in we go out! Even visitors don't get what

521 they came for anymore' (Hewlett, 2015). Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, a

522 similar perspective was conveyed by visitors who specifically cited the pejorative

523 effects of traffic and other noise (Hewlett & Harding, 2015a).

524

525 What is particularly interesting concerns the similarities and distinctions that can be

526 made from a review of the following four GIS models (Figures 2-5 below). All four

527 groups relate any representation of mankind to nontranquillity as shown on these

528 models through for example settlements representing the most nontranquil spaces.

529 This sense of nontranquillity and its source, is additionally expressed through noise

530 related to human activity and seeing traffic thus areas close to the road networks are

531 depicted as nontranquil. Tranquil spaces, on the other hand are found in areas away

532 from the roads and settlements. These spaces on the models are enhanced by

533 participants' and respondents' views conveyed during the primary data collection

534 that considered 'isolation' and 'wilderness' as important aspects contributing to how

535 tranquillity might be perceived and experienced.

536

537 Figure 2 GIS Model: Residents (Hewlett et al. 2017)

538 Figure 3 GIS Model: Institutions (Hewlett et al. 2017

539 Figure 4 GIS Model: Householders (Hewlett et al. 2017)

540 Figure 5 GIS Model: Visitors (Hewlett et al. 2017)

541

542 Notwithstanding these similarities, there are distinctions amongst the models.

543 Amongst these, residents considered the notion of remoteness as a greater factor of

544 tranquillity than institutions, as such their respective model represents   more

545 tranquillity than that of institutions (Figures 2 & 3). Further, on comparing Figures 4

546 and 5, the householders' model emphasises a greater representation of tranquillity

547 than that of the visitors' who interestingly out of the four models shown, emphasise

548 traffic on the roads in relation to how non tranquillity might be experienced.

549

550 Whilst the similarities are encouraging in terms of just how institutions, householders

551 and visitors consider the Purbecks, the distinctions presented here and many other

552 differentiating factors identified post research, question just whose views should

553 lead on decisions taken in relation to tourism planning and its management in the

554 Purbecks –institutions and managing agencies, householders or visitors to the area-

555 and just how publically acceptable LPA decisions on development in the Purbecks

556 will actually be, if their views dominate planning decisions taken. Yet, as previously

557 discussed the law states that local people's views should be considered by LPAs in

558 determining local planning decisions and further in determining what local residents

559 consider as areas of significant local value. Conversely a long-held critique of

560 planning practice is that LPAs may consult with local people, but residents' views

561 can be fashioned to support authorities' objectives thus creating the potential for the

562 steering of the public's views to fit political agendas and development plans

563 (Burton, 2003; Hewlett, 2010; Hyden & Court, 2002; Ledwith, 2005; Richardson &

564 Connelly, 2002) .

565

566 **6. Putting BET into planning practice**

567

568 The BET framework is a predominantly qualitatively-informed MMR design for

569 investigating the highly subjective quality of tranquillity in rural and protected areas.

570 This is not to undermine the quantitative element of the research, which

571 demonstrated statistical significance for example, according to how noise, as a

572 negative experience and sounds from a positive perspective, can be interpreted

573 according to gender   (Hewlett and Harding, 2015b; Hewlett *et al*., 2017).

574 Furthermore without the householder survey, it is suspected that more than half of

575 the respondents classed as hard-to-reach would not have been involved in BET

576 (Hewlett, 2015) and certainly we would not have been able to hold the focus groups

577 with householders due to current restrictions placed on our partners by the Data
578 Protection Act 1998.

