

# OUTDOOR TOURISM MARKETING PROJECT

## WORKING PAPER 4 COMPARATOR RESEARCH

This working paper was produced for the Outdoor Tourism Marketing Project. It summarises our research and the lessons we have drawn from 17 comparator destinations considered to be best practice models. We looked at Outdoor Multi-Activity Destinations (p1); Sailing & Coastal Activities (p8); River Valley with Activities on Banks & Water (p12) and Other Thoughts & Ideas from the outdoor sector (p16). We also looked at what could be learned from Other Sectors (p19).

### OUTDOOR MULTI-ACTIVITY DESTINATIONS

#### Fort William and Lochaber – The Outdoor Capital of the UK

The Outdoor Capital [website](#) welcomes you with the bold statement *From Summit to Sea. The best place in the UK for everyone to enjoy the outdoors* – it is clear that they are trying to capture the breadth of the offering referring to the mountains and the coast.

Although Fort William, home of Ben Nevis, was always well known to walkers and subsequently, with the introduction of the Nevis Range ski centre, to skiers and ice climbers, from a tourism point of view it was more likely to be frequented by coach tourists. The advent of mountain biking around 2001 helped put this 'sleepy' Highland town on a global stage with the



Mountain Bike World Cup, helping to establish the area as a world class mountain bike centre. The town's potential was then realised to re-position as an outdoors destination by the local authority and businesses.

The website makes good use of stunning taster images and has clear tabs to find out what to do, where to stay etc. More importantly they have a tab called '[Activacation](#)' which clicks through to holiday ideas in the area eg West Coast Waters, Mountain Bike Madness, Rockhopper Sea Kayaking, Treat the Teenagers, etc. This section is useful as it cuts through the 'clutter' of operators and helps consumers make a decision. Clicking on the Activities tab provides a menu of options eg canoeing and kayaking, then provides some editorial on where to go and provides the details of the operators offering the relevant activity. It is straightforward to work through the options and editorial provides suggestions about what to do, where to explore. Events are listed under the See & Do tab and a 'What's On' section on the home page.

Further down the coast is [Oban](#) offering outdoor activities including sea kayaking and a handful of operators offering wildlife boat trips with the promise of dolphins, seals, porpoises, whales and sea eagles. The west coast is forging a wildlife watching reputation.

### Lessons

- ▶ Make a bold statement about what you have to offer – claim distinctive territory
- ▶ Make it easy for visitors to make decisions about what they might do in the area by presenting information in simple to access formats; tempt them with strong images
- ▶ Use other environmental assets - particularly wildlife, but also heritage and culture - to enhance the offer

### Lake District – Adventure Capital UK

The Lake District is a favourite UK destination well known for outdoor activities: fells, lakes and coast. The Adventure Capital campaign was launched by Cumbria Tourism in 2008 as 'A Year of Adventure' to reposition and refresh the tourism offer – this was followed by an Adventure Capital UK Strategy being developed with collaboration and buy-in involving strategic partners around the county. In 2009 marketing grant funding was secured and an AdCap Project & Marketing Officer recruited to work with outdoor businesses and implement a 3 years marketing &



development campaign.

[Adventure Capital website](#) promotes outdoor activity **on foot** (day, long distance & family walking, orienteering & navigation, scrambling, ghyll scrambling), **on wheels** (road, mb, long distance, family, guides), **on ropes** (climbing, canyoning, caving, high wire), **on water** (canoeing, open water swimming, gorge walking, kayaking, waterskiing and sailing), **on course** (outdoor events and challenges) and accommodation. Other activities include in the air (gyroplane), in the saddle (equestrian) and in the driving seat (quad/4x4).

There is no direct online booking available but plenty of providers with contact details are given. There is a wealth of information about every activity and suggestions for what people may be looking for eg Links to find a provider gives suggestions to help other groups; Looking for a more gentle day out; Email a provider - Contact activity providers to check availability; <http://www.golakes.co.uk/adventure-capital/activity-request-form.aspx> Group activities - Looking for something different for a team building day, stag or hen party or just a good day out with friends; Other Outdoor Pursuits - fishing, clay pigeon shooting or horse riding.

The adventure website integrates with main tourism website [golakes](#) giving options for accommodation booking, places to eat and other things to do, translated information and a planning tool. Leaflets for separate sports are available and downloadable and the biking leaflet integrates with the Drive Less See More sustainable transport campaign. Free to download, TRACKS is the adventure and outdoor magazine for the Lake District & Cumbria, for Android tablets and iPads.

