

PORTS OF CALL: IN SEARCH OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Graham Busby

Jennifer O'Neill

Plymouth University, UK

ABSTRACT: Cruise tourism is one of the fastest growing components of tourism. As cruise companies begin to look for diverse itineraries, in order to gain a competitive advantage, Britain, especially the South West (Gibson and Bentley, 2007), is becoming more desirable due to the range of varied products it has to offer. As the number of cruise ports of call continues to increase, it is important to gain a competitive advantage over other ports and encourage these companies to visit, due to the benefits a cruise-ship visiting can bring to the local economy. The research examined the factors that may affect port-of-call selection. This study used triangulation: data collection of interviews, content analysis and archival analysis. The findings concluded that ports need to have sufficient berth depth to accommodate cruises, help and support from local authorities for improvements needed for the expanding cruise ships, and natural assets such as attractions within easy access for visitors. **Keywords:** cruises, destinations, competitive advantage, ports-of-call.

RESUMEN: El turismo de cruceros es una de las vertientes del turismo que de forma más rápida viene creciendo. Como las empresas de cruceros empiezan a buscar itinerarios diversificados, con el objetivo de obtener una ventaja competitiva, la Gran Bretaña, especialmente en la zona del sur oeste (Gibson & Bentley, 2007), se pone cada vez más atractiva, debido a los productos variados que tiene para ofrecer. Como el número de puertos de escala de cruceros sigue aumentando, es importante ganar una ventaja competitiva en relación a otros puertos e incentivar esas empresas a visitar, debido a los beneficios que la visita de un navío de crucero puede traer a la economía local. La pesquisa analizó a los factores que pueden afectar la elección del puerto de escala. Este estudio recurrió a la triangulación: recogida de datos de entrevistas, análisis de contenido y análisis del archivo. Los resultados muestran que los puertos necesitan tener profundidad suficiente para acomodar muelles de cruceros, ayuda y apoyo de las autoridades locales para las mejoras necesarias para el número creciente de navíos de crucero, y activos naturales, como atracciones de acceso fácil para los visitantes. Palabras clave: cruceros, destinos, ventaja competitiva, puertos de escala.

RESUMO: O turismo de cruzeiros é uma das vertentes do turismo que mais rapidamente tem crescido. Visto que as empresas de cruzeiros começam a procurar itinerários diversificados, a fim de obter uma vantagem competitiva, a Grã-Bretanha, especialmente a zona do Sudoeste (Gibson & Bentley, 2007), torna-se cada vez mais atrativa, devido à gama de produtos variados que tem para oferecer. Como o número de portos de escala de cruzeiros continua a aumentar, é importante ganhar uma vantagem competitiva em relação a outros portos e incentivar essas empresas a visitar, devido aos benefícios que a visita de um navio de cruzeiro

Graham Busby has been with Plymouth University since 1994. During this time, he has taught on a range of programmes from Bachelor's to Master's and supervised a number of doctorates. His research interests are film-related tourism, literary tourism, rural tourism, and the concept of tourism higher education. Author's email: g.busby@plymouth.ac.uk. **Jennifer O'Neill** is graduated from Plymouth University in 2011 with a BSc Tourism Management, classified First Class Honours. She now works for Winchester City Council, in Hampshire, UK, as Tourism Support and Publications Officer.

pode trazer à economia local. A pesquisa analisou os fatores que podem afetar a seleção do porto de escala. Este estudo recorreu à triangulação: recolha de dados de entrevistas, análise de conteúdo e análise de arquivo. Os resultados mostram que os portos precisam de ter profundidade suficiente para acomodar cais de cruzeiros, ajuda e apoio das autoridades locais para as melhorias necessárias para o número crescente de navios de cruzeiro, e ativos naturais, como atrações de fácil acesso para os visitantes. Palavras-chave: cruzeiros, destinos, vantagem competitiva, portos de escala.

INTRODUCTION

More than a decade ago, Wood (2000) observed that it was remarkable that so little research existed pertaining to the cruise industry, particularly given that Foster (1986:217) had remarked, fourteen years earlier, on the paucity of studies, asserting that “cruising and the cruise industry is a major frontier for tourism research”. The cruise sector grows annually around 7% (Lester and Weeden, 2004) meaning it is one of the fastest growing components of the tourism industry. It was expected that by the end of 2011 the total numbers of cruise passengers would be approximately 19.2 million (Wahlstrom, 2010).

Although a few well-known brands, such as Princess Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line and Cunard, dominate the industry (Gibson, 2008), there are many more small ship operators. Almost without exception, ports of call are an integral part of the experience for passengers on these lines and, not surprisingly, they are continually looking for diverse itineraries to offer their passengers, in order to gain a competitive advantage over other companies.

In recent years, there has been a development of British ports of call; websites such as Cruise Britain illustrate recognition of the importance within the ‘product offer’; indeed, Cruise Britain is a joint venture between VisitBritain and the Passenger Shipping Association (Cruise Britain 2011). Particularly, South West England has shown opportunities for cruises (Gibson and Bentley, 2007), especially after the creation of the Destination South West initiative, which consists of thirteen ports working with local authorities and attractions to promote the region as a cruise destination. This research focuses on four ports: Plymouth, Falmouth and Fowey, all in Destination South West, and Southampton, the largest cruise port in the United Kingdom.

The aim was to investigate characteristics of cruise ports of call and to identify what creates competitive advantage. The research involved tape-recorded interviews with key individuals at the ports, content analysis and archival analysis. The first section identifies the pertinent literature relating to ports of call; this is followed by a brief review of the concept of competitive advantage and, then, findings and discussion.

Ports of call – the geographic dimension

Ports of call are an integral part of the cruise product, often being described as the destination port (Butt, 2007). Visit Southampton (2005) expands this description by noting that a port of call is when a ship calls at a certain port and the passengers spend the day within that port or the surrounding area. Cruise lines stop at these particular ports usually for the attractions rather than what the port itself has to offer. Parrett (2008) highlights that ports are important to holidaymakers, with roughly 49% expressing this as the reason why they chose their cruise, compared to the second most important factor of cost (15%). Henthorne (2000:247) agrees with this, stating that “because of this, cruise lines are very cautious regarding selected ports of call”. However, Wood (2000), Weaver (2005) and Hatch (2010) believe that ports of call are a niche market within the cruise industry and it is the cruise ships, themselves, and the experience they offer that the holidaymakers choose. Ports of call have many different characteristics which attract a variety of people. Gardner (2007) states that new destinations are being sought out to tempt more passengers; this can, therefore, lead to a competitive advantage for ports of call if they can offer something for everyone.

As the cruise industry grows, the number of destinations, axiomatically, grows. Véronneau and Roy (2009) comment that cruises operate throughout the world changing itineraries with seasons and changes to the market. As a result, passengers are able to travel the world with ease and cruise liners are able to offer a variety of activities for everyone, therefore, widening the market. Indeed, Wood (2000:348) suggests there are “over 1,800 ports worldwide”; more recently Ward (2008) states that there are over 2,000 ports of call worldwide, taking passengers to places otherwise inaccessible. This highlights the fact that new ports are being added all of the time (Park, 2011). Johnson (2002) emphasises those new ports, which are less popular and less known, as being in addition to the existing ports and not instead of, so there is something for everyone. There are, however, some constraints to these new ports which include the size of the ship being very large and some docks either not being deep enough or long enough to take them.

