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# Handbook on Marketing Transnational Tourism Themes and Routes

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# Marketing Transnational Tourism
# Themes and Routes

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# Table of contents

# Acknowledgments

# Foreword

One of the tourism areas with high potential to empower travellers to make a positive change on their surroundings is that of transnational tourism, whether based around cultural or natural thematic threads. This diverse and novel phenomenon appeals to the emotions, intellect and senses of the modern-day visitor, who desires to live the culture and character of a place, connect with local communities, and pursue challenges and discovery as they travel. The UNWTO Silk Road Initiative, gathering today 33 countries, is a contemporary example of a pioneering project in this field.

The marketing of such routes and networks is complex, with transnational tourism products facing several potential administrative and cultural challenges. However, overcoming these obstacles to create transnational networks can bring significant benefits to all stakeholders, including in terms of marketing, trade, education and community development.

With this *Handbook on Marketing Transnational Tourism Themes and Routes,* the European Travel Commission (ETC) and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) aim to provide an overview of six varieties of transnational tourism themes and routes, as well as practical guidelines both for managers of existing transnational routes and networks and for those seeking to create new ones. The Handbook includes a four-step guide to the marketing process of transnational themed tourism products.

ETC and UNWTO are pleased to present members with another practical and useful reference tool, founded upon our strong and ongoing cooperation, We trust that this handbook will guide national and destination management organizations to understand the challenges, opportunities and functioning of transnational themed products, with a view to identifying potential new prospects for development of such routes and networks.

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# Executive summary

## Global overview of themed tourism and tourism routes

Themes are the basis on which tourism professionals, whether in the public or private sector, construct and market tourism products. They correspond to the **motivation of travellers,** whether they relate to history, food, well-being or any other domain of human interest.

In some cases, the motivation is quite basic, for example to relax on a beach. In others, the motivation is functional, such as travel purely for business. The handbook focusses on **aspirational tourism,** where the goal is discovery, stimulation of the mind and senses, or **challenge,** motivated by achievement, for example through physical or sporting activities.

In general, thematic tourism is driven by one of two complementary threads: *culture* and *nature. Culture* includes all aspects of human activity and endeavour, leading to a multitude of possible themes on which a tourist product can be built. Meanwhile, *Nature* includes the discovery of wildlife and untouched landscapes; also, physical activities where the natural environment is important.

Tourism themes can be grouped into several categories, for example:
–  **History:** experiencing and understanding the past through buildings, artefacts, reconstitutions, or other material or immaterial traces and memories;
–  **Pilgrimage:** experiencing or sharing a sense of spirituality or sublimation through travel; and
–  **Landscape:** seeing and communing with remarkable and beautiful sites, including coastal, mountain, rural, and even man-made landscapes.

## Themes and routes

When a theme extends over a wide geographical area, as is the case when more than one country is involved, the tourism managers can emphasize the link between the assets and attractions. A common method is to create a **route.**

Sometimes this is an itinerary, to be followed by car, on foot, or by any other means. In other cases, it is a network of attractions and sites. For example, the creators of a wine route might propose a guided itinerary; or they might map and promote the vineyards, allowing the traveller to choose to visit one or several, in the order they wish.

The marketing of routes and networks is complex, and includes:
–  Identifying and defining the theme;
–  Shaping and packaging the concept;

  – Developing products for the market; and
  – Promoting the whole.

This process may involve many different stakeholders, in both the public and private sector.

## Tourism themes and experiences

Thematic tourism appeals to the emotions, intellect and senses of the consumer. It is often linked to the culture of a destination, and the lifestyle and aspirations of its people. Thematic tourism can be successfully developed through techniques such as **storytelling.**

The creators of a tourism theme may link the tourism assets through reference to food, landscape or other cultural realities. Above all, they will provide the visitor with **experiences:** not just places to go and things to see, but feelings, sensations and activities. Events will often be an important part of the experience, as will authentic contact with the local inhabitants.

Successful initiatives offer a cultural experience, where the visitor feels a **personal engagement** with the theme. Experience-based tourism adds value to the consumer, but also reinforces the identity of the territory, both internally and to the outside world.

This style of tourism is called *experiential,* and the marketing of theme-based tourism is also experience-based. In addition to traditional tools such as brochures or websites, it should be delivered in the form of stories, experiences and events, allowing the consumers to *taste* the tourism experience in advance.

## Making theme-based tourism transnational

A tourism route can extend over a wide geographical area: in the case of the UNWTO Silk Road, for example, over thousands of kilometres. Such transnational products are very powerful, but raise many issues:
  – Challenges of an *administrative* nature, such as differing models for the governance of tourism, differing modes of funding, and in general, the partners' regional or national priorities, which may not include transnational cooperation; and
  – *Cultural* issues, including different working practices, language, and/or levels of experience in one domain or another.

It is worth persisting, to overcome these challenges, as the creation of transnational networks can bring significant benefits to all the partners involved:
  – It can attract a high level of interest from consumers and the media;
  – Between neighbouring countries, it will lower barriers, and develop mutually beneficial tourism flows;
  – It can enable frontier regions to create attractions and products that would not be viable if undertaken alone; and
  – In all cases, it will encourage the development of new skills among tourism operators, including at the grass-roots level.