### Lessons

- ▶ Collate provider information together to make it easy for visitors to see what is on offer and to contact to make the booking.
- ▶ Extend the offer by giving people ideas
- ▶ Integrate with other visitor information and accommodation booking
- ▶ Use strong, clear, confident branding

## Chamonix-Mont Blanc

[Chamonix](#) is well known as a winter sports destination, but also has a strong summer activities offering predominantly focused on the mountains. The town positions itself as the world capital of mountaineering, thereby suggesting that other mountain destinations are somewhat inferior. The website offers a video of the summer activities to help reinforce the year round offering, although given the terrain and glaciers there is obviously still a lot of snow in high summer. This offers a different summer experience to what we are used to in the UK.



Walking, mountaineering, climbing, paragliding, mountain biking and water sports are all available. Most of these activities benefit from the lift system throughout the valley providing quick and easy uplift to the higher ground; the ability to be transported upwards is a different offering to Wales. Like other mountain resorts various lift passes are on offer providing savings all year round. The trick is to work out what is the best value for individual needs. Mountain guides and activity operators are listed in the various activity sections of the site.

Ease of [transport](#) is perhaps something that could be looked at. Most winter resorts have a good transport network in place to shuttle visitors to/from the slopes and in Chamonix this system runs throughout the year offering the same facility to walkers and mountaineers; there is less need for a car in the valley. The lift passes also provide free access to some of the transport on offer. Ease of access to the mountains or town is an attractive aspect of any outdoors trip. Chamonix benefits from being on a train line.

The website is perhaps too cluttered with too many 'useful' snippets encroaching on the main screen and drop down options. They do offer the facility to buy lift passes and book accommodation online. There are also a couple of packages available to book such as accommodation and paragliding and walking/accommodation offers. These are titled as partner offers and if enough of these can be offered by the industry and are attractive to visitors then this will be a benefit to a destination.

### Lessons

- ▶ Be creative in providing transport solutions which make it easy for visitors
- ▶ Provide offers and packages through tourism providers

## South Dakota

Where? [South Dakota](#): Great Faces, Great Places. You may think that South Dakota is not well known, but it is home to Mount Rushmore, the Badlands, the Black Hills, Deadwood and the very impressive Crazy Horse Memorial. It is also home to the biggest annual motorcycle rally at Sturgis which saw 600,000 motorcyclists descend in 2000 for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, all of whom will have visited some of the above attractions; that's big money. The website uses some striking images to tempt the visitor to look further.



It has much to attract the general tourist but also much to offer the outdoors enthusiast. It has long distance trails such as the George S Mickelson Trail. There is plenty to tempt the rock climber and the cyclist. Wildlife is everywhere, both in and out the state parks; it's just there in an understated way. Horseback riding and fishing are also a big offering in the area.

The South Dakota website has some flaws but it clearly labels the outdoor activities on offer. It tells you a bit about what is available, why it is so good, where to go and details sources of further information.

It has an events section which includes buffalo round ups and rodeos. Granted these are quite different event experiences and on a different scale, but it does raise the question about what new event experiences might be arranged on a realistic scale nearer to home.

Like Chamonix the website provides a section on [vacation packages and hot deals](#). An example would be the Spearfish Waterfall Loops Package which includes accommodation and entrance fees to some of the local attractions and state parks. There are only a few of these offers on the site, as the destination is reliant on securing the offers from the businesses. We know from other destinations such as Scotland that offers from businesses make a real difference to potential visitors; it's easier for them to browse ready made offers.

### Lessons

- ▶ Use events to reinforce the offer and drive visits; create something new, or position something which may seem 'normal' to some, as exciting to others.

## Queenstown, New Zealand

World renowned for its adrenaline based activities, a number of outdoor destinations look toward [Queenstown](#) for ideas and best practice. It modestly positions itself as the adventure capital of New Zealand in one area of their website and in another as the Southern Hemisphere's premier four season lake and alpine resort; conflict of positioning?



Like Chamonix it has a year round offering to appeal to the wild, young and old. The website is split into: adrenaline rush; ski, snow and ice; walking, hiking and biking; air adventures; lake and river adventures and nature and eco-tourism. For the not so wild it also offers sightseeing, golf, pampering and wineries.

When it comes to thrills, if you can think of it, then Queenstown probably offers it. It has a wide range of activities to excite including ledge swinging, white water sledging and riversurfing, all of which are enjoyed, or suffered, in spectacular scenery.