Presently, the Caribbean islands are the most popular cruise destination (Butt, 2007; Dwyer & Forsyth, 1998); these islands have approximately 50% share of the total market, followed by the Mediterranean which has a 10% share. Archer (2007), however, points out that the Baltic is probably the fastest growing destination. There has also been development of British ports being used as ports of call, as highlighted by Wild and Dearing (2000). A further example is portrayed by Butt (2007) who describes the port of Southampton as not only a home port, where cruises

start from (Visit Southampton, 2005), but also as a port of call. Furthermore, Gibson and Bentley (2006) emphasise that ports, such as that of Falmouth in Cornwall, have the right characteristics for cruises to berth and activities close by, thereby able to become a successful port of call.

Activities offered at a port of call are a very important aspect, as these can determine if people visit a certain destination or not. Dickinson and Vladimir (2008:61) comment that “while it is true that some experienced cruisers rarely get off the ship, the majority are always keen on exploring new destinations”. For this reason West (2008) highlights that as ports constantly change, it will not always be the same on a second visit, so exploring is worthwhile and it is important for the ports to gain a competitive advantage, by offering different things for similar ports of call.

Most cruise lines offer excursions for the passengers to enjoy; Wood (2000:349) observes that the “*CLIA* (Cruise Lines International Association) currently divides the industry into seven segments – budget, contemporary, premium, luxury cruise, luxury sailing, exploration/soft adventure, and niche”, this can determine what type of excursions are offered by the cruise line to passengers at each port of call. As Jaakson (2004) points out, passengers can either choose to join these tours or explore the destination on their own. In some cases, however, ports can be away from the tourist centre; therefore many cruise lines suggest booking excursions, for ease (Maassen, 2007). Across the world the range of activities varies considerably. Some examples of these are illustrated in Table 1.

Cruise passengers are not homogeneous and, therefore, a range of activities are needed at a port of call. Royal Caribbean, as highlighted by Dickinson and Vladimir (2008), promote their cruises and ports of call as offering anything you could want, from once in a lifetime experience to cultural experiences. Dickinson and Vladimir (2008:212) also note that Royal Caribbean suggests “cruising...more than a vacation, it [is an] adventure”. This is in contrast to cruise lines such as Voyages of Discovery (2010), who offer more cultural and heritage experiences. Furthermore, Voyages of Discovery’s website illustrates further how they offer unique experiences, with guest speakers and chances to explore monuments. This, however, is not just unique to them as Swan Hellenic (2011) also emphasise guest speakers on their cruises. In many Caribbean islands, in order to gain a competitive advantage, cruise companies have taken over their own islands or parts of islands. Some cruise lines have private clubs or passengers are able to use hotel facilities on others (West, 2008). Jaakson (2004), however, describes some places as having staged authenticity, with passengers wanting to remain in the tourist bubble such as that of the ship, to avoid the fear of crime, hence why so many are attracted to those Caribbean islands owned by the cruise company themselves.

Table 1. Sample activities on offer at Ports of Call

Port of Call and Source	Activities Offered
Barcelona, Spain (Word Travels, 2010)	Spain's most popular port offers history: <u>La Ramblas</u> - Europe's most famous street <u>Picasso Museum</u> <u>Guell Park</u> - Antonio Gaudi's work can be seen here, also it offers splendid views of the city <u>La Sagrada Família</u> - One of Catalonia's most intriguing landmarks, the bizarre Church of the Holy Family designed by modernist architect Antoni Gaudi <u>Montjuic</u> - hill overlooking the city centre of Barcelona on which are sited some of the city's show-pieces, including the main sites of the 1992 Olympics; the Poble Espanyol (a replicated Spanish village displaying art and architecture); the Joan Miro museum; and the National Art Museum of Catalonia. <u>Tibidabo</u> - Barcelona's second landmark hill <u>La Pedrera (Casa Milà)</u> - Another construction by the creative genius Antonio Gaudi <u>Barri Gòtic</u> - Known as the Gothic Quarter, the Barri Gòtic is Barcelona's oldest district. <u>FC Barcelona Museum and Stadium</u> <u>Joan Miró Foundation</u> <u>Museum of Contemporary Art</u>
Anchorage, Alaska (Alaska Cruises, 2010)	Largest city in Alaska, offers nature: Alaska Native Heritage Centre Resolution Park for a breathtaking view of the Talkeetnas and the snow-covered Alaska Range. Imaginarium – science centre Fly in a floatplane – to view bears Glacier Tours
Warnemunde (Berlin) Ger- many (Holland Ameri- ca, 2010)	UNESCO World Heritage site: A UNESCO World Heritage Site: Medieval Lubeck & its Famous Marzipan Berlin by Riverboat & Train Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp & the Holocaust Memorial Pergamon Museum & Berlin Cathedral

Ports of call – port characteristics

Ports attract different types of cruises due to their characteristics. This does not only include what activities they have to offer, but also aspects such as the size of the port and if a ship can berth in the port or if they have to anchor offshore, and passengers get tendered ashore by small boats, (West, 2008). Cottam, Roe and Challacombe (2007:188) state as with “the short-sea ferry industry, the ability to berth and unberth with only limited tow assistance is also paramount for many cruise destinations”; it's a determining factor whether cruises visit or not.

In the Caribbean, this has particularly become apparent as some Caribbean ports are being encouraged to deepen their ports to fit all types of cruise ships, especially the new larger mega ships (Lester and Weedon, 2004). As the cruise industry in Britain grows these factors need to be considered as to where can be visited and by which ships.

To a certain extent, berthing enables a competitive advantage; therefore, to be successful, it is necessary to find the ports that fit the cruise ship and which offer a variety of activities.

The Concept of Competitive Advantage

The concept of competitive advantage is under constant review (Harris and Ogbonna, 2001). Porter (1980; 1985) proposed the concept of competitive advantage, based on a five forces framework, identifying how to gain competitive advantage. Porter (1985:1) stated “competition is at the core of the success or failure of firms”; Porter (1985) suggests that there are three strategies that need to be put into place in order to gain competitive advantage: cost leadership, differentiation and focus. Competitive advantage can also be described as what firms use to outperform their competitors (Flynn et al., 1995, cited in Dunk, 2004); this is why it is becoming critical in a variety of types of business (Weerawardena and O’Cass, 2004). Customer focused strategies such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Service Quality, Relationship Marketing, and Total Quality Control (TQC) can create satisfaction from customers and, therefore, loyalty, which is important to gain a competitive advantage (Lobo, 2008; Reed, Lemark and Mero, 2000).

