

Chapter 9

Buxton and the Peak District: Attracting Visitors to the Water Festival

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is designed to analyze and interpret the demand from a new and anticipated international visitor market to the small market and spa town of Buxton, Derbyshire. It offers an audience development plan for the newly renovated Crescent Hotel and Spa (CHS). The hotel is currently in the final stages of re-development following a major refurbishment to a culturally important, both environmentally and socially sensitive, icon in Buxton. Benefits to the town include heightened awareness of tourism's contribution, through income from staying visitors and a resultant boost to the incomes of a range of stakeholders in the supply chain. A secondary analysis of two case studies, best practices of Harrogate and Bath, has been considered as these are both similar spa towns. The chapter concludes with several recommendations for the CHS to encourage international tourists to visit and stay a while.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is designed to analyse and interpret the demand from a new and anticipated international visitor market to the small market and spa town of Buxton, Derbyshire through the offer of a water festival. The Crescent Hotel and Spa (CHS) is currently in the final stages of re-development following a major refurbishment to a culturally

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important, both environmentally and socially sensitive, icon in Buxton. An audience development model (ADM) will be developed to identify ways to attract a new type of tourist to Buxton. The purpose of this study is to: (a) adopt the concept of a water festival through an ADM; (b) to compare Buxton to similar spa towns in the UK and; (c) to analyse key international markets (Camilleri, 2018a,b). This analysis and adoption of the festival are important to determine the success rate diversification in Buxton. Several UK destinations have successful festival/ event tourism and as Buxton is developing a new concept for this market it is important to determine what key competitors have done in the past to develop a strong diversification strategy for tourism success. Therefore, this chapter examines the impact of a new water festival, as this activity could attract new tourists to Buxton and the Peak District.

BACKGROUND

Buxton is located in the heart of the Peak District National Park and is the oldest and most visited National Park in the UK. Buxton currently caters for; outdoor/ walking tourists, cyclists; as there are many trails within and around the area; day trippers and lastly; wellness tourists as this is a developing tourism segment (Visit Buxton, 2016). Buxton offers a range of activities and has a wide number of accommodation types to meet the demand of many tourism segments (Visit Buxton, 2016; Bill, 2010), however, the CHS will be the first five-star hotel and resort in the area, therefore implying a change to the demand for the town. Buxton has a population of 24,000 people and has a reputation as ‘The Bath of the North’, this is due to Buxton being situated on thermal springs. Each year the town receives 1.3 million visitors, which generates £74 million to the local economy; mostly from food and beverage retailers (High Peak Borough Council, 2012).

Water Festival

The CHS is a grade 1 listed heritage building and renovation work started in April 2016, the work is expected to last for 20 months to restore the whole building. Six months after the start date the pump room was finished and is currently used as a venue for meetings at which the community is updated on the progress of the renovation of the building. Once the renovations are completed this will become the reception area for the visitor centre. The finish date is anticipated to be 2019. The funding for the project has come from various private and public section organisations, including the Heritage Lottery Fund and Derbyshire County Council. The hotel itself is built adjacent to thermal springs and will have 80 bedrooms, café, restaurant, shops, visitor centre, tour guides and a spa complex.

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