As with other destination websites, when you click through to an activity there are lists of operators providing the relevant service. Some of the operators provide a link to book direct with them. You can sort the list of operators by name or by price; not all of them list a price for the activity so may miss out or disappear to the bottom of the list. Searching by price is an interesting approach for an active product. We don't think twice about it when searching for a hotel online or a hire car, but this seems a clever idea. For those backpacking with a desire to do something wild (to tick a box), then searching by price might be an attractive option eg. I have £100 to blow on one wild thing, what is it to be? <http://www.everythingqueenstown.com/> Customers can choose and book from a number of operators on one [website](#). User friendly website with clear navigation, clear pricing and course information, clear calls to action (find out more / book now), cross-selling of other courses after adding a booking to basket

### Lessons

- ▶ Make a bold claim – and make sure it is delivered
- ▶ Offer the ability to search and sort by price
- ▶ Make it very easy to book – ideally with one click

## Australia's Blue Mountains

Located a 50 minute drive away from Sydney the [Blue Mountains](#) are within easy reach for locals and tourists alike. The website has a 'things to do' menu comprising a wide range of activities including abseiling and rocksports, guided bushwalks, cycling and mountain biking, fishing, eco-tourism, 4 wheel drive and horse riding.



When clicked through to the [bushwalks](#) section you are presented with around 15 operators providing the relevant service. Some of them promote the fact that they will pick up from Sydney hotels; easy access for tourists. Some of them provide an online booking facility. If you were visiting Sydney and wanting a quick Blue Mountains experience you would be most tempted by those operators who pick up in Sydney and offer online booking. The hotels will also have relationships with these operators thereby providing a further push to their guests. Although tourism businesses and destinations are still very much operating in an online environment, these types of business to business relationships remain important as a channel to raise awareness.

### Lessons

- ▶ Tourism businesses work together to provide all elements of the experience
- ▶ Online booking to make the product more accessible

## SAILING AND COASTAL ACTIVITIES

### Isle of Wight

The [Isle of Wight](#) has an attractive website and immediately the eye is drawn to a section titled '[10 reasons to visit in October](#)'. This section comprises events taking place in the current month, but could include other suggestions perhaps useful snippets on significant events in the calendar for flora and fauna eg deer rutting, autumn colours, wintering birds, snowdrops as relevant to suit the time of year.

Like other destinations this site makes a bold statement and suggests visitors travel to the Isle of Wight to 'Escape the World'.

Interestingly the island does not position itself as a destination for water based activities, but more of a more rounded destination offering a variety of things to do and see. The home page highlights [itinerary ideas](#) and this section comprises a number of suggestions: Classic Coastal; English Heritage, National Trust Trail; Natural History Trail, Old World Charm; One for the Family and Victorian Memories. These itineraries help to underpin the broad offering, but as with Fort William could also be narrowed down and used to highlight ideas, or themes for outdoor activities.

Although many of the rotating images on the home page are of the coastline, outdoor activities are hidden within the 'things to do' tab. In this section they advise the visitor what activities are on offer, and specifically state that there are 165 miles of bridleways, over 500 miles of well-kept footpaths and a 62 mile cycle network. This detail will make the visitor think that there is plenty to do; more choice of routes. As with other destination sites operators are detailed in each activity section as relevant.

### Lessons

- ▶ Provide reasons to visit throughout the year
- ▶ Provide itinerary ideas to make it easy





## San Francisco

Although a number of coastal/Golden Gate images are used on the [website](#), the feel of the site is more about what you can do in the city rather than in the bay. Water based activities are only available through a search, and at this point there is no editorial to advise the visitor of the types of activities on offer and you are just presented with a list of operators to scroll through. It was not helpful and did not shout out that this was a great thing to do in the area.



The site heavily promotes the [City Pass](#) which provides savings of 52% across a number of attractions and transport, including a Bay cruise.

### Lessons

- ▶ If you've got it, flaunt it. Do not assume that people know about it.

## English Riviera

The [English Riviera](#) has much to offer those visitors interested in getting out on the water. It positions itself as South Devon's Beautiful Bay. The website clearly states that there are 2 piers, 3 harbours, 22 beaches and 2 marinas and that life in the area revolves around the sea. The site provides information on the types of water sports and key events taking place including a regatta and the Fastnet race in August. If some of the activities sound too energetic they suggest that you can simply go for a swim, bob or a paddle.