Service Quality, including service encounters, is an important factor that needs to be considered alongside competitive advantage, as it can influence customer satisfaction. Weiermair (2000) identifies that management problems may arise in intercultural service encounters (which occur at ports of call) due to the fact that the service provider and the service client may not come from the same cultural background. This is why, especially in the instance of ports, it is important to consider the five gap model by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) to gain greater understanding of how successful service encounters can be achieved. This is further emphasised by Lobo (2008) who highlights that service quality, such as customer satisfaction from encounters, is very important to gain success and establish a competitive advantage, by exceeding customer expectations. Therefore, by having a service strategy in place, it is argued that it will increase the firm’s revenue, improve satisfaction and increase success, thereby providing a competitive advantage (Nordin, 2008).

Another way to achieve a competitive advantage, in particular for destinations, is through careful marketing and branding (Anholt, 2007; Huang, Busby and Bosdou, 2009), creating an image and reputation for an area (López-Gamero, Molina-Azorin and Claver-Corte, 2009). It is suggested by Agrawal and Kamakura (1999:262) that for a “perfectly competitive market [would be that] in which consumers have full information about available products and producers have full in-

formation about consumer preferences". It is however, identified by Bobillo, López-Iturriaga and Tejerina-Gaite (2010), Narula (1993) and Li and Zhou (2010) that each country is different and, therefore, different strategies need to be employed for each. Firms/ countries need to pick their strategy carefully to ensure it is right for them to gain a competitive advantage. Chang and Liu (2009), and Kong and Prior (2008) suggest that the focus should be on developing competitive activities, which is especially important with ports of call, as there are a number of variables which need to work together. As competition continually increases, it is essential to not only develop a competitive advantage but also to sustain it, to keep ahead of the competition and enhance the product (Harris and Ogbonna, 2001; Morgan and Hunt, 1999). Moreover, to sustain an advantage a firm or destination needs to ensure that they are ready for crises and disasters, to stay ahead of the competition (Chang, 2000).

It is also important to consider that many industries work closely together and that other industries can influence demand and help to gain a competitive advantage (Brouthers and Brouthers, 1997). Domestic competition is a big factor and gaining an advantage can be difficult. Governments have a major influence on the competitive advantage, through aspects such as laws, tariffs and charges (Brouthers and Brouthers, 1997; Chang, 2000). Governments can help, in areas such as ports and destinations, by increasing investment, therefore aiding with access, time and reducing port charges, making it cheaper for cruise lines and passengers alike to visit (Grossman, 2008).

Competitive Advantage as Applied to Ports of Call

The concept of competitive advantage can be applied to ports of call, in a number of respects, and which passengers can benefit from (Véronneau and Roy, 2009), given that cruise ships can be easily repositioned. Careful management is needed to ensure that the best of the ports is experienced by passengers and there is something for everyone. It is important to ensure that popular ports of call are not overwhelmed causing passengers to have bad experiences (Archer, 2008). Therefore, it is essential to continually deliver high service quality to compete effectively (Teye and Leclerc, 1998). Ports of call can, however, be affected by other areas: "a poor performance in one area may negate a high performance in other areas... provision of consistent and high quality service is relatively hard to attain in many service industries" (Teye and Leclerc, 1998:154) so cruise lines and ports of call must work together for a total quality experience.

In order to gain a competitive advantage, it is important to understand what the consumer wants and needs, this includes knowing the

target segment (Debbage, 1999). This should be used to attract consumers to the port, by offering what they want (Hung and Petrick, 2010). In ports of call, this can be somewhat difficult, with people of all ages, with different wants and needs visiting, there needs to be something for everyone. Fahy (2004) also highlights that the country of origin can also determine different needs and wants, therefore, this is another factor that needs to be considered. Customer satisfaction is essential to gain a competitive advantage at a port of call, due to significant competition. Consequently, improvements in service quality are vital to success, along with strong marketing of what is available from cruise companies and travel agents (Qu and Ping, 1999). Furthermore, the improvement of products, and not just the service quality, is necessary, as this is what first attracts the consumers, as a result creating a competitive advantage (Gamble and Jones, 1991). Carpenter and MacGill (2001) also comment that lowering port charges can create a competitive advantage as more cruise companies will go there due to the lower costs.

It is important to offer different experiences and unique opportunities at ports of call, in order to attract holidaymakers. Gardner (2007) points out that cruises in Australia and Asia are becoming increasingly popular as passengers seek new experiences through different itineraries. Gordon, Lee and Lucas (2005) indicate that in the port of Singapore, a sustainable competitive advantage has already been achieved. This has been done by selecting resources that other ports cannot match easily. They also draw attention, however, to the fact that competitors do not easily give up, so it is important to continually monitor to keep ahead. Constantly planning and developing new ideas will aid a competitive advantage and sustain it (Progoulaki and Theotokas, 2010). In England, several ports have established a marketing partnership called Destination South West in order to promote the region as a cruise destination. This was aided by a cruise coordinator specialist who has many contacts within the industry. When cruise lines choose a port of call, there are many factors which they consider. These are highlighted by The Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility (PPIAF) (2010) in Table 2.

Table 2. Port of call selection factors

1	Location of the port and cruising distance relative to other ports on a particular itinerary.
2	“Marquee” value and activities available for passengers.
3	Visitor safety and comfort
4	Existence of head taxes.
5	Physical capabilities of the port to accept cruise ships.

As competition grows, these factors become more important. Tongzon and Heng (2005) highlight these factors and expand by using eight determinants, these being: port operation efficiency level, handling charges, reliability, selection preferences of carriers, depth of channel, adaptability to changing market environments, landside accessibility, and product differentiation. To summarise, it is important for ports of call to gain a competitive advantage in order to be successful. Ports of call must distinguish themselves, by offering a range of activities to attract a variety of people. There is a lack of research on the cruise industry and most of the extant research focuses on that of cruise lines themselves, instead of the ports of call.

METHODOLOGY

With this topic, remarkably little research exists and, in order to investigate how ports gain competitive advantage, triangulation was used; this refers to use of a combination of data collection methods to explore the research question, therefore, enabling cross validation and a greater evaluation of data (Mason; 2002: Todd, 1979). The triangulation approach for this research encompasses, face-to-face/ telephone interviews (qualitative approach), a review of archive material (archival research) and information taken from websites concerning cruises (content analysis). After the research was completed, it was discovered that Park (2011) had also adopted a multi-method approach to data collection when examining the cruise industry in the Pacific.

The combination of these methods was chosen as the cruise industry can be somewhat difficult to research, due to access. Questionnaires would require a number of industry informants to respond and access to cruises can be very constrained. Questionnaires would also not have enabled in-depth, specialist knowledge that the interviews can gain and that the analysis of content and archival data can unfold. This, therefore, emphasises how the combination of archive research and content analysis enables a more comprehensive view of the data available, combined with cross-examination of interviews with those who have in-depth knowledge of the industry, is more suited for this research. The ports chosen to be considered in this research were Falmouth, Fowey, and Plymouth, which are all included on the Destination South West website, and Southampton, the largest and most dominant port in the United Kingdom for cruises.

Qualitative research was used in this study, by undertaking face-to-face and telephone interviews. These interviews were with people within the cruise industry and port managers, who would be classed as elite interviewees (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). The interviews included semi-structured questions and, therefore, were altered according to responses.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed, according to Silverman's (2006) guidelines in order to analyse the responses in greater depth and to ensure no important information was lost. These are beneficial to the research, as they enable detailed knowledge from those who know most about the industry. The results of the interviews were analysed by tabling key themes that appear within them to gain a clear idea of the responses and anything that was repeated or different between responses.