## Varieties of transnational themed tourism

The handbook covers examples of transnational tourism initiatives from the following six groups:

1. **Localized, cross-border initiatives,** where two nearby regions or towns are separated by a border: these initiatives may be of an urban nature, or link adjoining regions that share cultural or landscape characteristics;

2. **Itineraries and travel corridors,** where the tourist travels by car, train, foot, or by any other means along a road, trail, *route,* or *way:* these corridors may be managed by transnational organizations such as EuroVelo, in the case of cycling trails;

3. **Thematic or cultural networks,** where attractions are grouped at a transnational level, based on a theme. Examples in the handbook include Europe's Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA) and the Jesuit Route, grouping heritage sites in six countries of South America;

4. **Sustainable environmental management:** there are many examples of national parks that cross borders and are jointly managed; also of organizations, such as the UNESCO Geoparks network, that facilitate international cooperation;

5. In the **theme and experience** model, the partners promote a style of tourism that reflects values and lifestyle. This may concern food, well-being, spiritual experience, eco-responsibility and so on. These networks target special interest tourism communities, which are very willing to travel to find experiences in line with their values; and

6. **Strategic regional cooperation** goes somewhat beyond the scope of this handbook. It concerns tourism strategies that reflect regional cooperation partnerships, such as the Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle, or the International Bodensee Conference, involving cantons, states and national authorities from four countries.

## European mapping

Before going into detail on the challenges, opportunities, and functioning of transnational themed products, the handbook provides an overview of European examples. Europe was chosen for the richness and variety of examples it already provides, and with a view to identifying potential for partners to develop new transnational themed routes.

This *mapping* of the continent also illustrates the **differences of theme** from north to south and east to west. For example:

– In southern Europe, on or close to the Mediterranean, tourism may focus on food and drink as markers of social interaction (e.g., markets and open-air dining), or on the heritage of ancient cultures; and

– In Scandinavia and the Baltic, the theme of winter is obviously more important, as are mountain and coastal landscapes, and a certain culture of self-sufficiency.

Just as the themes differ, so do the **opportunities for transnational partnerships.** In certain areas of northern Europe, the relatively flat landscapes lend themselves to thematic and cultural tourism by bicycle or by river and barge. In the Balkans, cultural diversity lends itself to rich and spectacular walking tours.

# Practical guide

From general principles and examples to practical implementation, this section covers the marketing process step by step, and provides a roadmap through the complexity of transnational tourism.

## Step 1: Planning and preparation

Planning and preparation are the keys to success in any partnership. There is a need to develop a framework for collaboration, starting with initial assessment of the project, and including research, consultation and team building.

More specifically, this means:
– Determining the **development model;**
– Construction and **formulation of the theme;**
– **Situation assessment,** which includes evaluation of the available assets and of the potential market; and
– Consultation and **team building.**

In other words, all the steps needed to draft a full *marketing strategy.*

## Step 2: Targeting the customer

Helping travellers to engage with the destination, both before and during the visit, is at the heart of tourism marketing. It requires:
– A good understanding of the consumers concerns;
– Developed products that can meet expectations and aspirations of consumers; and
– Promotion of the products in a way that fosters an emotional and memorable connection with the destination.

The transnational theme can be a tool to foster this connection. If the theme is marine life, for example, marketing campaigns can be developed using events and imagery relating to the sea, the fish and aquatic life. These **marketing tools** can be made available to partners and stakeholders in every country involved.

The same theme can be a way of **segmenting the market** and establishing a dialogue with consumers who could be potential visitors. Behind every theme, there is a **community of consumers** that has an emotional stake in that world.

This emotional link is the means to add **visitor value** to the tourism product.

## Step 3: Developing the product

There are five essential phases in developing a transnational initiative:

1. **Harnessing local energy** to get active support from communities and small businesses on the ground;
2. **Structuring and clustering** the tourism assets of the different countries, organized to a clearly defined plan that makes sense to all partners;
3. **Following the market:** the plan is designed to ensure that the network of assets or route corresponds to targeted segments of the market;
4. **Building development capacity:** with this plan and this stakeholder support, the capacity to deliver a powerful marketing message is multiplied; and
5. **Maintaining quality:** although many stakeholders are involved, all will follow guidelines that ensure quality of design and delivery.

The tools to manage this development framework will typically include a **management committee** or working group, formed of senior executives from the principal regions and stakeholders involved; and an **advisory board** and/or **scientific committee,** whose role includes guiding the expression of the theme, obtaining development funding and political support; and involving the tourism industry at an international level.

## Step 4: Taking it to market

This handbook primarily addresses national regional tourism authorities, which are fully aware of the importance of the private sector. Additional requirements for success as a transnational themed product or route are:

– Be present and visible at travel trade **industry events,** to meet and talk to tour operators, cruise operators, and other professionals. Develop tools to help them create products that reflect the theme. Keep providing them with information;

– Work with the **media,** using the existing resources of the project's partners. Send out news releases, but also invite journalists and bloggers to visit and share, to become involved in your strategy;

– Think in terms of **communities of interest:** those who will be naturally drawn to the theme. For example, if a route links bird sanctuaries, identify the organizations, media, blogs and social networks that are used by bird-lovers;

– Take advantage of high-speed networks and digital tools to strengthen **communication** with customers, and build trade and media relations. Communication costs have decreased dramatically, with phone, skype and email contact across frontiers low cost or free. Tools like Google Translate reduce language barriers. For younger consumers, cultural references are increasingly global; and

– New technologies increase opportunities for **innovation:**
  – Augmented reality and virtual reality help the visitor understand the links between attractions and assets, across frontiers;
  – Walking and cycling routes are less dependent on physical signage, as smart phone ownership becomes universal; and
  – Social networks can bring communities of travellers together, around common themes.

# Conclusions: looking to the future

Managers of transnational tourism themes and routes should keep three major trends in mind:

1. **International exchange** will continue to develop. Tourists will increasingly expect easy border crossing, and consumers have become accustomed to international travel;

2. **Technology** will drive that growth ever faster. It will continue to facilitate travel, and the creation of themed products across frontiers; and

3. Growth will be encouraged and supported by **international bodies** such as UNESCO, UNWTO, the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, Mercosur, ECOWAS, World Bank and other bodies, including international development agencies.