Food is a big aspect of the website and with it being a coastal destination seafood is the main item on the menu. The website goes as far as to have a section on [talented local chefs](#) which will help to underpin the quality of the offering. Active people like to eat, so food is a natural partner to an outdoors offering whether it is good, hearty bowls of food or something fresh, or more refined.

### Lessons

- ▶ Use copy to reinforce the brand and the product offer
- ▶ Make sure the food offer supports the outdoors tourism offer – and information about where to eat is easily available

## Stockholm and Gothenburg

Stockholm is a beautiful historic city which contains the first National City Park in the world. The Stockholm [website](#) has a section called Editor's Tips. Within this section is a feature on the top ten things to see and do in the city. Stockholm is blessed with being built upon 14 islands so the water features heavily in the tourism offering. Beyond the city there is an archipelago with 30,000 islands, skerries and islet rocks to explore. It all sounds very tempting and unlike San Francisco they are flaunting it.



There is a further tip from the editor titled '[The archipelago – from easy access to wilderness](#)'. Sounds even more tempting, so we read on. The editor then provides a choice of the islands which you can access easily if short of time or perhaps ticking a box, those that are wilder and more remote, and if neither of these options suits you then you are provided with some 'in between' options.

This approach and level of information was extremely user friendly and lessons can perhaps be learnt from it on how to position outdoor tourism products for the dabblers and those who have more experience and looking for a bit more adventure. The tone of voice is also important in how this information is communicated; informative but informal.

On the west of Sweden, [Gothenburg](#) also offers a base to explore the west coast archipelago. This site also highlights what you might do in such a vast area of coast and islands. This includes a feature on Herring, History and Seafish Safaris. This suggests that this area are using the industry along the coast and turning it into a tourism advantage. They even have the Day of the Herring in June. Visitors can join fishermen on a seafood safari for lobsters, oysters and mussels. This highlights that there may be potential for coastal/fishing businesses to diversify into tourism.

### Lessons

- ▶ Use lists and tips to draw visitors in– particularly endorsements from those in the know – editors, local experts, sportspeople etc
- ▶ Think about the tone of voice in communications – find your own voice and use it
- ▶ Use non-tourism traditional businesses – either to diversify or use as a product strength

### Poole Harbour Watersports (Dorest) - [Surf, rest and play!](#)

Wind conditions are variable, allowing for a range of different sports and appealing to a wide range of abilities eg Poole Park nearby, the largest saltwater lake in the UK offering watersports. The destination hosts over 100 water-based events each year including hosting 'Windfest, the South Coasts's Biggest Free Action Sports Festival. The Guardian commented: *"Excellent windsurfing and kitesurfing, for all abilities. More advanced kite/windsurfers can use the seaside, while beginners or intermediates are able to learn and improve in the shallower areas of the harbour."*



There are many providers, the majority privately owned but there is a council operated watersports centre at Poole Harbour. The [Poole Harbour Watersports](#) website provides information and contacts to book kite surfing and windsurfing, kayaking and stand-up paddle. It also has a comprehensive online site to buy kit. The [Poole Tourism website](#) links to various providers of sailing, yachting, kite sports, paddle boarding, jet skiing, angling, where visitors can book online. [Poole Harbour Commissioners](#) designated areas exclusively for watersports that are free from normal harbour rules – they try to “balance the interests of stakeholders to ensure cooperation and long-term sustainability”.

#### Lessons

- ▶ Make booking easy. Offer different options for different markets and abilities – be clear about what is appropriate for which market
- ▶ Festivals get buy-in from local providers, creating awareness and excitement among visitors and strengthening the brand

### Vancouver Island

A beautiful island with many inlets, islands and passageways to explore by boat or kayak. The island's [website](#) is not great, with long lists of area tourism groups mixed in with active and accommodation providers. It is very confusing and off-putting to the visitor. The island is big and has mountains and rain forests with great walking, cycling and fishing on offer. A significant highlight of the island is that it offers the opportunity to go killer whale watching and a number of operators offer whale watching. The information about this is hidden away under wildlife within the 'things to do' tab - from a tourism point of view it is a missed opportunity.



#### Lessons

- ▶ Don't miss an opportunity; identify your key product strengths and promote them. Make a virtue about being responsible.

## RIVER VALLEY WITH ACTIVITIES ON THE BANKS AND ON THE WATER

### River Wye

The River Wye is a popular destination to canoe and the [Canoe the Wye](#) website run by a private operator provides a useful source of information.