Due to the limited time and number of interviews that could be conducted, triangulation is important in this research, as it can be undertaken "using multiple and different sources, methods, investigators or theories" (Robson, 1993:290); it is important to research this as it enables cross checks of data ensuring increased validity. Robson (2002) emphasises that this is particularly important concerning qualitative data, as it can ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected.

Archival research was also undertaken. This approach utilises sources such as minutes of meetings to assess relevant data; this is why Decrop (1999:113) considers archival research to be a "privileged tool". Within this research, minutes of meetings and news articles from Chambers of Commerce, Town/City Councils and County Councils were reviewed to assess whether there was mention of cruises or activities associated with cruises. This is important as it permits cross-examination of data and a review of what is happening at specific destinations and ports. If ports are mentioned, it expresses that they are important to the area and are considered part of their development.

In order to assess the reliability and trustworthiness of archival documents, Scott (1990, cited in Punch, 1998) recommends a twelve cell typology, which encompasses four main questions which should be referred to in order to evaluate:

- authenticity (whether it is original or genuine)
- credibility (whether it is accurate)
- representativeness (whether it is representative of the totality of documents in its class)
- meaning (what is it intended to say)

With regards to the use of minutes of meetings, these questions can be answered by:

- They are credible
- Cannot be sure how accurate they are
- Cannot be sure if they represent the totality of documents.

These, therefore, help assess internal validity, which is described by Robson (2002) as if the results can demonstrate a causal relationship between treatment (tests) and outcome (results). Campbell and

Stanley (1963, cited in Robson, 2002) do, however, suggest that there are threats to internal validity and these were considered.

The other form of data collection was content analysis of websites. This has been described by Krippendorff (2004:18) as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use”. The content analysis used for this research was that of reviewing relevant cruise websites, port websites and Destination South West’s, to assess what they emphasised about different ports of call and the competitive advantage they provide over other ports. Law, Qi and Buhalis (2010) express that web evaluation in tourism research is both valuable and important, as it can find lots of information and measure the usefulness of websites assessed. Jang (2004) further expresses that due to the trend of internet searching by tourism consumers, it is important to have a clear understanding and evaluation of what online information they receive. The information found on websites is both descriptive and factual.

By analysing websites concerning cruises and ports of call, it is possible to review what different ports have to attract people to them, how they are marketed and what range of activities they have to offer in comparison with other ports. Websites were also analysed to assess how much information they provided to cruisers on issues such as size, activities, facilities, technology and information on excursions. As there are too many websites concerning cruises to pick everyone, a search was conducted via Google and every third website was chosen. The sample used when assessing websites, was random sampling. This involved exploring different websites that arose through different searches on the internet. This involved using key websites associated with cruise companies, ports and information on ports given via interviews. By undertaking content analysis of websites, it is possible to distinguish where cruises visit, what is available and if cruises to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) World Heritage Sites, to places such as Kotor, Montenegro, are becoming increasingly popular and available. Content analysis and archival research involved in this research is that of reviewing archives of relevant data available, in the form of minutes of meetings and news articles, and assessing their relation to the cruise industry. Content analysis also involves assessing websites and information on cruises. For all three forms of research, Table 3 was used in order to assess what information there is and to enable evaluation, to determine if the decisions made on ports were in fact policy decisions or operational decisions.

Table 3. Template of findings table

	Chamber of Commerce	Town Council	County Council
Berthing			
Length			
Passenger: Disembarkation			
Passenger: Welcome			
Excursion: Transport Network			
Excursions			
Influences/Implication			
Facilities			

Sample

The sample in research is very important to the study; it is important to use relevant people, due to it not being possible to interview everyone (Punch, 1998). For qualitative sampling, for example face-to-face or telephone interviews, deliberate sampling tends to be used, so that relevant people are chosen. The sample chosen for this research includes those who have a connection and knowledge of the cruise industry. These include port managers, Chamber of Commerce officers and those who work within the cruise industry. Elite sampling as described by Marshall and Rossman (1999) would be deemed the best sample for this research. Elite individuals are considered by Marshall and Rossman (1999:113) to be “influential, prominent, and/or well-informed people... selected on the basis of their expertise”. Due to the combination of qualitative research, archival research and content analysis, with the mixture of time restrictions, a restricted number of people were used within the study, but did represent a selection of ports to gain a balanced view.

Findings – analysis of interviews

Olsen (2004) suggests that in order to examine triangulation research effectively, it is best to conduct and examine the primary research, such as interviews, to begin with then continue on to the secondary data, such as archival research and content analysis, as patterns and framework for primary research can be constructed more coherently and used for the latter research.

Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest that in order to assess qualitative data, the interviews, the most effective way is to use a framework, as much of qualitative data is unstructured, thus ensuring detection of key elements in the interviews. This is then used throughout the triangulation process in order to ensure that the research is coherent and can be examined efficiently as they relate to one another. The five key stages to qualitative data analysis in the ‘Framework’ Ritchie and

Spencer (1994) suggest are shown in Table 4. The framework allows the information required to be sifted through and charted according to the key themes and issues of the research, in order for clear analysis.

Table 4. Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis

Stage	Description
Familiarization	Become familiar with range and diversity of data, gain overview of material. Immerse in the data, listen to tape/read transcript.
Identifying a thematic framework	Identify key issues, concepts and themes. To create framework draw upon prior issues and relate to aims, emergent issues from respondents and analytical themes arising. Then devise and refine framework, making sure research questions are fully addressed.
Indexing	The framework is applied to the data. All the data, not just those selected for review are read and annotated.
Charting	Data is lifted from the original document, such as a transcript and rearranged in appropriate sections.
Mapping and interpretative	Key objectives of qualitative analysis are addressed. Data has been sifted and charted according to key themes.

(Adapted from Ritchie and Spencer, 1994 in Bryman and Burgess, 1994)

The interview research was analysed according to the aim of the study and a thematic framework was constructed according to key themes identified. This was then interpreted into the transcripts of the recorded interviews, using the index system created, to identify where these fall within the themes. The respondents and the themes were numbered and then the text was emboldened within the transcript. The information taken from the interviews was then charted using the key themes of:

- The depth of the berth
- The length of the berth
- Passenger disembarkation
- Passenger welcome
- The excursion transport network
- The excursions available
- Influences or implication concerning the port

For the purpose of Table 5, Silverman's (2006) guidelines have been hidden to enable easier evaluation and to reduce complexity. These key terms were further used in the content analysis and archival research, in order to create tables 6 and 7, to cross reference the results, to ensure validity.

Five semi-structured interviews with key people involved in port management and port decisions were conducted in order to aid the research. Amendments were made to the questions depending upon who was being interviewed, what their job was and the location that they were representing.