Successfully themed transnational tourism can be **game-changing.** Pioneering projects such as UNWTO Silk Road will be followed by many more which, though currently at early stages of development, could become as important.

A transnational theme can create a powerful dynamic and engage local communities, tourism businesses, local authorities, and the general public. A transnational theme will bring other associated benefits:

– Giving a voice to local communities;

– Helping to rediscover local traditions and cultural assets; and

– Encouraging walking, cycling and other forms of *slow* travel; and raising public awareness of the richness and variety of human experience.

# Introduction

In recent years, the development of tourism around a common theme has gained prominence, whereby services and attractions are bundled under a unifying topic, for the purposes of marketing. Themes bring together the destination's tangible and intangible characteristics, and appeal to specific visitor segments, developing experiences on topics such as culture, history, heritage, nature, sports, gastronomy, religion or health.

In many cases, themed products are purely local, but they will have more impact if they cover a wide geographic spectrum, crossing landscapes and frontiers. Transnational themed tourism products offer visitors an immersive experience through the discovery of whole regions, in their richness and diversity. Whether in Europe or in other areas of the world, they also enhance synergies, and strengthen cross-border collaboration.

A common way to group tourism assets is as a tourism **route or circuit,** taking the visitor from one site or attraction to another. A tourism *route* may imply a physical road or trail, or may simply be a network of destinations. Once again, the extension of a route across frontiers sends a powerful message, as is demonstrated by routes such as the Camino de Santiago or the UNWTO Silk Road.

## The purpose of the handbook

With this handbook, the ETC and UNWTO aim, first of all, to acquire a deeper understanding of the transnational tourism themes and tourism routes that are already proposed to travellers. The handbook will shed light on the current landscape of tourism themes and themed tourism routes in Europe and on other continents.

Secondly, the ETC and UNWTO wish to provide practical guidance on the implementation of thematic tourism marketing and the creation of tourism routes, including their development, management and promotion. The handbook will serve as a comprehensive guide, both for managers of existing transnational products and for those seeking to create new routes and networks.

Specifically, the handbook provides practical guidance for National Tourism Organizations/Administrations (NTOs/NTAs) and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) on how to market and promote destinations through transnational thematic tourism experiences and products.

The handbook will enrich the UNWTO's tools for innovation, and feed into the ETC's 'Destination Europe 2020' strategy, contributing also to the development and promotion of its VisitEurope.com Internet portal (see http://visiteurope.com).

## The innovative nature of this research

This handbook takes into account previous work undertaken on the theme of *cultural routes,* including the ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes; the CERTESS project, covering governance, capacity building and good practice (2014); the Council of Europe's reference publication *Cultural Routes Management, from Theory to Practice* (2015), produced by the European Institute of Cultural Routes; and the UNWTO's *Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries* (2015).

There is, however, very little of a global nature published on the subject of *tourism-focussed* themes and routes, still less on transnational tourism products, except in very specific areas, such as long-distance walking or cycle trails. In that sense, this is a ground-breaking publication, the first to define the subject, to establish its parameters and to propose a framework for the development and marketing of transnational tourism themes and routes.

## The goals

Above all, therefore, the handbook has been designed to achieve the following three goals:
1. To define and create a **common framework** for transnational tourism products;
2. To provide a portfolio of **best practice examples,** for learning and reference; and
3. To develop a **toolkit** for the marketing and promotion of transnational tourism themes and routes.

The handbook is presented in five sections:
1. **Global overview of themed tourism and tourism routes** (chapters 1 to 4) describes the growing importance of cultural themes in tourism; it identifies the *route* as a common way to structure such tourism; and describes the current state of transnational tourism based on themes and routes;
2. **European mapping of transnational theme-based tourism** (chapter 5) takes the continent of Europe as an example, identifying interesting initiatives and future potential for local and national tourism organizations;
3. **A practical guide to developing transnational themed routes** (chapters 6 to 9) is a step-by-step guide for NTOs and DMOs in the development of transnational tourism routes and networks;
4. **Further case studies** (chapter 10): though every chapter is illustrated with case studies and short examples, these eight additional case studies have been influential in the development of transnational theme-based tourism; and
5. **Conclusions to the handbook** (chapter 11) includes a summary of the success factors for transnational tourism partnerships, and of the challenges and benefits of pursuing them; also, a view to the future, explaining why such initiatives are likely to develop and prosper in the years to come.

## Potential rather than achievement

Readers should note, as this is a new field of development, that most examples and cases are in early stages of development, with marketing strategies and plans generally presented as being *under development.* As a result, the managers interviewed were rarely able to provide detailed or reliable performance statistics.

With few exceptions, transnational initiatives are generally described as *having potential* for the future; and their achievements tend to be anecdotal in nature rather than backed by hard evidence.

## Methodology

Little previous research has specifically addressed transnational tourism, or the transnational marketing of themes and routes. Consequently, the handbook is based on established practice: what has been done and achieved in the field.

The following research methodology was adopted:

1. Assemble a comprehensive, worldwide Database of Transnational Themes and Routes, currently containing 240 items;
2. Validate the database content by an Expert Panel of twelve senior tourism professionals;
3. Select the 130 most developed transnational tourism initiatives, according to agreed criteria, with the most relevant ones being used as *mini-cases* (examples of practice), inserted throughout the text;
4. In-depth interviews of 25 managers of transnational theme-based tourism initiatives; and
5. A number of case studies was selected. Some are located at the end of relevant chapters; some in chapter 10.

Annex 1 provides the links and information about each case study discussed in the handbook. Annex 2 gives more detailed insight into the institutional background of transnational themes and routes while annex 3 provides a step-by-step description of the methodology.