The site displays a map showing the access points to the river, where you can hire, how long it will take to paddle along sections of the river and also includes accommodation details. They take you up river from the place of hire and paddle your way back thereby overcoming any linear route transport logistic issues.

They have a specific package for those paddlers who do not want to move hotel. The operator picks the guests up from the hotel each day and delivers them to their next start point and returns them to the hotel at the end of the day. They also suggest that if visitors have an idea of a canoe trip that is not detailed then they welcome the enquiry. The site also makes the suggestion that some people may wish to paddle in the evening in the summer when the light is good. The tone of the site suggests flexibility and keeping the customer at the centre of the experience.

They have a great 'get a quote' facility, where you type in the number of canoes and people, how many days, where do you want to start and when. The quote also advises you of how much deposit is required at time of booking. It is extremely user friendly and has some charming scribbled graphics to suggest a more personalised touch.

### Lessons

- ▶ Packages for transporting people from base
- ▶ Offer 'quick quote' facility
- ▶ Listen to customer feedback and requirements and remain flexible

## Stratford upon Avon

[Stratford-upon-Avon](#) is a market town with over 800 years of history and a must visit destination for Shakespeare fans. Short boat trips are available along the River Avon, and cycling is a popular way to get around and see all the sites. [Stratford Bike Hire](#) is a family run business with innovative ideas - they deliver bikes to visitors making it as easy as possible to get on a bike, and they also work with Shakespeare's Birthplace to offer a bike hire and entrance fee joint [ticket](#). They also offer a [Bike 'n' Boat](#) package where they work with a boat operator and an Inn. This package involves the visitor cycling around the area, stopping for lunch, and then jumping on the boat. This provides the visitor with the opportunity to relax and take in the sights.



### Lessons

- ▶ Package activities in ways which are easy to purchase
- ▶ Use the area's assets to link them up into interesting experiences

## Brittany

As well as being a long established favourite of [sailors](#), Brittany also has an extensive network comprising over 600km of canals. The website features a specific section on the [canals](#) and provides options on boating or canoeing on them and cycling or walking along them. It makes a point of saying that you do not need to be an expert navigator and that you can hire a boat without a license. The towpaths are part of the [Green Ways](#) (Voies Vertes) network of routes throughout Brittany. The site also details a number of places suitable for canoeing the canals with links to a list of hire operators. There are helpful [brochures](#) available to download (in French) to help you plan your trip eg accommodation, food stops and what to see and do along the way. There is also a specific [website](#) for further details although only available in French. All of these support materials help the visitor decide whether this activity and destination is for them.



### Lessons

- ▶ Think about what the visitor needs to help them plan their trip and provide it – this will help them to choose your destination over another

## Scottish Canals

Scotland has a number of canals, including the Caledonian, the Crinan, the Forth and Clyde and the Union. They are maintained by Scottish Canals which are now a stand alone organisation and separate from British Waterways. The most majestic of the canals is the Caledonian which is 60 miles long and travels through the Great Glen from the west to the east coast. There are canal sections linking a number of lochs along the Great Glen. The Scottish Canals website has a section for each canal with sources of information on boating, paddling, fishing, walking, wildlife, cycling, events, history and holidays. For boating, this will include a [skipper's guide](#) which provides comprehensive details on how to navigate the canal from start to finish.



A [Great Glen Canoe Trail](#) has recently been established and takes 3-5 days. Scottish Canals estimate that around 4,000 paddlers take to the Caledonian Canal throughout a year either for a day trip or an extended journey. The website for the Trail has a number of useful sections including one on '[Planning a Paddle](#)'. This site provides details of local companies who hire canoes/kayaks, offer guided trips and also run shuttle services to solve transport logistics presented by a linear route.

### Lessons

- ▶ Present your offer clearly and fully providing practical information. Include businesses offering activities or support services

## French Rivers

Canoeing trips are offered on a number of French rivers including the Orne, the Dordogne and the Ardeche. There are limited sources of information for experiences on offer but our own knowledge and research have revealed a number of operators providing canoe hire with transport pick up r at the end of the route. One [operator](#) in the Ardeche offers half day and multi day trips of various distances. Another Ardeche operator displays a [map](#) showing the various canoe options and the advantages of each trip. An operator in the [Dordogne](#) promotes canoeing as the best way to see some stretches of the river's best kept secrets.