Table 5. Interview evaluation – examples

Theme	Port Manager comments	Cruise industry comments
Berthing	Plymouth – “the biggest single problem that Plymouth has got with regards to...attracting cruise vessels is that we haven’t got a dedicated alongside berth”	“in the first place they have to be able to accommodate the ship and you know the navigation into the port, the key side and all those facilities”
	Falmouth – “They are planning on a redevelopment for cruise ships, depending on funding “Freedom...of the Seas” which is what we have designed our dredging...I think it’s nearly fifty...meters in beam”	
	Southampton – “that’s one of the challengers for a port you know how deep your...berth is and how highly restricted your port is that is that’s...whether it can easily take the vessel off at the first instance. So if the port is...only able to take very small vessels, other ports will be able to take very...large vessels and some you’ll have to tender in”	
	Fowey – “keep them afloat they’re normally about seven meters we have our seven meters um in the channel in the berth um in the berth that they’ll going to sit in it is an important factor for attracting them”	

Table 5 expresses the similarities and differences that occur when speaking to managers of various ports and cruise specialists. It is clear from the table that if a port is to be successful as a cruise port of call, the starting point is to ensure it has the correct facilities. The most important of these facilities is that there is sufficient depth of water for various sizes of cruise ship or they will need to use tenders. The natural assets of a destination were shown to be important when it comes to cruise coordinators selecting where to visit on their itineraries. It is essential to have places of interest, within easy access from the port for passengers to visit, in order to be considered as a port of call for cruises.

Although not all ports have alongside berths or alongside berths that are available, they are still able to attract cruises to their destination because of other features. It is apparent, however, that this is still a strong advantage for any port to have an alongside berth as it means not having to tender passengers which can be a long process and difficult in bad weather conditions. For many ports, it is a case of funding as these facilities can require substantial investment.

When gaining a competitive advantage it is clear that the fame of the area rather than a single port is what attracts most companies and passengers alike as they want to visit these areas. When it comes to special interest areas such as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, this is still a niche market and also depends on the fame and competition from other ports available. The most successful ports have lots to offer locally and within easy reach. The port managers at Falmouth, Fowey and Plymouth all state that they have special welcomes for when the cruise passengers leave the ship, such as information given, bands or acts which are connected to the area; this can set them apart from the competition, giving a competitive advantage.

Analysis of Archival Research

The information gained from the analysis of the interviews, needs to be cross examined with the use of archival research and content analysis to validate it. The most effective way to cross validate is to use the same themes discovered from the framework, to keep the information consistent to see any reoccurrences. Therefore, following on from the analysis of interviews, archival research concerning cruises and ports, the chamber of commerce, Town/City Council and County Council websites was conducted and analysed. Berg (2007) indicates that triangulation research is effective for archival research as this cross examination can determine if there are any errors in the archives examined. With regards to this research, there is very limited archival material regarding cruises, on the four main ports looked at, Fowey, Falmouth, Plymouth and Southampton. This may be due to limits in access to these resources, as many require membership, or a lack of key parties supplying the information. Also, much of the archival material that was available did not mention cruises.

It is clear from the archival analysis that cruises do not feature significantly with the Chamber of Commerce, Town Council or Local Authority or there is very restricted access to these resources. Relating back to the interviews, it is clear that with regards to Plymouth City Council, cruises are not high on their agenda as they are not mentioned within the archival documents. This emphasises the point that the City Council can see that it would make a major difference to the state of Plymouth's economy, but do not wish to contribute financially. As the interviews indicate, it is important and much needed that local councils become involved because the local area does benefit.

Table 6. Archival Research Evaluation – sample extracts

	Chamber of Commerce	Town Council	County Council
Berthing		Falmouth - “ <i>The Town Mayor reported that disappointingly the Regional Development Agency had indicated that it would not support the funding application for dredging and cruise terminal facilities at Falmouth.</i> ” (Falmouth Town Council, 2009b)	
Excursion – Transport Network		Falmouth - “ <i>The Town Manager presented his report which was duly noted and forms part of these minutes. He provided further updates regarding the enhancement of the shuttle bus service and the first cruise ship call which was duly noted</i> ” (Falmouth Town Council, 2009a)	
Influences/ Implica- tions		Southampton – “ <i>increased cruise liner visits next year (approximately 350) including programme of sailings from the 2000 passenger MSC Opera and the new Queen Elizabeth</i> ” (Southampton City Council, 2010)	Southampton – “ <i>Continuation of a diverse shipping character and the economic benefits that this brings to the area, without compromising the ambience to yachting / ocean liners using the estuary as a result of increasing the proportion of commercial shipping.</i> ” (Hampshire County Council, 2010)
Influences/ Implica- tions			<i>“It is also expected that the growth in the cruise industry will continue to bring additional spending to Southampton”</i> (Hampshire County Council, 2011)

Content Analysis review

Law, Qi and Buhalis (2010) state that website analysis is becoming increasingly prominent in research. This form of research is effective as it enables the content of the websites to be assessed to examine what information is given to the user and how useful it actually is.

Content analysis permits cross-examination of the interviews and the archival material to be conducted; in order to assess what information there is available from both cruise companies and the ports and to see how they correspond. Table 7 shows what information was found when researching websites concerning the four ports of Plymouth, Falmouth, Southampton and Fowey. Within the content analysis, it was important to add a further section regarding facilities, which was not found in the interviews but was found while conducting the content analysis, to see what is available for passengers at the ports.

