

Research Methods and Field Study Experience (BMTP5022)

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Sailing Towards Sustainability: Welsh Public Attitudes to Cruise

Ship Tourism and Environmental Innovation

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**Exploring Welsh Public Perceptions of Cruise Ship Sustainability and
Environmental Innovation**

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to propose a model to investigate Welsh public attitudes toward cruise ship tourism and environmental innovation, with a focus on perceptions of cruise ship sustainability as a mode of transport. The study aims to assess public awareness of the environmental impacts of cruise ships, explore attitudes toward cruise tourism within the context of sustainable transport, and identify factors shaping these perceptions. It will also examine differences across demographic groups and provide recommendations to support more sustainable cruise transport practices in Wales.

The United Nations Development Programme (2025) characterises sustainable transport as mobility systems that minimise greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impacts while ensuring safety, affordability, and equitable access, and improving energy and resource efficiency. Similarly, Transport Topics (2024) defines sustainable transportation as methods that reduce environmental impact while safely and efficiently moving people and goods. Together, these definitions highlight that sustainable transportation facilitates the responsible movement of people and goods while addressing environmental, social, and economic objectives.

Transport has been recognised as a cornerstone of sustainable development since the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit and the adoption of Agenda 21. Subsequent conferences, notably the 1997 United Nations General Assembly Special Session, identified transport as a key driver of rising global energy demand. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development reinforced this through the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, highlighting sustainable transport's role in infrastructure, public transport, efficient goods delivery, affordability, air quality, public health, and greenhouse gas reduction. The 2012 Rio+20 Conference affirmed that sustainable transport supports economic growth, social equity, environmental protection, and urban–rural connectivity.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is integrated across multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including those on food security, health, energy, economic growth, infrastructure, and cities. Transport is also central to climate action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, contributing nearly a quarter of energy-related global greenhouse gas emissions, with projections indicating continued growth (United Nations, 2022).

2. Research Methodology

2.1-Research Design

According to Stephen and Velmurugan (2020, p.1), data collection is the process of systematically gathering quantitative or qualitative information to answer research questions or test hypotheses. The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, which is suitable for this project as it integrates both quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Quantitative data, is information measured and expressed in numbers, using consistent methods that make it easy to compare and analyse (Uher, 2021, p. 2519). Qualitative insights, on the other hand, provide non-numerical information, collected to understand people's experience, behaviours, and meanings (Goldkuhl, 2019, p. 572). This combination ensures a comprehensive analysis, capturing both statistical trends and personal perspectives, making it well-suited to the research objectives. This is further supported by The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (2020), indicating that a mixed methods study provides a deeper and more complete understanding of a research question.

2.2- Data Collection Methods

The study employs an embedded design, integrating both paper-based and online surveys via Google Forms to gather data from a wide range of participants. Surveys were selected for their ease of distribution and suitability in achieving the research objectives, with Kelley et al., (2003) noting that surveys provide an "easy research approach." Nevertheless, while surveys are convenient, the success relies on the researcher's organisation, planning, and careful design of questions. Following data collection, responses will be compiled into an Excel spreadsheet, systematically

organised into tables, and visualised through graphs and charts to reveal patterns, trends, and key insights.

Additionally, an interview with a cruise specialist will provide expert insights. Existing Literature (Jain, 2021; Khan and MacEachen, 2022; Gunawan, Marzilli, and Aungsuroch, 2022), suggests that interviews are highly effective for collecting rich, in-depth qualitative insights, which has influenced the researcher's decision to include an interview as a supplementary data collection method. If the interview cannot be conducted, nevertheless, the project will not be compromised, as the alternative data collection methods are sufficient to meet the research goals.

2.3- Sampling

Sampling is a critical aspect of research, involving the careful selection of participants to ensure that the data collected is reliable and reproducible (Finn et al., 2000, pp. 108–109; Veal, 2018, pp. 414–415). The primary data collection will be conducted at Paul Cranny Travel. The researcher will utilise a non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience sampling, by recruiting twenty-five participants to complete the questionnaire. Additionally, a single interview will be conducted with a cruise industry specialist, employing expert sampling to obtain informed insights from a professional with relevant expertise. This sample size was chosen to ensure the research remains manageable, diverse, and feasible within the project's scope and timeframe. The study will exclude individuals under 18 years old to meet ethical research standards. The study will include both the public and travel industry professionals to capture general and expert perspectives. Using the same questionnaire for travel agents enables direct comparison with public responses, providing a comprehensive understanding of perceptions. All research will be conducted in Wales, focusing on regional views in the context of recent growth in cruise travel.

2.4- Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are fundamental to protecting participants' rights, ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and preventing harm. Principles such as informed consent, confidentiality, integrity, and respect for persons are central to

responsible research practice, guiding researchers to conduct their work ethically and respectfully (National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, 2024).

Researchers will be required to follow the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Policy, as well as the University's Data Management Policy. All participants will be fully informed about the purpose of the study, how their data will be used, and their right to withdraw at any time before taking part. Transparency will be maintained throughout the research process. Participants will be provided with a Participant Information Sheet outlining these details. Additionally, a Research Permission Letter will be sent, to request approval to conduct research at Paul Cranny Travel, and written confirmation will be obtained before any research activities commence. Participants will be given at least one week to decide whether to take part. They will receive clear information about the study's purpose, what participation involves, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence, ensuring informed and voluntary consent.