### Lessons

- ▶ Identify the particular strengths and advantages of what you are offering. Highlight opportunities to see areas not otherwise accessible

## OTHER THOUGHTS AND IDEAS

### Scotland's Outdoor Access Code

Scotland has an Outdoor Access Code which allows everyone the opportunity to enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly. It also tries to address conflicts of interest between users of a shared space. A good example of this would be on [rivers](#) where rafters, anglers and canoeists may all be trying to take advantage of the river. Specific advice exists to try and minimise conflict and to respect the interests of other people. In some cases various management measures such as zoning have been introduced.

### Event thoughts

[Pedal for Scotland](#) is a mass participation cycle ride with a choice of either 47 or 110 miles to suit ability. The route travels from Glasgow to Edinburgh. The event has grown quickly over the past few years and regularly has around 10,000 participants. The event is organised by Cycling Scotland and this event provides a solid platform to engage with cyclists throughout Scotland. Twitter and facebook are regularly used to communicate with participants and involve them in the event. One recent example of this was to invite comments on event t shirt designs which resulted in a re-design. This type of interaction if managed carefully can make participants feel involved.

[No Fuss Events](#) and [Hands on Events](#) are organisers of a number of outdoor/endurance events in Scotland. These events include Bealach Mor, the UK's biggest road climb and 10 under the Ben; both well-established events. Participants in these events may return to the same event to improve their time or performance or just because they love the whole experience. If however they wish to undertake other endurance-style events, either to test themselves or just for a different type of experience, these organisers provide them with a tasty menu of events to choose from. Building up a portfolio of appropriate events helps to position a destination as an outdoors destination.

Mountain Festivals take place throughout the world and provide an opportunity to create a focus for a destination. Some use films as the main hook whereas others include lectures and events. [Kendal](#), [Fort William](#), [Llanberis](#) and even [Edinburgh](#) have established events. [Keswick Mountain Festival](#) is aimed at the dabbler market and encourages participation in a wide range of outdoor activities over the 5 day festival in May. Walking festivals also offer an opportunity for destinations to target specific market. Examples include North Devon & Exmoor, [The Drover's Tryst](#) and [Cowalfest](#) which is now in its tenth year and merges walking and the arts.

Events like this do not necessarily have to focus on mountains or walking. Cycling offers another opportunity and there are a number of such events including the [Isle of Wight Cycling Festival](#) has been running for a number of years and positions itself as Britain's biggest cycling festival taking place over nine days in September. [The Highland Perthshire Cycling Festival](#) piggybacks on the established [Etape Caledonia](#), the successful closed road race which attracts over 4,000 participants. The model for this event is interesting as registration for the race takes place the day before thereby resulting in greater economic impact through bed nights. [Bike Blenheim Palace](#) established in 2008 is positioned as the UK's fastest growing cycling festival and makes good use of the grounds and also benefits from the promotional activity already in place for the Palace.

Destinations such as Queenstown have a wide variety of [events](#) on offer to visitors. As expected they have a range of outdoor events such as triathlons and mountain bike events. They also offer opening days for outdoor activities, saloon evenings, gold panning, mock trials and beard shave offs. They also have a Queenstown Bike Festival.

### Food for Thought

Food is an important part of any event/festival; it can set the tone and can help to target a specific market. Focused food festivals can be an effective way of showcasing a place's produce offer and culinary skills as well as increasing economic impact. In its third year Cockermouth's weekend [Food Festival's blog](#) and now in its eighteenth year Ludlow's Food Festival's [website](#) demonstrates the interest from visitors, businesses and suppliers. Specific venues can also become associated with specific foods eg [Dalemmain House](#) hosts the '[World's Original Marmalade Awards](#)', which helps to give a sense of place and strengthen the business brand.

### Dabbling

It is important for destinations to consider who their target market is; what product do they have to offer. The Scottish Borders positions itself as Scotland's leading cycling destination. Although the project behind this positioning focuses on road cycling the mountain biking on offer through the 7stanes at Glentress, Innerleithen and Newcastleton fits perfectly into this claim. There is road cycling routes and mountain bike trails for both the serious cyclist or biker and also those who may be new to the sport. The area has worked with VisitScotland to create a



pilot project which has allowed a regional expansion of the Cyclists Welcome Scheme to include non-accommodation provider eg bike hire, visitor attractions, cafes etc. This fully inclusive 'welcome' to cyclists helps reinforce the area as a destination for all types of ability.