Table 7. Content Analysis Research Evaluation – sample extracts

	Cruise Industry	Port Websites	Destination South West
Berthing		<p>Plymouth – West Wharf Ro-ro berth – 8.5m Trinity Pier – 5.0m (AB Ports, 2011a)</p> <p>Falmouth – 3 berths depth along side of up to 8.0 metres. (AP group, 2011)</p> <p>Southampton – Queen Elizabeth II Cruise Terminal berth 38/39 – 10.5m Ocean Cruise Terminal berth 46/47 – 10.2m (N)/11.7m (S) City Cruise Terminal berth 101 – 10.2m</p> <p>Mayflower Cruise Terminal berth 106 – 11.7m (Southampton VTS, 2001a, Southampton VTS, 2011b, Southampton VTS, 2011c, Southampton VTS, 2011d, Southampton VTS, 2011e)</p>	<p>Plymouth – “West Wharf (berth) 8.5m, No’s 6 and 7 anchorage’s approx 8.5m” (Destination South West, 2011a)</p> <p>Falmouth – “Berth alongside large quay areas. 3 berths taking liners up to 230 meters LOA with a depth along side of up to 8.2 metres. Large sheltered bay and deep-water anchorage where ships can be moored or anchored.” (Destination South West, 2011f)</p> <p>Fowey – “Anchorage’s for cruise ships: ‘Swing buoy’; 8.2m at L.W.Spring tide ‘Under hills flood tide’; 8.5m at L.W.Spring tide Deep water; outside port; 8.5m at L.W.Spring tide” (Destination South West, 2011l)</p>
Length		<p>Plymouth – West Wharf Ro-ro berth – 200m</p> <p>Trinity Pier – 120m (AB Ports, 2011a)</p> <p>Falmouth – 230 meters (AP group, 2011)</p>	<p>Falmouth – “Berth alongside large quay areas. 3 berths taking liners up to 230 meters LOA with a depth along side of up to 8.2 metres.” (Destination South West, 2011f)</p> <p>Fowey – “Maximum length of cruise ship that can anchor: ‘Swing buoy’; 160m ‘Under hills flood tide’; 200m Deep water; outside port; unlimited” (Destination South West, 2011l)</p>
Passenger Welcome		<p>Plymouth – “Close and friendly co-ordination with local tourist boards and other related organisations for a warm welcome and send-off to passengers” (AB Ports, 2011b)</p>	
Excursion – Transport Network		<p>Fowey – “easy coach ride (link to destinations).” (Fowey Harbour, 2011b)</p>	<p>Plymouth – “Simply Special is the premier provider of executive car hire to business in Cornwall...our fleet of luxury chauffeur driven executive cars, people carriers and minibuses” (Destination South West, 2011c)</p>
Excursions	<p>Plymouth – “Plymouth is also your gateway to Devon and Cornwall’s ravishing countryside, one of the most beautiful landscapes in all the British Isles. It’s a land of rugged coastlines, small villages, granite farmhouses - and the brooding wasteland called Dartmoor.” (Princess Cruises, 2011a)</p> <p>“Plymouth Largest city in Devon, Plymouth is a mix of modern urban centre and suburbs. Much of the city was rebuilt following World War II... Dartmoor...” (Princess Cruises, 2011b)</p> <p>Falmouth – “The town’s heart lies just off the waterfront, where you’ll find a charming mix of shops, art galleries, cafes and restaurants. Great for indulging in the local specialities of freshly caught seafood and the delights of Cornish cream teas. Of course, Falmouth is really famous for its beautiful sandy beaches...With the National Maritime Museum, art galleries and gardens, together with the nearby castles of Pendennis and St Mawes (built by Henry VIII), you’re sure to find plenty to do in this relaxing seaside town.” (P&O, 2011a)</p> <p>P&O (2011b) Featured excursions – St Ives, The Eden project, Trebah Gardens, Surfing, Gwithian Beach, Rib Safari, St Michael’s Mount</p> <p>Fowey - Key places of interest; Bodmin, Charlestown, Dozmary Pool, Eden Project, Lanhydrock, Lost Gardens of Heligan. (Silversea, 2011a)</p> <p>Featured Excursions - Fowey Walking Tour, Bodmin & Wenford Steam Railway, Lost Gardens of Heligan, Cornish Scenic drive and cream tea, Countryside of Cornwall and Pen-carrow House, Private car hire (Full or half day) with English Speaking guide (Silversea, 2011b)</p>	<p>Falmouth – “The town is a short walk from the cruise berths and tender landing point, taking guests past the new yacht marina and the National Maritime Museum Cornwall. Falmouth has great charm, with many interesting shops, pubs, restaurants, bistros and cafes - plenty to see and do for those guests who remain in the town and great excursions for those who decide to take them.” (AP group, 2011)</p> <p>Fowey – “There is a wealth of interesting, historic and beautiful destinations within an easy coach ride (link to destinations)” (Fowey Harbour, 2011b)</p>	<p>Plymouth - “The Elizabethan streets of the Barbican maritime village are an essential first port of call...bustling community of specialist shops, restaurants, cafes and world-class attractions, all in a picturesque harbour setting...the Plymouth Mayflower Exhibition Centre. ...Plymouth Gin at their historic distillery...the National Marine Aquarium – now the largest aquarium in Great Britain with the deepest tank in Europe... Elizabethan house...Elizabethan gardens. On Plymouth Hoe... waterfront and provides excellent facilities for visiting cruise ships.” (Destination South West, 2011d)</p> <p>Suggested - Buckland Abbey, Devonport navel port, Eden project, Dartmoor national park, Saltram House, Plymouth Gin, Crownhill Fort, Cotehele house.... (Destination South West, 2011d)</p> <p>Falmouth – “The town is a short walk from the cruise berths and tender landing point, taking guests past the new yacht marina and the National Maritime Museum Cornwall. Falmouth has great charm, with many interesting shops, pubs, restaurants, bistros and cafes” (Destination South West, 2011h)</p> <p>The National Maritime Museum, Pendennis Castle, St Mawes Castle, Eden Project... (Destination South West, 2011j)</p> <p>Fowey – “Fowey has a strong Celtic connection, maritime history and many wonderful gardens within 30 minutes drive. The fantastic Eden project is only 16kms from Fowey.” (Destination South West, 2011m)</p> <p>Eden Project, Place Manor, Lost gardens of Heligan, Lanhydrock... (Destination South West, 2011o)</p>

(cont.)

Cruise Industry	Port Websites	Destination South West
Influences/ Implications	<p>Falmouth – “As one of the few ports in the South West region with alongside facilities for cruise ships, a sheltered deepwater anchorage and a purpose built landing facility for passengers arriving by tender” (AP group, 2011)</p> <p>Fowey – “Cruise liners visit the port mainly during the summer months. These vessels largely moor in the lower harbour to buoys and passengers are tendered to landing pontoons at Albert Quay or in the Docks area for coach embarkation. Largest cruise liners handled inside the harbour “Bondicca” 205 m LOA. Also “World” Largest outside the harbour mouth “Crystal Harmony”” (Fowey Harbour, 2011 a)</p>	<p>Falmouth – “Falmouth is the third largest natural harbour in the world, guarded by the impressive castles of St. Mawes and Pendennis.” (Destination South West, 2001e)</p> <p>Fowey – “Fowey, a picturesque protected anchorage, is only minutes from the ship into the town centre. Fowey has a strong Celtic connection, maritime history, literary involvement with the Daphne du Maurier festival, many wonderful gardens and exciting shore excursions - all within a short drive...The Eden Project is located just 10 miles from Fowey” (Destination South West, 2011k)</p>
Facilities	<p>Plymouth – “passenger terminal Bureau de Change and buffet facilities Secure, covered storage and baggage-handling facilities” (AB Ports, 2011b)</p>	<p>Plymouth – “Sheltered berth close to city centre. Passenger terminal and baggage handling facilities available” (Destination South West, 2011b)</p>

The content analysis highlights that the port websites display a lot of detail on the port concerning depth and length of berths available, but very little on excursions. Whereas the cruise websites do not display any information on aspects such as the depth and length of berths, but do display what is in the local area surrounding the berth and what excursions are available. Destination South West displays a lot of information on all aspects with the ports concerned (Plymouth, Falmouth and Fowey), therefore expressing how useful this website is for both cruise companies and passengers alike. With regards to excursions with all the ports, they underline the responses within the interviews, suggesting the same places to visit and excursions that would be available within that area. There is one exception to this, however, according to P&O (2011b) surfing in Falmouth is available and popular, whereas within the interviews it was concluded that things such as water activities were only popular in areas such as the Caribbean.

