EXPERIENCE Project: partners

The largest EU cooperation project for the tourism sector

EXPERIENCE is a €23.3 million project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (€16 million) through the Interreg France (Channel) England Programme. It is led by Norfolk County Council and runs from September 2019 to June 2023.
EXPERIENCE Project: work-package overview

Ambitious goals

• Attracting 20 M additional new visitors during the off-season (Oct-Mar) by 2023 - 45 M by 2028
• 1 B new revenue and 16,859 FTE employees - increase visitor spending by 5%

• WP 2: Skills audits - 2000 actors trained (typical and atypical stakeholders)

• WP 3: 1500 new tourism activities, 6 new off-season events, and 600 themed experiential itineraries

• WP 4: Adapt and create 52 key tourism infrastructures

• WP 5: Market testing, consumer testing, trip-planning platforms

• WP 6: Positive economic, social, and environmental impacts

#sustainability #non-discrimination #accessible #inclusive #residents
Designing new off-season experiences: combatting seasonality

To extend the visitor season

• We have developed a manual to help destinations design activities for when it’s wet, cold, and dark to help design activities which are **better** during off-season, e.g. glow in the dark cycling itineraries, light festivals

• Create Autumn-Winter events, creating clusters to ensure businesses are equipped to work collaboratively and offer outstanding experiences for visitors in the off-season

Engage business networks to work collectively
Monitoring performance of new off-season experiences

To extend the visitor season and combat seasonality

Monitoring visitor flows, expenditure and satisfaction for off-season experiences is key to improve their design and increase demand. To ensure this we conduct:

- Visitor surveys following events/experiences
- Tailored surveying to residents attending EXPERIENCE activities to ensure activities are designed to bring locals on board → Off season first and locals first too!
- Regular business surveys to monitor financial performance in summer and winter
Adapt infrastructure

For the off-season & to enhance accessibility

Storm- watching from Lighthouse, île Noir, Baie de Morlaix

Starry-night inspired, glowing cycling paths

‘Changing Places’ toilets Kent Downs, AONB
Experiential tourism marketing: How to market the off-season offer

Marketing, distribution and consumer testing of off-season activities

• Customer segmentation to understand expectations and preferences of off-season visitors
• Create tailored promotional and distribution campaigns to generate more demand for off-season experiences
• Develop a digital presence to promote the off-season
• Market test with trade and distribution channels to enhance the off-season tourism offer
• Conduct consumer testing to ensure expectations are met
• Develop online pre-visit inspiration and interactive trip-planning platforms

Testing new offer and services in a digital lab
• Eye-tracking
• Galvanic skin response
• Facial expression analysis
Evaluating Economic, Environmental and Social impacts

Monitoring Economic impacts

- Identify the experience or group of experiences for evaluation in each destination
- Establish a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to estimate economic impact from visitors:
  - Spend per trip: categorised by key areas (transport, accommodation, food and drink, shopping, entertainment).
  - Spend per night
  - Trip / spend seasonality (monthly data)
- Regular visitor surveys to event attendees and consumers of products and activities funded by the Experience project (treatment/intervention group)
- Monitoring visitor flows and expenditure behaviour throughout the year will allows to compare the effectiveness of promoting off-season experiences with baseline data to address issues regarding seasonality within pilot destinations
Ensuring tourism growth is sustainable also means not jeopardising the quality of life of the locals.

All pilot regions are now distributing a residents’ perception survey twice a year (Winter and Summer) to collect data on how residents feel about tourism in their area.

This will allow us to:

• Bring locals on board with the initiatives taking place through the project
• Monitor how residents feel about Winter and Summer tourism, particularly over-tourism issues and consequences/issues of attracting more visitors during off-season
• Create experiences and events which locals feel involved in
• Encourage councils to take action and account for residents’ opinions
Evaluating Economic, Environmental and Social impacts

Monitoring Environmental Impacts

A key feature of the experiences being launched by the project is that they must be sustainable and low-carbon. In most cases however, the majority of carbon emissions is associated to visitors’ mode of transport and distance travelled, not the experience itself.

In collaboration with Breda University, we are testing a carbon footprint calculator:

- A tool which delivers a high level of accuracy and benchmark against similar destinations

In collaboration with Pas-de-Calais (a partnering region)

- A Scenario-based carbon footprint tool linking tourism expenditure data with carbon data. Combining the these two elements will provide destinations with a level of sophistication in decision-making that we have not seen up until now

The aims:

- To use carbon footprint data to inform decisions in pilot destinations
- To encourage destination to consider not only visitor expenditure data but also visitor carbon impacts, making comparisons between peak and off-peak impacts of visitors at a destination and the benefits of addressing seasonality
- To monitoring visitor flows, expenditure and carbon footprint of summer and winter visitors, to encourage destinations and businesses to market for the off-season
Challenges

- Lack of expertise for the development and marketing of off-season experiences
- Each region has a different level of expertise and collects data in different ways
  - Lack of consistency in the data across partners
- Very large-scale project with an array of partners implementing very different interventions at multiple points in time within the project cycle
  - Finding indicators that make sense project-wide

To respond to these challenges we have proposed:

- Manual to help design off-season activities and surveys and consumer testing to evaluate effectiveness of off-season product development
- A common residents’ tourism perception survey for all partnering regions. Distributed individually by each region, data is centrally managed and analysed by the team at the University of Surrey
- Using published datasets at destination level to harmonise the datasets as much as possible, we can have meaningful comparisons based on a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the economic impact assessment between peak and off-peak season
THANK YOU!

Tuesday 27th of July 2021