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Ironman In Tenby

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Lecturer's Name

Deborah Jenkins

Student Name: Jasmine Robinson

Student ID: 2404492

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Introduction

This is a report analyzing Tenby which hosts the Ironman annually. This report discusses the Tenby train station, the impacts of using the train, the short and long-term positive and negative impacts of Ironman on Tenby, the future planning that's needed to take place to accommodate visitors and locals and make sure the event is sustainable, the type of visitors who attend the Ironman and sustainability challenges the event has.

Overview of destination

Tenby is a seaside town in Pembrokeshire in Wales and is most commonly known for its history, beaches and colourful houses. (Bluestonewales.com, 2024) Tenby is accessible by train and the station is close to the town. This is significant as train travel is one of the most sustainable methods of transportation and is more environmentally friendly than driving. (Fletcher et al., 2018) 19,809 people used the train to visit Tenby in the summer of 2023 and 60,000 people visited altogether which means 33% of people visited Tenby by train in the summer of 2023. (Ovenden, 2023) (Tenby Observer, 2023) The Ironman takes place in Tenby. The people who compete in the race have 17 hours to complete the triathlon and those who complete it in time are awarded the title 'Ironman'. (Boulder Bibs, n.d.). Ironman competitors start at 7.30 and finish late on Sunday 22nd of September 2024 so they would have had to stay for the Saturday and Sunday night therefore filling all the accommodation for that weekend. (Imperial Hotel Lounge & Terrace, 2024) (Sinclair, 2024) Competitors are only given snacks to keep them going throughout the race such as gummy bars, bananas, salted snacks, Red Bull and water which means that they will need proper meals which is why lots of local businesses do specials such as the Qube as they get so much revenue from the event. (Guide Station Aid Nutrition Guide for 2023 IRONMAN Wales, n.d.) (Facebook.com, 2022)

Short-term effects and long-term effects of this event on the destination

Ironman Tenby increases the number of tourists in Tenby and the event took place on the 22nd of September 2024 (Ironman, n.d.) which gives the economy an extra boost after the end of the busy summer season. Thousands of tourists visit Tenby to see the Ironman. This is a short-term effect of the event on this destination as these visitors are only visiting Tenby during the Ironman. (ITV News, 2024)

When interviewed about the effects of Ironman on the hospitality industry Jacob Barfoot, a chef who works in Twelve which is a local Tenby restaurant said "The event brings lots of revenue to the business and gives a large boost to our publicity" (Barfoot 2024) this is due to many people walking around and viewing the businesses. This is a positive effect on the destination as it

creates customers for the businesses ensuring they stay in business. According to statistics in 2023 Ironman brought 2,400 athletes and thousands of spectators from families to sports enthusiasts to locals. (Strongman, 2024) This is a long-term effect of the event on this destination as it keeps people talking about the businesses and which encourages them to thrive and keeps money in the local community which gives it opportunity for growth.

During Ironman Wales there are many road closures due to the event as Tenby is a small town, this is backed up by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1994. (Street Time Event Activity Closure Information n.d.) These roads can be closed for several days and includes the centre of Tenby, the roads that the athletes use and some surrounding areas including Penally, Manorbier, Pembroke, Carew and Angle. (Pembrokeshire Gov, 2018) The locals don't like this as it makes it hard for them to leave their homes, some are even housebound and a lot of people complain that they can't get to work due to the road closures which costs them money "It would be nice if the million pound company that is Ironman who pay very little tax in the UK, just once say sorry for the inconvenience." (Evans, 2024) This links to Doxeys Irridix. Doxeys Irridix is a graph which shows the attitudes of local people towards tourists. It shows that as more tourists take over a destination the less enthusiastic the local people feel about it and it ranges from euphoria to apathy to irritation to antagonism. As more tourists visit the Ironman the attitudes of the locals will change from apathy to antagonism. (Reisinger and Dimanche, 2010) (Beeton, 2006) This is a short-term effect of the event on this destination as these roads are only closed during this time.