# Section 1:

# Global and European overview of themed tourism and tourism routes

# Chapter 1

## Exploring and defining key concepts

This chapter defines and explores key concepts used in the handbook, starting with **tourist themes:** what they are and how they can be grouped or classified. It looks at fifteen theme groups and how they are applied in tourism.

The chapter covers three critical areas of application:
1. **Tourism routes:** what they are, and why they are important to theme-based tourism;
2. The **creation of themed products,** in collaboration between the public and private sectors; and
3. The role of **marketing,** also presenting the **eight components** of the themed tourism marketing mix.

## 1.1    What is a tourism theme?

Destination managers and private sector tourism operators use themes to build and market tourism products. They highlight a destination's key attributes, characteristics or unique propositions, and give character and identity to a tourism asset or activity. Whether the theme is "The Castles of the Rhine" or "Folk Festivals in India", it can be summarised in a few words, speaks directly to the market and conveys shared understanding.

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**Box 1.1          Common tourism themes**

1. **Architecture, landscaping and design:** refers to a particular period or style.

   Example: you will find the baroque theme expressed on all the city's façades.

2. **Food and drink:** denotes a style, a way of cooking, a method of production and/or a type of ingredient.

   Example: basil and tomato is a common theme in all Mediterranean cuisine.

3. **Music and dance:** refers to the content, the musical style or the mood.

   Example: the theme of young love is expressed in the dances of these remote villages.

4. **Trails, itineraries and routes:** gives an identity to the journey.

   Example: walking or cycling trails may be defined as *springtime walks* or *geology trails.*

5. **Cultural events:** where the theme determines the nature of the event.

   Example: the principle theme of the annual festival is that of religious music.

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The examples above show themes used as a marketing concept – a way of positioning and identifying a tourism product.

The significance of themes and theme-based tourism to consumers will vary depending on their motivation for travel, which is roughly grouped into four categories:[1]

1.  **Functional** motivation, for economic or cognitive reasons, such as for business or for health;
2.  **Hedonistic** motivation, where the objective is primarily to satisfy the need and desire for relaxation or pleasure;
3.  **Aspirational** motivation where the goal is discovery, stimulation of the senses and the mind, or elevation through culture, spirituality or the natural environment; and
4.  **Challenge,** where travel is motivated by the desire to achieve, for example through physical or sporting activities.

Motivation for travel is invariably mixed and these categories should not be regarded as exclusive. A traveller primarily motivated by hedonistic objectives, such as lying on a beach or partying, or a traveller to a business meeting or convention, may also look for the cultural experiences offered by a foreign destination.[2]

Thematic tourism primarily sits within the categories of Aspiration and Challenge and these are the handbook's main focus areas.

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| Example 1.1 | **Budapest, Hungary** |

"As Europe's established cities race to reinvent themselves as weekend party destinations, nowhere turns on the style like Budapest. When evening's cloak brings darkness to the central districts of Pest and Belváros, thousands of twinkling lights glint on the ripples of the River Danube, suggesting hidden delights within countless bars and restaurants. Richly adorned with classical culture, from traditional folk music to renowned national opera, there's also a burgeoning club scene as the city rushes to catch the established order. It may not be long before Budapest gets there – catch the vibe while it's on the up."

Source:   Lonely Planet (2012), *Top 10 hedonistic city breaks* (online), available at: www.lonelyplanet.com/travel-tips-and-articles/57567 (12-07-2016).

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Ultimately, a theme is as strong as its capacity to move and excite travellers. The starting point for tourism marketers is an understanding of how their destination can be seen and lived by potential travellers. A historic site or building, such as the Acropolis, may be perceived by one group as "a journey back in time", by another as "an architectural marvel". In this case, two themes are in play: that of history and that of architecture. They will be the basis and starting point for designing a suitable tourism product.

> **Key point:**
>
> A theme can be a marketing concept – a way of positioning and identifying a tourism product. The value of the theme is its capacity to move and excite travellers.

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1   David Ward-Perkins and Jennifer Houillebecq, 'Categories of Tourism Motivation' (2016).

2   See, for example: Travel Hedonism (2012), *Travel Hedonism* (online), available at: www.travelhedonism.com/Home.

# 1.2    Grouping or classifying themes

Most tourism themes are driven by one of two broad and complementary threads: *culture* and/or *nature. Culture* includes all aspects of human activity and endeavour, including the arts, heritage, events, and local produce, together with niche interests such as dark tourism or the discovery of urban subcultures. *Nature* includes the discovery of wildlife and untouched landscapes; also, physical activities where the natural environment is important. The two often interact: Ecotourism, for example, is a blend of cultural and nature-based tourism. Cultural and nature-based tourism tends to revolve around **discovery** and **experience.**

Themes can be further grouped according to the **underlying aspiration** that motivates the interest in travel. The following table offers an overview of thematic groupings and the related aspirations.