Discussion

Berthing: Lester and Weedon (2004) indicate that for the expanding cruise ships, Caribbean ports had to deepen their berths in order to accommodate the larger vessels. This is emphasised in the interviews by berthing being highlighted as one of the most important factors for a port that wishes to attract cruises. A deep berth is needed in order to accommodate a range of cruise ships, due to the increasing sizes. It may be essential for ports to adapt as Falmouth is hoping to dredge the harbour to the measurements of *Freedom of the Seas*, one of the biggest ships in the world, to enable accommodation of larger ships, however this is restricted until funding becomes available; after the research was undertaken, a plan was unveiled as part of a £106.5 million upgrade (Parks, 2012) although there are a number of hur-

dles to overcome, not least finance. The archival research established that Falmouth Town Council are not willing to put in money towards the improvements to the port (Falmouth Town Council, 2009a), even though this would mean that the town as a whole would benefit in the future. It was also established that if Plymouth had the money required, they would also ensure that a dedicated berth could be used on a regular basis for cruise ships, rather than working around Brittany Ferries schedule, however, they could not get this much needed funding because Plymouth Council are unwilling to invest.

The lack of funding available to these ports to make the necessary changes may be due to the fact that Southampton's county authority (Hampshire County Council), was the only one of the three that all four of the ports fell under (Hampshire, Devon and Cornwall County Councils) who mentioned anything about ports or cruises in the archives, showing the lack of involvement of these key parties. There was a lack of mention of the key aspects which affect ports and the surrounding local area, berthing depth and length, and excursions; this could be why it is becoming difficult for these ports to push themselves further into the cruise industry.

With regards to the content analysis, it was depicted that information about the ports' berth or length size only came from the ports' own websites, or from Destination South West, and not from the cruise companies' websites. This may be due to the fact that this information is only useful for those whom these websites are aimed at, the cruise companies, rather than the passengers who would not find this information beneficial. Baird (1997) highlights that websites such as Cruise Europe and Cruise Britain, which were identified in the literature review, are very useful to cruise lines as they provide a wide range of information, such as technical data that is useful to these companies. Cruise Europe (2011) like Destination South West also have pages dedicated to either passengers or cruise companies to ensure that they receive only the information they require. It is, however, interesting to note that within the Cruise Europe (2011) website, with regards to the four ports chosen to analyse, only Falmouth and Southampton are mentioned. The results of this mean that berthing, and having deep enough berths are the most important factor for ports to consider when attracting cruises.

Length: The interviews explored that it is essential that if a port has a berth that this has the length to accept the ever expanding cruise ships. This emphasises the point made by Cottam, Roe and Challacombe (2007:188) who state "*Similar to the short-sea ferry industry, the ability to berth and un-berth with only limited tow assistance is also paramount for many cruise destinations*". This ease of access means

that cruise ships are able to visit the port or consider the port for visits, and opens up the port to become a turnaround which generates more expenditure within the area. Both the literature and the interviews agreed that by having a dedicated berthing facility for cruises, it would ensure a greater competitive advantage over another port of call, and would mean that tendering of passengers ashore would not have to occur, which can be a time consuming process. An example of this is in Plymouth where, depending on the weather, it can take between twenty and forty-five minutes to get the passengers ashore, which can sometimes be a choppy journey, which can be difficult considering as many passengers can be elderly, causing bad views of the port from experiences. Baird (1997) highlights that for the most visited ports within Northern Europe, some key issues regarding size arise, but at a limited number of ports. The only port within the top eleven ports, in 1997, with a restriction on the vessel beam was Amsterdam. Baird (1997) also highlighted that only two of the ports out of the top eleven had restrictions on the length of cruise vessels (Tallinn and Helsinki); although these are still regarded as some of the most popular ports, it shows that only a small number of ports with restrictions succeed at becoming successful ports of call. The findings from this express that it is better to have a berth dedicated for cruises, which are long enough to accommodate varying sizes of cruise ships.

Passenger disembarkation: Passenger disembarkation is an important factor to consider as it can affect the passengers view of the area. From the interviews, it was seen that the passenger disembarkation can depend on the availability of a berth. Tendering, where the cruise ship is anchored off shore and the passengers tendered in on small boats, can be a very lengthy process. At Falmouth when they received their biggest ship, to date, the passengers had to be tendered in on lifeboats, which the ships use as tenders, as these are only small boats and on this occasion only six tenders were available with two fitting on the pontoon at any time, it took four hours to tender all the passenger ashore and get them off on their excursions. If tendering is not required, passengers can get off the ships with ease and onto coaches for excursions in a limited amount of time.

This is an important factor that can affect whether the cruise companies feel that the area is worth a visit and if passengers have a good experience of the port, so it is interesting that there was no information regarding this in both the archival research and the content analysis.

For ease to passenger disembarkation, it is more useful to have an alongside berth for ease and comfort for all parties, therefore cutting out tendering times.

Passenger Welcome: Having a special welcome was discussed by three of the port managers (Falmouth, Fowey and Plymouth) to be a key factor and can determine a competitive advantage over other ports of call. Every port does their own thing; Plymouth welcomes cruise passengers with people dressing up as Sir Francis Drake and his wife, as these have a strong connection with the City, and school bands: this is something to entertain cruise passengers, an identity for the city and sets it apart from the competition. Plymouth also has a welcome team set up by the council offering information and translators. Falmouth has 'Falmouth Ambassadors' who welcome passengers and give them information and guides. Fowey also set up information desks and sometimes go on-board before the ship docks to give information.

It is important for ports to have this sort of welcome as it gives the passengers a good first impression of the port and the area and can be something that they remember, and makes them feel cared about. Goater (2010) discusses that in Portland, cruises are welcomed by the mayor of the town. He discusses that by going this extra mile reaps rewards for the town, so this is something every port should consider to set them apart from the competition. An interesting point to note is that it was discovered in the interviews how special welcomes can determine setting a competitive advantage over another port, but these welcomes are not discussed in the content of the websites. As something that can set ports apart from the competition, it is interesting that it is not mentioned to encourage cruise companies and passengers alike.

BBC (2011), however, discusses new plans for Falmouth, which could set it apart from the competition. The plans set by the Falmouth Business Improvement District, would see passengers being dropped off at one point of the town and picked up in another, enabling a wider proportion of the area to be able to be seen by the passengers. This is something other ports in the South West do not offer, so it would see Falmouth as unique gaining, a competitive advantage for the port. A passenger welcome can set apart one port for another and give a rounded experience for passengers therefore enabling a competitive advantage.

Excursions: In all three research areas there was very little information regarding the excursion transport network, however, this is an important theme to consider as it connects the cruise passengers to one of the most important factors of their visit: the excursion. The use of triangulation, in this case, enabled the theme to be cross-referenced to gain the most information possible and to see if there were any similarities. In the three research areas, it was found that the main excursion transport network was that of coaches, taxis or, in the case of Destination South West, executive car hire with the use of a driver.

At Falmouth, it was indicated that the cruise coordinators who set up the excursions tend to use a specific company called Cornwall Panoramic Tour, however it was not discussed in the archival material or content analysis that a specific company was used on the excursions, just coaches. If a relationship, like the one at Falmouth, of using the same coach company for excursions can be built upon this, it can give a competitive advantage as they will, over time, learn exactly what it is that cruise passengers want and can respond to this in an effective way.