Future-planning of tourism on the destination

According to statistics 33% of people who visited Tenby in the Summer of 2023 used the train. (Ovenden, 2023) (Tenby Observer, 2023) This number increases during the Ironman as tourists can't access Tenby due to road closures and Ironman promotes the Tenby railway station on the website. (Ironman, 2022) This is why investment in the Tenby railway service is important. All trains from large cities such as London and Manchester connect to Swansea however there are only 8 trains a day and the trains stop at 8pm. (Trainline, 2024) Trains often have fewer carriages than planned and cancellations which causes overcrowding. (VY, n.d.) These trains do not run frequently enough and are not big enough to support an event of this size. To future develop the train service in Tenby the trains in Tenby should be more frequent and larger to fit the growing amount of tourists. If there are more reliable trains it will encourage tourists to use the train service which makes a big difference to the environment. It would also make Ironman more appealing as it's even more accessible. In the future stakeholders could consider liaising with train companies to increase the number of trains coming to Tenby during this time which would reduce car travel and parking issues.

To sustain visitor numbers and increase them in the future Tenby could develop, support and highlight hidden spots in the surrounding areas that are interesting and attractive but not as busy. (Travel Begins at 40, 2021)

Visitor Typology

The Ironman is an event in the public sector which means Pembrokeshire council help to operate it, and it is a sports event. (BBC, 2023)

A lot of people like to train and compete in the Ironman to stay healthy. Some people go to watch the Ironman as they find it entertaining and enjoy the community aspect of it and some people take part of the watch to support a cause that they care about as the athletes choose which charity they are fundraising for. (IRONMAN Foundation, 2024)

There are many different types of people who visit Tenby for the Ironman. Some people are domestic tourists which are locals who visit the Ironman as it's an event close to them. (Travelperk.com, 2024) There are many reasons why people may become domestic tourists including to save money, environmental reasons or the type of people who are travelling, for example elderly people or families with young children are less likely to travel far. (Hui, L. Phillips, W, Francombe, J. Dunkerley, F., Rohr, C., 2021) Some people may also visit the event to see their loved ones compete, 30% of trips to Wales overnight in 2022 were to visit relatives. (GOV.WALES, 2024)

A lot of people who attend the Ironman are leisure tourists. Leisure tourists are tourists who travel in their free time for enjoyment and relaxation. (Taylor and Torkildsen, 2011) (Letchworth, 1981) People who attend the Ironman are also events tourists. Events are "An organised activity at a particular venue." (Bowdin et al. 2006) Events can be commercial activities which are events planned for commercial gain such as sports tourism like the Ironman. Events are a form of a leisure activity. People can also be sports tourists means that they travel to participate in or observe a sporting event. (Weed and Bull, 2012)

The Ironman is an outdoor event which brings the visitor market of adventure tourists which are tourists that like challenging activities that can be outdoors. Outdoor events can be challenging due to the weather and this is something event organisers need to keep in mind when planning this event. Some people enjoy outdoor events as it's seen as a way of pride and community spirit and makes the location look good while making sure that the heritage and traditions are being respected. In 2018 29.5 million people visited recreation outdoor events and spent a total of £7.2 billion. (Jackson, Blake and Hibbert, 2018) (Tillman, A., 1974) (Torkildsen, G, 2005)

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs describes the five stages of want. There are basic needs such as safety and physiological needs (food, water, warmth), physiological needs such as belongingness and love needs and esteem needs and self-fulfilment needs which are achieving one's full potential including creative activities. The Ironman is a self-fulfilment need as those who complete the Ironman feel like they are achieving their goals. (Pichère, 2018) (Maslow, 1943)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Ironman affects Tenby in an overall positive way with some negative aspects to it as well. The Ironman brings a lot of visitors to Tenby which some can argue is too much but it makes a massive impact on the local businesses and boosts the economy. Tenby is a great

place for sustainability due to the train service however the trains are often too overcrowded. The Ironman builds the community spirit and makes a lot of money for charity from the amount of athletes. The Ironman brings a whole new customer base to Tenby which it may not have otherwise.

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