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Clever development the key to sustainable tourism

Increasing the efficiency of regional tourism development is at the heart of a University of Queensland study.

UQ School of Tourism PhD scholar Char-lee McLennan is examining how economic structure and government policy, laws and business practice interrelate in the context of tourism in three Queensland regions – the Murweh Shire, Hervey Bay and the Gold Coast.

"My study aims to help local regions develop their tourism industry in the most efficient way for their economies while minimising the negative impacts on the society and environment," Ms McLennan said.

"It investigates what institutions could be improved in each of the regions to ensure the tourism industry is operating effectively."

Ms McLennan, who will take part in the prestigious Universitas 21 conference later this year co-hosted by UQ and the University of Melbourne, said that in the past century Australia's economy had been significantly transformed, with a move away from farming and a greater focus on tourism.

"As the agricultural industry declined, many regions restructured towards tourism," she said.

"But regions have generally been left to pursue the change on their own and have lacked the destination management knowledge and decision-making tools needed to deal with the process.

"As a result a number of environmental, social and economic issues have emerged, which have often been attributed to poor government policies.

"The gap needs to be closed for tourism regions to be developed sustainably and efficiently."

In Murweh Shire, tourism is in its infancy, while in Hervey Bay the industry is growing rapidly. In contrast, the Gold Coast is a well established tourism destination.

To complete her study, Ms McLennan needs help from each of the regions she is targeting and is looking for people to take part in a short survey.

"Respondents can remain anonymous, or if they choose, they can enter a draw for a \$100 gift voucher and \$100 worth of Sommariva Olive products," she said.

To take part in the survey phone Ms McLennan on 0407 589 110 or email c.mclennan@uq.edu.au.

The survey is also available online.

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Note to eds: For more information phone Jodie Powell, Media Officer, UQ School of Tourism on 0409 946 796.

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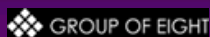
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