Table 1.1    **Dominant thematic groupings**

| Thematic grouping | Nature of the aspiration |
|---|---|
| **History** | Experiencing and understanding the past through buildings, artefacts, reconstitutions, or other material or immaterial traces and memories. |
| **Pilgrimage** | Experiencing or sharing a sense of spirituality or sublimation through travel. |
| **Roots** | Discovering and experiencing the heritage of one's ancestors or one's people. |
| **Landscape** | Seeing and communing with remarkable and beautiful sites, including coastal, mountain, rural, and even man-made landscapes. |
| **Natural systems – ecological and geological** | Discovering the life and appreciating the natural forces that form exceptional places. |
| **Cultural icons** | Visiting sites and monuments, including art galleries and museums that are recognized and admired on a national or international basis. |
| **Urban life** | Participating in the life of cities, through strolling, shopping, nightlife or other urban activities that capture the essence of the urban setting, including interacting with local people. |
| **Rural life** | Participating in the life of rural areas, through activities that capture the essence of the rural setting and interacting with local people. |
| **Maritime life** | Participating in activities that provide insight into maritime industries, such as going oyster catching with a local oyster catcher. |
| **Artistic excellence in visual and performance arts** | Appreciating and engaging in activities relating to visual and performance arts in a destination, including related festivals and events. |
| **Traditional crafts** | Appreciating and engaging in activities relating to traditional crafts in a destination, including related events. |
| **Food and drink** | Discovering and learning about or experiencing the food and drink of different regions and countries, in restaurants, farms, plantations, vineyards, breweries, or at markets and local festivals. |
| **Physical challenge** | Pursuing physical activities where the setting provides a critical backdrop for the experience, including outdoor adventure sports or endurance, journeys to extreme locations, or long-distance running, hiking, cycling or riding. |
| **Industrial tourism – modern and traditional** | Engaging in activities that demonstrate past, present and state-of-the-art work practices in industry, such as factory, mine or power station tours. |
| **Well-being** | Travelling to experience a healthy lifestyle and stimulation of well-being through activities such as spa treatments or meditation. |

These groupings are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive.

The use of themes in tourism promotion and advertising is particularly apparent at the local or regional level. In such cases, destinations seek to differentiate themselves with unique selling propositions. But destinations may also collaborate on the basis of a theme, to strengthen their overall market position. For example, different gastronomic regions of India might work together to raise the overall perception of India as a food tourism destination.

> **Key point:**
>
> Most tourism themes are either culture or nature-based. They express the underlying aspirations of travellers, and their motivation to travel.

## 1.3    The concept of *route*

Many themed experiences are labelled as *routes:*[3] a term that can be misleading.

The original purpose of a tourism route was to link the different expressions of a theme together by creating an *itinerary* from one to another; for example, in the case of a wine route, to link one vineyard to the next. *Routes* might be linear, or else presented as a *circuit* where the traveller returns to the point of departure. The purpose is to guide the traveller through a journey of discovery, based on a common theme, thereby giving it greater visibility.

This original purpose has been enlarged, and many *routes* are now created with no fixed or recommended itinerary. The essential purpose remains to group tourism assets by theme, over an extensive geographical area.

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| Example 1.2 | **The Chocolate Way** |
| --- | --- |



© The Chocolate Way EU.

The Chocolate Way is a network of public and private partners sharing the goal of protecting centuries of European artistic, historic, cultural heritage, linked to cocoa and chocolate. The Chocolate Way promotes visits and tours for the purposes of tourism, but the word *way* does not necessarily refer to a specific itinerary from one site to another.

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3    Or sometimes *ways* or *trails.*

The European Institute of Cultural Routes acknowledges openly that the Routes of the Council of Europe are not necessarily itineraries. In some cases, they have a linear and geographical basis – for example, along historic trade or pilgrimage routes. However, in others, the *route* groups sites that are geographically unconnected, even quite distant from each other.

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Box 1.2                    **The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe**

Cultural Routes are defined in the Council of Europe's Resolution CM/Res (2013) 66 as being "based on a historic route, a cultural concept, figure or phenomenon with a transnational importance and significance for the understanding and respect of common European values." According to the text of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA), adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 December 2013, it is therefore to be understood "not in the restricted sense of physical pathways […] (but as) […] a network of sites or geographical areas sharing a theme".[a]

The Institute proposes a categorisation based on the structure of their routes. It identifies three key types:

1.   **Linear routes** which are based on one or several starting point and one end point. *Camino de Santiago* (also known as Saint James' Way) is an example of this type of route where it starts at various points but ends at one destination – the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, Spain.[b] With linear routes, the physical route itself is often the thematic focus;

2.   **Network routes** where the route and its various elements form an archipelago of points but may not be connected sequentially or physically. The routes are often unified on a thematic basis rather than physical continuity with no specific start or end. Examples include The European Cemeteries Route and the Phoenicians' Route. Themed routes of this nature are generally focussed on a single theme and present a range of experiences or elements associated with that theme; and



St. Olav Ways is a network of pilgrimage routes across Scandinavia.
© Stolavways.com/David Tett.

3.   **Territorial routes** where the cultural routes involve a large geographical area sharing a theme. These themes are based on elements of civilisation and how these are integrated into the region's culture and identity. In territorial routes the territories involved are contiguous. The Routes of the Olive Tree illustrate this category and links regions around the Mediterranean Basin which have the cultivation of the olive tree as the element of commonality, but variations on the theme exist depending on methods of cultivation and the local knowledge base together with the landscape differences.

a)   Council of Europe (2015), *Cultural Routes Management: from Theory to Practice.* Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

b)   World Tourism Organization (2015), *Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries,* Affiliate Members Report: Volume Twelve, UNWTO, Madrid.

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Based on Council of Europe's classifications, any thematic grouping of sites or destinations can be considered as a route. Indeed, in this handbook, many transnational themed tourism initiatives are called *routes* or *ways,* without representing an itinerary.

However, the use of the same word can give the misleading impression that all routes are of the same nature, and operate in similar ways. This is not the case. In chapter 4, the handbook distinguishes between six distinct types of transnational themed tourism, and explains how each of them will operate.

**Key point:**

The term *route* sometimes designates a themed tourism product in the form of an itinerary, and sometimes simply a network of similarly themed products or destinations. In all cases, it is a way of *structuring* tourist visits and grouping sites and assets over an extended geographical area, guiding the traveller through a journey of discovery.