579

580 The findings have proved useful to local authorities in informing protected area
581 management plans, in implementing management objectives and in policy
582 formulation on the management of the Purbecks. The models are additionally being
583 used to inform tourism and visitor management strategies, the promotion of tourism
584 attractions and de-marketing of other areas valued for their cultural heritage and
585 protected as environmentally sensitive sites. Such is the importance of the BET that
586 its research design is being discussed nationally by heritage management
587 organisations and the research framework has been transferred for use by authorities
588 in other areas in England, including Devon in the South-West, Kent in the South
589 East and York in the north from where it has encouraged further interest in being
590 tested overseas in New Hampshire, in the United States. What has attracted interest
591 in this research design is the mixed methods approach that has led to the
592 development of GIS models which have been able to visualise the multifaceted
593 nature of a subjective landscape quality such as tranquillity, (see Hewlett *et al.,*
594 2017) and that have already demonstrated their utility in policy implementation.

595

596 Just how widely the BET framework will be adopted by other authorities
597 countrywide is yet to be seen. It offers numerous advantages to professional
598 planners not least in using techniques used in professional planning practice of public
599 consultations on planning strategies. The MMR approach adopted in this project
600 represents a robust methodology and technology for determining public views on the
601 subjective qualities of landscape; it addresses the practical demands of the National
602 Planning Policy Framework; and through the use of maps and models of tranquillity
603 it results in a powerful and easily accessible mechanism for heritage organisations,
604 planners and their wider audiences of local politicians' to gauge public views.

605

606

607

608 **7. Conclusion**

609

610   An increasing emphasis in academia on knowledge exchange and on research impact
611   demands that academics direct their attention towards practice**.**   From a practitioner
612   perspective, the BET project offers data and a methodology that can legitimise and
613   enhance planning practice and help to inform and legitimise decisions taken in the
614   public realm. The MMR approach is valuable to planners because of the access it
615   offers to both qualitative and quantitative data and the ability through GIS, to
616   visualise a highly subjective and value-laden concept such as tranquillity. No single
617   method, we argue, can address the nebulous topic of the meaning attached by key
618   stakeholders to the term tranquillity. A real potential exists therefore to adopt this
619   framework further to investigate, as noted earlier, other equally nebulous concepts
620   that are so commonly referred to in planning and in marketing contexts.

621

622   Limitations to this research project are however, acknowledged.   The universal
623   application of case study findings cannot (Yin 2003) and have not been made
624   however, the research framework and the designs of the GIS models used can and
625   have been transferred to alterative locations. Secondly, taking a primarily qualitative
626   approach to understanding the meaning of a highly subjective concept such as
627   tranquillity is open to claims of researcher bias particularly also in relation to the
628   analyses of the qualitative data collected, examined and counted according to the 19
629   themes identified on tranquillity. We hope to have addressed this critique in a
630   number of ways not least through the facilitation techniques used, the inclusion of
631   quantitative analyses where variables permit and the triangulation of data emergent
632   from analyses. Through the laboured efforts additionally to reconvene participants to
633   verify/amend their views presented in the GIS models, a legitimisation of the work is
634   claimed.   This, we hope, helps to correct the problem of an expert, top-down
635   approach to civic engagement.

636

637   Further research is warranted particularly in terms of distinctions on views of
638   tranquillity amongst social groupings including by gender and the effect of
639   domiciliary residence on attitudes. Additional testing of the methodological
640   framework is also called for, especially in relation to the power of GIS and the effect
641   that maps and GIS models may or not have on decisions taken by LPAs. Overall,

642   perceptual studies require not only research and contextual expertise, but time and
643   funds to support public consultations. However, the availability of a
644   methodologically acceptable template that can be adopted easily and effectively by
645   practitioners is a priority area of research in progressing perceptual studies in
646   landscape planning. This challenge is amply met by the BET project which provides
647   a tried and tested framework that can not only be deployed in identifying and
648   determining tranquillity in a given space, but that can easily be adapted to discern
649   public perspectives on other equally ambiguous concepts used to describe rural
650   destinations. Furthermore, the practical use of this ESRC funded research project on
651   tranquillity, is increasingly evident through its adoption by protected area managing
652   agencies, heritage organisations and LPAs both in England and more recently, in the
653   United States, for determining planning and development decisions designed to
654   enhance rural destinations within their jurisdictions.

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