
Tourism Research Intelligence Partnership - TRIP East Midlands

Partnership Launch Event 3rd July 2006 at Nottingham University Business School, Jubilee Campus, University of Nottingham.

1. **Keynote Speech**

Richard Dickinson, Chief Executive, East Midlands Tourism

East Midlands Tourism is working to provide strategic direction to set the region apart and to put it on the tourism map. It is important to get the public, private and academic sectors involved in this project.

Improving quality in the region is crucial and some of the work Nottingham Trent University has been doing is closely related.

Understanding how business is performing, the economic impact of the industry and evaluating the effectiveness of marketing campaigns (as in the work of Professor Thea Sinclair and colleagues at Nottingham University), all will contribute to improving the sector in the East Midlands.

2. **TRIP: An Introduction**

Professor Thea Sinclair, University of Nottingham

Outlines the context of TRIP. Tourism has proved to be a sociable field with people enjoying meeting others in the sector. TRIP is an ideal way of partnership between members of government organisations, academics and members of industry.

Thea explains that TRIP:

- establishes a network of researchers across the East Midlands from 8 universities working with Intelligence East Midlands
- communicates and share ideas with the industry and government members
- provides a forum for collection of data and dissemination of research to a wider audience
- provides a forum for collaboration between academia and government organisation members
- maintains a website for transfer and access of data and ensures information is readily available
- carries out the Tourism Barometer as a way to monitor latest sector trends across the East Midlands by asking businesses their perspective.

4. **www.trip-eastmidlands.org.uk "a tour"**

Isobel O'Neil, TRIP East Midlands Research Coordinator

A quick welcome to the website to act as a starting point for individuals' own use.

Explains some key functions by way of a tour including:

- The Tourism Resource Catalogue – contains research, reports, and other information to be used by all with an interest in tourism. Type in a keyword e.g. "accommodation" and related reports will appear. A click takes you to the external website where the document is held or will open it up directly.
- Facts and Figures – an interactive map which will contain basic tourism statistics by Destination Management Partnership area.
- Find an Expert – allows users to search for an expert in a particular subject
- News – a chance for all organisations and business to announce new developments in research or in tourism activity.
- Student Link – a space for students and organisations to communicate – jobs wanted, jobs offered. Dissertation ideas etc.

Please look at the website and email isobel@trip-eastmidlands.org.uk if you have any content, events, links or general feedback.

5. **Tourism Barometer**

Professor Thea Sinclair, University of Nottingham

A first survey of this kind for the East Midlands, which is something to be excited about. Approximately 110 businesses were contacted to take part with 24 responses being returned by the cut off date.

Thea provides a brief presentation some of the findings, with the caveat that the sample size is small and has effectively been a pilot edition.

- Business activity when compared to the same quarter last year: activity is general up or about the same. Only 22% said activity was down.
- Staff levels have generally remained unchanged when compared to the same period last year.
- Factors having a negative or positive impact on business activity – unable to do much about the weather but might have a chance to change operational costs.
- Destination reputation – some respondents felt it was a positive force with others stating it had had a negative impact. Reputation is something that can be worked on improving – takes time.
- Investment areas – Tourism organisations have invested in their businesses over the last 12 months and additional have plans to invest in the coming 12 months. Shows a wish to grow and improve.
- Finally, anticipated business activity – 57% projecting business to be up in the coming quarter when compared to the same period last year.

A report will be produced shortly and a process of evaluation will take place over the summer to further improve the barometer survey.

6. **"University Challenge: Sharing Some Experiences of Engaging with Industry"**

Professor Conrad Lashley, Nottingham Trent University

The challenge is building partnerships between the private sector and academia. Nottingham Trent's approach has been to create specialist centres – "The Centre for Leisure Retailing" – which has been successful in engaging with corporate sector. It has been vital to develop ongoing positive partnerships with client organisations, but to remain in control of these relationships.

There are three ways of developing and maintaining relationships:

1. Management Development and Training
2. Research Consultancy
3. Sponsorship and Access

Some experiences of industry have shown actual tangible outcomes from investing in any of the three above.

Management Development results:

70% reported that sales have increased or loss of sales has been reduced

50% saw improved profitability

70% report increased customer satisfaction

Research Consultancy

Work has looked at tracking the benefit gained from training, mapping the changes, making training sustainable, looking at employment of students in the sector, ACE employers and service quality.

This all feeds into the need to improve quality in the East Midlands, as Richard Dickinson alluded to in the keynote.

The important issues is that we need to develop a culture whereby organisations see the university as a resource which can be used.

7. **Working with Universities – a Private Sector Perspective** Stephen Gould, Everard Breweries Ltd

What do Google, Cisco, Yahoo and Microsystems all have in common? They started life at Stanford University.

Speaks about an example of a venture capitalist who invested in the Chemistry Department at the University of Oxford. Universities are looking elsewhere for funding and some businesses looking to universities.

Key products from the academic world is intellectual property – the point is what to do with these ideas.

Attention is given to what is usually thought of as the independence of academics – beware when research is privately funded that it doesn't become biased.

Advice to those considering working with universities is to start small [invest in a small amount of training or a small research consultancy] but to think big.

The relationship between entrepreneurs and academic researchers is important.

8. **Evaluation and Research in the East Midlands** William Smart, East Midlands Tourism

Provides a map of the UK to highlight public sector spending on tourism delivery.

WS outlines some of EMT aims with marketing at the top of the agenda but closely backed up by investing in research and intelligence programme. The total budget for 2005-06 is in excess of £4 million. Tactical Marketing has taken place in 4 overseas markets. Return on Investment is 10:1 domestically and 28:1 inbound.

WS presents some of the overseas marketing campaigns carried out as part of Essential England (Visit Britain).

Evaluation is "the attempt to measure the impact of marketing activities on the tourism performance of a destination" and "the analysis and measurement of the effectiveness of tourism policy in meeting objectives of a destination; and in finding new ways to improve its future performance".

Some figures from the Marketing Evaluation of the Peak District Short Breaks Campaign. A 25% response rate was achieved. The average spend per head was £310, with a total of £2.67 million generated from a £75,000 campaign. The return on investment is 14:1.

East Midlands Tourism are working on the following research projects:

- A major programme to look into consumer trends, spend and impact.
- New methods to understand tourism consumer behaviour – Visitrac survey and the occupancy survey.
- Understanding the true economic impact of tourism.
- Links with the East Midlands Tourism Barometer, and TRIP
- Proactive work with Nottingham Trent University to proactively improve quality.

9. **Concluding Comments**

Richard Dickinson, East Midlands Tourism

A thank you is given to all who attended and questions are put forward to those who gave presentations.

Q. Richard Voase, University of Lincoln asks about the problem of the East Midlands being described as a hidden gem – does this imply that the East Midlands is not heavily visited?

A. East Midlands is not a very helpful term due to the midlands bit. Hidden gem works for the international market as many people who have visited the UK have just seen London area. This marketing activity complements the work by Visit Britain.

Q. 110 businesses said they would respond but only 24 did. Any reflections on this?

A. What was more important at this early stage is to get the survey online and gather some initial results. There is a need for a big push next time – more businesses will be contacted and brought into the project. Slightly disappointing start