## 1.4    Collaboration in the development of tourism themes

Tourism themes or routes are created and developed through partner collaboration. For example, there may be a number of medieval buildings in a valley, each visited separately. The local tourism authorities may see an opportunity to develop tourism around this theme, promote these heritage assets in their marketing or even create a tourism route to link the buildings up and down the valley. This may, in turn, encourage private operators to adopt the theme, and local businesses such as Bed and Breakfasts to become involved. This *virtuous circle* model will be familiar to all DMOs.

However, even in this simple example, the project is dependent on the active support of many stakeholders. If there is no support from the public sector, if the local community is indifferent, or if the private sector sees no commercial value, it will fail and the Medieval Valley tourism route will have no future.

Example 1.3        **Te Araora, New Zealand**

Te Araroa is a 3,000 km walking trail, spanning the country's two islands. Over 40% of the trail is on conservation land, and the project required a massive effort of collaboration between public sector stakeholders, including local authorities, conservation managers and many others. Bringing the trail to life, however, required private sector involvement, for example to provide accommodation for walkers; campsites and B&Bs have now sprung up along the trail. The YHA (Youth Hostel Association alone manages 16 hostels along the trail, offering a "low carbon discount" to walkers, as an incentive to stay.

This handbook primarily addresses the public sector, in terms of methodology. However, other stakeholders may have a role in the successful development of a tourism theme.

## 1.5    The role of marketing



Music and dance are ways to establish common themes and cultural links. © Jackie Ellis.

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large".[4] More briefly, we might say that marketing is the art and science of bringing a product or service to market.[5] In either definition it is clear that marketing is much more than just the promotion of tourism, and includes the shaping of the product itself, so that it is better understood and appreciated.

In the context of tourism, marketing is about how the traveller engages with the product. It covers multiple issues: branding and positioning; the various elements and quality of the visitor experience; aspects such as interpretation, access to supporting services such as accommodation, food and drink; signage and wayfinding; and the training and coordination of local businesses. In other words, marketing is concerned with the entire visitor experience. This is particularly the case for theme-based tourism, where local produce, the arts and architecture, the protection of the environment, may all be central to the traveller's experience.

The marketing of themes and theme-based tourism cannot be the sole responsibility of tourism authorities. Rather, it must be a collaborative effort that involves the public sector, tourism professionals, other private businesses, and the local community as a whole.

The marketing mix comprises all the activities that national tourism organizations (NTOs), destination management/marketing organizations (DMOs), local authorities, non-governmental organizations, or tourism operators can do to influence the demand for the product, operating alone, or in collaboration.

Traditionally the marketing mix is defined according to components known as the four **P**s: **p**roduct, **p**rice, **p**lace and **p**romotion.

In the context of services (including travel and tourism), other **P**s have been suggested to reflect the changing realities of marketing: **p**eople, **p**articipate, **p**ersonalise, **p**artner, **p**ackaging and **p**rocess have all been highlighted.[6]

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4    American Marketing Association (2013), *Definition of Marketing* (online), available at:
https://archive.ama.org/Archive/AboutAMA/Pages/DefinitionofMarketing.aspx (12-07-2016).

5    BusinessDictionary.com, defines it as 'the management process through which goods and services move from concept to the customer'.

6    For example: Morrison, A.M. (2010), *Hospitality and Travel Marketing* (4th ed), Delmar, Clifton Park, NY.

| Box 1.3 | **The eight components of the marketing mix for themed tourism** |
| --- | --- |

1.  The **product** is the *offer* or promise that is made to the traveller at a transnational level, and which is defined by the theme. It might be "music tourism", with a programme of concerts in the territories concerned, or "horse-riding in the mountains", for example.

2.  **Place** refers to the transnational territory or territories themselves – the way they are structured and organized to receive visitors, facilitating access and making the product available to visitors.

3.  The **partners** are the major stakeholders of the project, representatives of the different countries, each of them active and engaged.

4.  **Participation** refers to all stakeholders, large and small, including local authorities, local communities, businesses, clubs, and associations.

5.  **Process** or **planning** refers to the need for an overall marketing and development plan, in which the countries, communities, businesses, groups, and people all find their place. This is a written plan, contractual in nature, which keeps the project on the rails.

6.  **Packaging** concerns the way experiences and information are structured and delivered to stakeholders and customers, for example through organized events, or through websites that assemble data from all the territories.

7.  **Promotion** covers all activities that communicate the interest and merits of the transnational theme and product and persuade potential visitors to come and experience it.

8.  Finally, tourism is a **people business,** and every component above is dependent on people, on their goodwill, skills, and dedication.

In later chapters of this handbook, we will be recommending a focus on these eight components.

Source:   TEAM Tourism Consulting.

**Key point:**

Marketing involves all aspects of a tourism product development and how the visitor engages with it. As such, marketing is the responsibility of a wide range of stakeholders from individual businesses, to DMO and NTOs.

## 1.6       Case study 1: Marketing a cultural theme: historic thermal towns

**What this case illustrates:**
–   How a shared history, with common cultural references, can form the basis of a rich tourism network;
–   How a global European story adds power to the individual narratives of the members; and
–   How a network can support members' individual efforts.

The case is about marketing and sales, but also shows that a transnational network can address members' common economic concerns, and can lobby for change, over economic, social, medical and regulatory issues.

### 1.6.1    Origin and purpose

The European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA) was formed in 2009, and represents a network of 30 historic towns. Its first initiative was to seek Council of Europe certification, under the name of the European Route of Historical Thermal Towns.[7]

Several EHTTA regions come to the association with their own local partnerships in place. In the Auvergne, for example, The Route des Villes d'Eaux represents 17 thermal towns, which are successfully promoted as a network, with a common sales team and shared presence at professional events and in brochures.

The EHTTA intends to transpose this model to a European scale to raise awareness of all members through business-to-business activities, consumer events, social media, and so on.