Baird's (1997:36) study emphasised that "*The main reason for cruise ships to come to Leith in the first place is of course its proximity to historic Edinburgh*". This emphasises the responses for the interviews that in order to attract the cruise companies and passengers, it is important to have natural assets such as places to visit in close proximity to the port; this is also highlighted in the literature review by Gibson and Bentley (2006), who express with regards to Falmouth, how it has natural assets such as the berthing and activities close by which enabled it to become a successful port. The research also highlights the literature review with regards to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) World Heritage Sites, emphasising that they are still very much a niche market and depend upon how famous they are and what other ports are available for them to compete with (Dickinson and Vladimir, 2008).

The research found that at most ports, surveys are conducted by the cruise companies via the passengers about their experiences; this highlights the literature review, as it is important to offer a high quality service to ensure cruises return. The findings from the interviews confirm that of the literature, with the exception of the fact that actually the fame of the port is the main influence of people choosing a cruise destination. Baird's (1997) study expresses that even though three of the top eleven ports had restrictions, it can be considered that these ports are so popular because of the fame of the ports. All three of the ports with restrictions (Amsterdam, Tallinn and Helsinki) are well known, popular sites which have a lot to offer visitors. This conforms to the interviews, where the fame of the area rather than the port itself influences where people wish to travel.

Within the content analysis, it is clear to see that the ports displayed a vast amount of information concerning the ports, depth and length but very little concerning the port excursions that are available. This may be due to the fact that these websites are more directed at cruise companies and cruise coordinators, who use this information to find ports where they can take their cruise ships, than to passengers who look at cruise companies as their source of information. The cruise company websites were, however, the opposite to that of the port website, as they expressed information on the excursions available and not

on the port size and specifications: this is because these websites are mainly directed at passengers and this information would not be useful or of interest to them.

The content analysis and the interviews agreed with each other in terms of the range of activities available within the four ports and surrounding areas, with one exception to this: according to P&O (2011b) surfing in Falmouth is available and popular, whereas within the interviews it was concluded that things such as water activities were only popular in areas such as the Caribbean. This confirms what is discussed in the literature, that across the world, there is a wide range of activities available to suit everyone and this can determine why people choose to go on these cruises. It was also noted in the literature review that most of the excursions are offered by the cruise companies themselves and people can choose to go on one of these excursions or discover the area by themselves. This was highlighted in both the interviews and content analysis where a cruise coordinator arranges the excursions and the cruise companies sell them through their websites (Silversea, 2011b).

Influences and Implications: The archival analysis established that there is a lack of cruises being mentioned in the archives of the Chamber of Commerce, Local Councils and Local Authorities and that some of these archives have restricted access to members only. The archives that were available, however, did point out some key factors concerning ports and cruises visiting them. It is surprising that there is such little information from these key parties, especially in Falmouth, as Gibson and Bentley (2007) highlighted that in 1996 the council expressed that twenty-three percent of those who worked in Falmouth worked in the tourism industry, expressing how important tourism is to them. Gibson and Bentley (2007) also highlight how Cornwall County Council helped to establish EU Objective One funding for the port of Falmouth, an investment programme established to help the growth of Cornwall and was part funded by the European Union (Objective One, 2011): this expresses that it is important, but questions why they do not mention the industry very much.

Furthermore, the content analysis, with regards to Destination South West expresses that it does conform to the majority of The Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility's (PPIAF, 2010) factors that need to be considered, for each port, when trying to appeal to cruise companies and gain a competitive advantage, as discussed in the literature review. The results highlight that Destination South West supply information on the location of the port, excursions that are available, the distance of other ports in the South West and including the port

of Southampton (Destination South West, 2011p) and the physical components of the ports which enable them to accept cruise ships.

Facilities: The section of facilities was added for the content analysis, as it was not depicted in the interviews, but was found within the content analysis. With regards to the facilities on offer at ports, it was discovered that many offer a small range of facilities such as Bureau de Change, baggage-handling, tourist information and at Southampton they offer ABP Parking especially for cruise ship passengers (ABP Parking, 2011). These services are very limited, but this may be due to the limited time that they are actually in the port area itself. In the literature there was no information discovered on this area, which could be due to there not being a great deal at the ports, although Progoulaki and Theotokas (2010) do discuss that it is important to develop new ideas, such as developing facilities as this could set them apart from the competition as they could be considered more welcoming.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to undertake an investigation into characteristics of cruise ports of call and the features relevant to securing competitive advantage. Research was undertaken with triangulation of data collection, using semi-structured interviews, archival analysis and content analysis of websites, in order to assess what is discussed about cruises and ports of call, what information is available on them through archives such as minutes of meetings and what information appears in the content of websites. These were then displayed in tables with themes which were established through conducting a framework analysis of key issues discovered.

The results were then discussed in relation to the literature review. The research uncovered, through speaking to a cruise specialist and relevant port managers, that the most essential thing for a port to have is deep-water or a berth long enough for the expanding cruise ships, otherwise they would be unable to visit or need to tender ashore. This might appear to be 'obvious' but the authors refer to the work of Baratz (1983) who pointed out this frequently seems to be the case after the results are available.

The interviews also discovered that to gain a competitive advantage over other ports of call it is important to have natural assets such as activities close by, with good access to them. Passenger welcomes, as these can be varied, can gain a port a competitive advantage, as it makes passengers feel special and this is something they will remember, giving a good overall first impression of the port.

The archival analysis discovered that there is very little mentioned about cruises in the archives of the Chamber of Commerce, Town/City Council and County Council of the four ports concerned in this

study (Plymouth, Falmouth, Southampton and Fowey) showing that this much needed support does not seem to be available. The content analysis discovered that for a port to gain a competitive advantage, it is important to have a range of information available. Many websites only supply the information relevant to the audiences that they are trying to attract, such as cruise companies or passengers. The most successful website in terms of information is dedicated to the South West, that of Destination South West, which has information for both cruise companies and passengers alike.

There were a number of limitations to this study, such as with regards to the interviews: it was difficult to gain responses from key parties to take part in the research, therefore limiting the number of ports that could be assessed. For the archival analysis, a limited amount of access to minutes of meetings, especially for the Chamber of Commerce of each port, was secured, and, therefore, this key information could not be looked at and taken into consideration within the results. Further research could be conducted; more ports could be assessed to gain a greater overview on how to gain a competitive advantage. It would also be useful to go back to port authorities and the cruise companies with the research tables to see if they think that this is a fair way to assess ports and how they can gain a competitive advantage.

There are three main conclusions that can be drawn from this research. Firstly, a port needs to have a deep enough berth to accommodate cruise ships, in order to begin attracting them. If ports do not have this depth then it is not possible for cruises to visit. Ports also need to consider that cruise ships are continually growing, so therefore they need to adjust to this.

Secondly, the ports need support and help from other companies and local authorities, in order to adjust and make improvements. Cruises benefit a whole area not just the port, so with this in mind support facilities and adjustments can be made in order to attract cruises. The final conclusion is that natural assets of a port such as activities available and the ease to get to these is one of the main pulling factors for cruises to certain ports.

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Submitted: 10th January 2012

Final version: 10th December 2012

Accepted: 10th January 2013

Refereed anonymously