Devon and Cornwall have a number of well-known cycle paths along disused railway lines. The very nature of these paths ensures that they have a very inclusive product which is not only suitable for those wishing to undertake long distance cycling routes but also families who may wish to hire a bike for a day and follow a well-established 'tourist route' such as the [Camel Trail](#) from Wadebridge to Padstow, or perhaps the [Tarka Trail](#) (now with an audio guide) or the [Drake's Trail](#) linking Tavistock and Plymouth. The benefit of these paths is that they can also be used by walkers thereby providing an easy access to those just wanting to dabble. Whilst in this part of the country it is worth noting that the [Eden Project](#) offers those visitors arriving by bike, on foot, or by public transport a discount on the admission fee.

## Safaris

A number of estates in the UK offer traditional shooting and stalking opportunities. [Wild West Safaris](#) operate a red deer rut safari throughout the month of October where visitors can experience the mighty roaring. At other times of the year they also offer normal red deer safaris, searchlight safaris in the dark and various bird and sea life trips.

A number of other operators offer something similar and this includes [Highland Safaris](#) who offer a number of safaris experiences in Perthshire. They also have an expanded offering with a Red Deer Centre and a Gold Panning Centre; this approach makes it more of a day out for the family. They operate a mountain bike trails centre and offer a lift to the top of the hill for those wanting to mountain bike back down; this makes the whole experience much more accessible and enjoyable. They also offer a [hilltop dining](#) experience with 5 star catering in a marquee set in an area with stunning views across the countryside. This is perhaps more suited to the corporate market, but also has potential for small groups of consumers as a different experience.

## Outdoors indoors

There are a number of facilities which offer an outdoors experience but indoors. Climbing walls are probably the best example of this. With the vagaries of the weather in both Wales and Ireland an indoor facility provides a drier alternative. It also offers a tamer environment for those who wish to learn or practice a specific activity.

The [Ice Factor](#) in Kinlochleven offer indoor ice climbing on the UK's biggest indoor ice wall and also indoor rock climbing. It also runs outdoor climbing experiences where those who have mastered the indoor version can progress to the outdoors. [Xscape](#) in Glasgow also offers an indoor snow experience with rock climbing. [The Roxx](#) in New Zealand not only offers a traditional indoor climbing wall it also offers a 'clip 'n' climb' facility. This is an innovative indoor climbing concept in an arena full of individually themed climbing challenges equipped with automatic belay devices that make climbing safe and exciting.

Edinburgh Indoor Climbing Arena (EICA) in Ratho, Edinburgh claims to be the world's largest indoor climbing arena – it is very consumer focused and activities are tailored for beginners to experts. The new [Beacon Climbing Wall](#) in Carnaerfon is the largest in North Wales and offers taster and dabbler sessions targeted at visitors.

Several development schemes for multi-activity indoor adventure activity centres have been discussed at different sites across the UK. The developer, [Venture Extreme](#) is progressing with planning permission for a project on the West Coast of Cumbria, led by Copeland Regen Company and involves a large scale indoor adventure centre on the edge of Cleator Moor that will include: indoor canyoning, ice climbing wall, caving, snow area for children, clip and climb and coasteering along with retail and food elements. £20million is required and 75% public funding has been mentioned. If all goes to plan it could be operational in mid 2015. A feasibility study was conducted in 2010 for a similar scheme for North Wales at the Dolgarrog former aluminium works in Conwy Valley. Ainscough Strategic Land commissioned the study in partnership with Conwy County Borough Council & the Welsh Assembly Government. The project has not progressed further as too much private investment was required.

## OTHER SECTORS

### People power and social media

Direct engagement and interaction with the consumer is now a valuable aspect of promotional activity. The rise of social media cannot be underestimated and businesses need to be prepared to have snackable, shareable content and to be liked and commented on instantly; importantly they also need to be able to react accordingly. It is advisable to analyse twitter followers and also who is retweeting; establish who are they and what they might want from you. We learn from the museum sector that some businesses are also using electronic comments books and then putting the comments online. Photography and film making may also provide an opportunity to engage with the target market, especially with young people using YouTube as a medium. The Guggenheim invited both amateur and professional film makers to submit films, with 25 to be selected as part of an exhibition.

Brooklyn Museum also took the power of the people one step further and established a 'crowd curation' where individuals browsed through possible exhibits online and reviewed and then voted on the final exhibits. It was a big undertaking by those involved as the process took a few hours to complete but they welcomed the opportunity to contribute.

The London Science Museum engaged with children as part of The Science of Spying exhibition. The children were invited to role play being a spy. This additional interactive measure helped to raise the profile of the exhibition. The National Maritime Museum asked visitors to wear wellies as part of their visit to help them step out of themselves and into the experience.