Many of these towns are in rural areas or away from major travel networks. Investment costs for the renovation of historic buildings can be high, and their businesses are under threat in some countries, due to changing legislation regarding spa treatments. The Association's goals are therefore strategic. They include the preservation of cultural and architectural heritage, but also the "integrated development of spa towns", even the development of "a new strategy for the spa industry".[8]

### 1.6.2    The theme



Chavasqueira, Spain has forms of open air bathing, similar to Iceland, Scandinavia and Japan. © EHTTA.

Most European thermal towns have a long history, often pre-Roman, and were considered as places of spirituality and magic, as well as for the healing properties of their waters. In later periods, they were frequented by Europe's aristocracy, as seen by the luxurious decoration of bathing areas and buildings. Fashionable towns grew up around them, such as Bath and Baden Baden. The importance of the thermal springs is reflected in the names of towns: Acqui Terme, Bad Homburg, Spa, Bagnères-de-Luchon, and so on.

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7   European Historic Thermal Towns Association (2016a), *European Historic Thermal Towns Association* (online), available at: www.ehtta.eu (02-09-2016).

8   European Historic Thermal Towns Association (2016b), *Introduction* (online), available at: www.ehtta.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=27 (12-07-2016).

## 1.6.3    Marketing work

Marketing is of critical importance to all members of the Association, each of which has developed an individual marketing strategy. Most thermal towns will have an active tourism office, working in collaboration with the spas, developing activities and events for their customers and patients.

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Example 1.4          **The case of Aqui Terme**

The tourism office of this small Italian town (20,000 inhabitants) has a collaborative relationship with the private sector. It uses the website, social media and printed material to promote the bathing facilities, available accommodation, local gastronomy, events and markets, local guides and other tourism offers. This example demonstrates the importance of collective marketing for a town with 30 hotels and over 50 restaurants in the town centre. The businesses generally have a good sense of the market so there is much to be gained from the relationship.

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However, small towns generally have little visibility on an international level. The wellness industry is progressively globalising, putting such smaller destinations at risk, so an important mission of the EHTTA is to develop marketing collaboration between members.

## 1.6.4    Future ambitions and issues

The managers and members of the EHTTA have a long-term marketing vision, which includes:
– Use of shared databases, to deliver information to consumers Europe-wide;
– A European festival programme under the EHTTA brand;
– Collaborative sales actions, targeting treatment spas, conference organizers, and other key markets;
– A global accommodation and management booking system; and
– A European thermal *pass,* allowing consumers to benefit from services in several destinations, operating also as a loyalty system.

At the current level of membership fees,[9] budgets for shared promotion remain limited. Ambitious collaborative marketing depends on additional investment by partners, and takes place on a case-by-case basis.

## 1.6.5    Conclusions and learning points

EHTTA is an excellent example of the networking model of transnational theme-based tourism. Members already have a marketing oriented culture. They recognize that their industry faces common challenges and risks, and see significant opportunities and benefits offered by a transnational approach.

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9    Annual membership fees are currently at EUR 3000, whatever the size of the town.

However, EHTTA faces a problem common to any not-for-profit cultural organization with limited budgets. To realize their ambitions, they may need to create a commercial arm that can manage the shared marketing budgets. In the words of Marion Vansingle, European Cooperation Manager: "as an organization, we have the opportunity to do much greater things; but we will need to give ourselves the means to achieve them."

# Chapter 2

# Tourism, themes and experience

This chapter explores the relationship of theme to experience, in tourism and tourism marketing. It explains the reasons for the significant growth of thematic tourism, resulting both from consumer demand and from new skills and technologies available to destinations and tourism operators. There is a brief overview of the variety of initiatives and marketing approaches to be found in the world today.

It covers:
– The relationship of themes to **culture** and to cultural tourism;
– The growing importance of **experience** in theme-based tourism, and the drivers behind the development of **experiential tourism;**
– The principal benefits accruing to destinations that adopt an **experiential approach** to marketing; and
– Examples that demonstrate the wide variety of thematic tourism based on experience.

## 2.1    Themes, culture and experience

Since the early days of tourism, destinations have been defined by the images and sensations that they evoke. These may be of iconic sites or monuments, but may also be less tangible, residing in the lifestyle, skills and cultural activities of the local people and communities. These complex elements shape the identity of the destination in the marketplace and in the minds of visitors.

A strong and evident link exists between tourism themes and **culture.** Indeed, culture has been described as "the new core paradigm for both sustaining and enhancing the tourism experience".[1] The categories of themes shown in table 1.1 are primarily of a cultural nature. On NTO websites, if the imagery is not landscape based, it is generally related to either historical or contemporary culture.

A cultural theme can serve as an anchor to many components of the tourism experience.

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1    World Tourism Organization and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015), *World Conference on Tourism and Culture: Building A New Partnership* (Siem Reap, Cambodia, 4–6 February 2015), UNWTO, Madrid, p. 62.

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**Example 2.1          The culture of olive oil**

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In the Baronnies region of the Rhône valley of France where the olive industry dominates the local economy, the olive theme draws attention to the landscapes, the working lives of local farmers, local food and drink, and the techniques of olive oil production. This single theme serves as a basis for interpretation and storytelling around multiple aspects of the destination.

Source:   Office de Tourisme du Pays du Buis-les-Baronnies (n.d.), *L'olive et l'huile d'olive* (online), available at:
               www.buislesbaronnies.com/terroir/olive.php (01-09-2016).

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An important trend in cultural tourism is *storytelling.* Marketing materials increasingly include images of people – travellers and residents – in situations of exchange, discovery and adventure. The key word is *experience,* a concept that is increasingly exploited in marketing materials, such as in the slogan of the Slovenian Tourism Office – "I feel Slovenia" – where the appeal is directed to the emotions and the senses.