Participants with difficulty understanding written information, will be accommodated with adjustments such as larger print or alternative formats ensuring all can participate comfortably and voluntarily. Data will be prepared, organised, and documented systematically. Paper-based survey responses will be entered into an Excel spreadsheet and stored securely on the university's password-protected server, while electronic data from Google Forms will be downloaded and saved in a secure folder accessible only to the researcher and supervisor. Paper-based materials will be kept in a locked cabinet when not in use. Regular backups will be made to prevent data loss. A record of data collection, entry, and verification will be maintained to ensure accuracy, transparency, and traceability. Access to all data will be restricted to authorised university staff following the university's data protection and ethical guidelines. Data will be used solely for this module and will not be retained or shared beyond the project. Upon completion of this module, electronic files will be securely deleted, and paper-based materials will be shredded. Important anonymised data, including surveys, interview transcripts, and supporting documentation, will remain within the university's secure system. Metadata and records will be updated throughout the research to maintain quality and context. Data will only be shared via Turnitin in the form of presentation slides and a video recording for assessment

purposes. Ownership of the data will be jointly held by the university and the researcher, but no data will be used commercially or externally.

3. Significance of the Study

3.1- Academic Contribution

The proposed research project makes an academic contribution by addressing a notable gap in the literature on cruise transportation, particularly within a smaller region such as Wales. While extensive studies have examined other modes of transport, including buses and trains, there is limited research on public perceptions of the environmental sustainability and social impacts associated with cruising as a mode of transportation.

3.2- Regional Context: Cruise Tourism in Wales

Wales has five cruise ports, Cardiff, Swansea, Milford Haven, Fishguard, and Holyhead, which have seen substantial growth in recent years (Visit Wales, 2025). According to the Welsh Government (2025), there has been an “over 100% increase in cruise ship visits to Wales,” highlighting the country’s emergence as a key cruise destination. A recent report further notes that this cruise ship boom is enhancing Wales’s international profile and providing a significant economic boost, with tourism leaders acknowledging its positive impact and local businesses expressing satisfaction with the increased activity (BBC, 2025).

As cruise tourism continues to expand in Wales, understanding public perceptions of environmental sustainability becomes increasingly important. While cruise ships may not represent the most environmentally sustainable mode of transportation, the industry is actively pursuing environmental innovation. According to the Cruise Lines International Association (2023), the organisation has committed to achieving net-zero carbon cruising by 2050 and closely monitors the adoption of sustainable fuels, energy-efficient technologies, and shore-side electricity across its fleet. Members of the Cruise Lines International Association also support several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including Climate Action, Sustainable Cities, and Responsible Consumption and Production. The project also aligns with Welsh

Government priorities outlined in the *Net Zero Wales* plan and the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy, which emphasise the need to reduce carbon emissions and promote greener modes of travel (Welsh Government, 2022). By exploring public awareness, attitudes, and demographic variations in perceptions of cruise ship transport, this research addresses a critical gap in both academic literature and policy understanding. The findings are expected to generate evidence-based insights to inform sustainable transport and tourism strategies, supporting Wales’s ongoing efforts to develop a low-carbon, community-oriented cruise sector that balances economic growth with environmental responsibility.

Moreover, the project’s findings could support Wales positioning as a tourist destination. A case in point is the Hebridean Princess, a small luxury cruise ship accommodating just 48 guests, which can access ports that larger vessels cannot. In September 2025, it docked at Swansea, bringing visitors to Wales and supporting local businesses. This example highlights how smaller, more sustainable cruise operations can provide economic benefits while positively impacting local communities.

4. Timeline and Budget

4.1-Timeline Overview

Within this research project, timelines will systematically sequence activities in chronological order, facilitating the management of complex tasks. They will support rigorous monitoring of progress, efficient allocation of resources, and the timely achievement of all milestones and deadlines associated with the study of cruise transportation (Office Timeline, n.d.).

4.2- Gantt Chart

The research project will employ a Gantt chart to systematically plan, schedule, and monitor all activities, as detailed below:



4.3- Budget

A budget is essential in conducting a research project, as it provides a structured framework for the efficient and effective allocation of financial resources (Nawin, 2023). The only minor expense anticipated is the printing of questionnaires, estimated at £2, which will be charged to my university card at the library. All data will be collected and securely stored using existing university systems, including Google Forms, Excel, and the university's secure server, which are sufficient to meet the short-term requirements of the project. As the data will be deleted upon completion of the module, no long-term storage costs will be incurred. No travel expenses are expected, as the research will be conducted during my work placement at Paul Cranny Travel.

5. Conclusion and Limitations

5.1- Conclusions

The mixed-methods approach strengthens the research by combining quantitative surveys with qualitative expert insights, allowing both broad patterns and deeper perspectives to be captured. Convenience sampling makes data collection practical and manageable, while the expert interview enhances the richness and credibility of the findings. Together, these methods provide a balanced and reliable understanding of public attitudes.

5.2- Limitations

The chosen methodology has several limitations. The relatively small sample size of twenty-five participants may limit the findings, as time constraints could restrict the depth of data collection. Access to participants is also dependent on Paul Cranny Travel and online distribution, which may reduce diversity and exclude certain demographic groups. Additionally, non-probability sampling, including convenience and expert sampling, may introduce bias, and reliance on self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews could be influenced by participants' subjective opinions or social desirability.

5.3- Mitigation Strategies

Multiple strategies can be implemented to mitigate the limitations of the chosen methodology. The small sample size can be addressed by supplementing data collection to increase participant diversity. Time constraints can be managed through careful planning, scheduling, and prioritisation of key activities. Participant access can be broadened via multiple recruitment channels, including local community groups and promotion on social media platforms. Potential biases from non-probability sampling can be minimised through transparent selection criteria and cross-verification with expert interviews. The reliability of self-reported data can be enhanced by using clear, neutral, structured questions and by assuring participants of anonymity and confidentiality to promote honest responses.

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