VisitScotland have used a number of initiatives to make the product more real, and perhaps accessible. 2011, was designated as the Year of Active Scotland and as part of their activity they created [Grab a Glen](#). This comprised a blog by a travel writer who travelled the length and breadth of Scotland visiting various glens and areas and undertaking all manner of active pursuits. His blog provided first hand details and top tips and featured on both VisitScotland's twitter and facebook accounts.

As part of their International Marketing campaign they ran '[Meet the Scots](#)'. This campaign included a seasonal calendar with each month having a dedicated theme and one of the Scots presenting a particular month, providing a colourful and inspiring guide to what's growing, what's nesting and what's blooming in the Scottish countryside, as well as what events and festivals are taking place. Thus the calendar

offered an impressive selection of year round adventures and experiences to be found throughout Scotland. The Scots were all part of tourism in Scotland and included a musician, a Lady, a ferry skipper, a kilt designer and the owner of an adventure travel company.

They also introduced a '[Days Out](#)' app which contains over 2,000 places to visit, eat and drink. This app is free to download and is in partnership with National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland. Users of it can find out what is on their doorstep or nearby in Scotland.

### Partnership marketing

Working with other tourism businesses and event can not only benefit an individual business but also a wider area.

Events provide a reason to visit and Cheltenham and Edinburgh promote their Festivals as a whole. Here you can find websites for [Cheltenham Festivals](#) and [Edinburgh Festivals](#). This joined up approach makes the offering stronger. If a visitor is looking for details on the Cheltenham Jazz Festival they also see that there is a Literature Festival which they may be interested in taking place later in the year. Not only is this approach good for the visitor but it is also a cost effective method for the various event organisers to promote their individual events. This approach can be used across the tourism sector.

The [Staffordshire Hoard](#) of Anglo Saxon gold objects, the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon gold in the world, has been promoted across venues in Staffordshire as a celebration of the importance of the hoard to the whole county. A partnership of the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent and Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery has shared the collection's display with Lichfield Cathedral, Lichfield District Council, Tamworth Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council. During summer 2011, some of the most impressive objects were first displayed in Stoke-on-Trent, then Stafford before moving on to Lichfield Cathedral and then Tamworth Castle. Overwhelming demand to see the Hoard meant timed entry tickets were all issued before even the first visitor had been welcomed through the doors. This benefited other museums in the historic city (Dr Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum, Lichfield Heritage Centre), and boosted bednights. Across Staffordshire as a whole, more tourists visited all the host towns.

## A tourist's shoes

It is important to put yourself in the shoes of a tourist. What do they want from a destination, where do they find out information? There are visitors who plan in advance of the trip and those that want to find out more when they arrive. Businesses need to ensure that they are reaching both audiences. When visitors have arrived, ensure that the local accommodation providers know what businesses are offering and make it easy to find out more information or more importantly book; strike up relationships amongst the tourism industry.

Think about how a family copes with rainy days; make practical suggestions on websites both indoors and outdoors. People don't mind getting wet, if it is fun. The [National Trust](#) has a section on their site for these conditions and includes making mud pies, mud slides and generally just running around in the rain. The National Trust also target families nicely via 50 things to do before you are 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  - this could be applied to the outdoors.

Visitors are on holiday to get away from it all and food can play an important role in the overall experience. Think about the power of a good café or a restaurant and how best to position the catering offer as part of the overall sell to target markets; family needs may be different.

During the 1980s, the Victoria & Albert Museum, now rebranded as the [V&A](#), launched a Saatchi & Saatchi-inspired campaign. Radical for its time and theme, it promoted the V&A as '*an ace caff with quite a nice museum attached*'. There was a notable level of backlash, a perception of selling out and giving in to commercial interests. However, the media coverage and increased visitor numbers contributed to the V&A achieving its objective in breaking down barriers, making the museum more attractive and broadening the audience base. Part of the campaign sold a high quality experience where they could enjoy '£100,000,000 worth of objets d'art free with every egg salad'. Although an outdoors tourism experience will not have the same type of collateral as the V&A there is still scope to re-think how a food offering can be used as leverage.

It is also worth considering the preferences of a visitor by establishing databases which can be achieved by acquiring contacts. This form of tourism data management allows businesses to build relationships via interactivity and is key to building loyalty towards a tourism initiative or theme. Destinations should consider establishing consumer and business databases made relevant to the specific sector.