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**Example 2.2          Jamaica – "feel the vibe"**

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Experiences of Jamaica's cuisine, music, or adventure activities promise visitors the opportunity to "feel the vibe" and find their own "holiday rhythm". A "Meet the People" programme, launched in 1968 by the Jamaica Tourist Board, offers visitors the opportunity to connect with likeminded Jamaicans who act as hosts to help travellers move beyond traditional resort and beach settings and experience the authentic and colourful Jamaican lifestyle, traditions and customs. Visitors may get to meet someone in a similar profession or occupation, or with similar interests or pastimes, to experience "the unique aspects of Jamaica's rich endearing heritage in its people, culture, music, cuisine and natural landscape."

Source:   Visit Jamaica (n.d.), *Visit Jamaica* (online), available at: www.visitjamaica.com (12-07-2016).

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Cultural experience has become an accepted approach to promoting a destination. The Visit Europe website,[2] for example, presents travellers with a series of themed experiences, introducing aspects of Europe's cultural and natural heritage. The home page tile format promotes a changing pattern of broad themes, such as:

–    Tasting Europe;
–    The rhythm of Europe (music festivals);
–    Europe's most romantic sites; and
–    The Alps experience.

Travellers seeking further inspiration will find more specific themes[3] that go deeper into the unique characteristics of Europe:

–    Oktoberfest and beyond: beer and wine festivals in Europe;
–    Where to see the northern lights in Europe;
–    Symphonies of sound: classical music in Europe; and
–    Whimsical, Surreal and Square: the modern art revolution in Europe.

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2    Visit Europe (n.d.), *The Official Travel Portal of Europe* (online), available at: www.visiteurope.com/en/home (23-04-2016).

3    Visit Europe (n.d.), *Inspirational stories, photos and videos* (online), available at: www.visiteurope.com/en/inspiration
     (12-07-2016).

Themes that are core to a destination's identity become the heart of the *brand.* They serve to present and promote a range of tourist attractions and activities, including styles of accommodation, appropriate modes of travel, and food and drink.

A theme offers the traveller an invitation to explore and appreciate what is important to a destination and its people – to engage in a journey of discovery. It helps travellers learn and understand what makes one place different to another, and what makes it different to home. It also helps them *invest* in the travel experience to gain the most from it.

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Example 2.3        **Yamashiro – "the home to stories"**

Yamashiro, a hot spring resort in Japan, promotes itself as "the home to historical stories". It has a 1,300-year history and retains much of its traditional culture. Visitors are encouraged to fully embrace the experience; to spend time understanding the region's history for a better appreciation of the area's religious heritage. Visitors to the Mokojinja shrine, for example, are not just passive observers. They "enjoy walking on the cobblestone path through the tunnel of cherry blossoms in spring and yellow leaves in Autumn".

Source:    Kyoto Tourism (n.d.), *Welcome to Kyoto* (online), available at:
           www.kyoto-kankou.or.jp/english/info_search/?menu=1&area=yamashiro (12-07-2016).

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This handbook makes frequent references to *cultural routes,* that are themed tourism experiences based a cultural concept. For example, the Route des Bréa, in the Southern Alps, guides visitors to small mountain churches and chapels decorated by the frescoes of the fifteenth century painter Ludovico Bréa, who left traces of his work both in Italy and France. It is probable that this route generates only a modest level of tourism. However, a cultural theme of this kind can raise awareness, and serve as a starting point for the development of tourism activity.[4]

> **Key point:**
>
> Themes provide the basis both for shaping the visitor experience and for marketing. Where they are core to a destination's identity, they become the heart of the brand.

## 2.2        The growth of experiential tourism

Tourism destination managers have become increasingly aware of the power of focussing on experience, but this was not always the case. In the 1960s and 1970s, theme-based tourism highlighted the classic attractions of a town or region: its major historical buildings, its striking landscape features, and its unique characteristics. For the most part, the tourist was treated as a passive observer.

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4    The Council of Europe has added importance to the notion of 'cultural route' by certifying major cultural initiatives that traverse frontiers (see 4.5 'The policy context'). Many of the examples in this Handbook are certified Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

Today the range of themes has expanded considerably, as the concept of *experience* becomes central to modern tourism marketing.

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Box 2.1        **Experiential tourism**

"An experience is different to a product or location. An experience is formed by the combination of activity, setting, social interaction and the personal connection that arises. An experience engages the senses; it is physical, emotional or spiritual (or all three). An experience offers discovery and learning, and creates strong memories."

Tourism Australia (2012), Australia's National Landscape Programme

There has been a very pronounced shift in market trends as travellers increasingly look for authenticity and a way to engage emotionally with the local culture and community – arguably the most significant and systemic trend in worldwide tourism today.[a] This is rooted in a much more general shift in values that has become referred to as the "experience economy".[b] Just as the quality of service was once the key way of differentiating tourism products, now it is *experiences* that visitors are looking for and, they are often prepared to pay a higher price for one that is unique.

Today managers and tourism operators have to respond to visitors that want much more than just the opportunity to see the sights. "They want stories of people and places they can share with their friends and family. They want to find the hidden gems. They want to see, feel, hear, taste and smell new things".[c] Travellers want to get off the beaten track. They want to experience destinations in a way that leaves them feeling that they have really connected with the *soul* of the place in a way that enriches their lives. They are looking for authentic and immersive experiences that match their interests and provide a sense of personal accomplishment and create distinct and lasting memories.

a)    SKIFT & Peak (2014), *SKIFT Report 2014: The Rise of Experiential Travel,* Skift Team + Peak Adventure Travel Group (online), available at: www.skift.com (20-07-2016).

b)    First discussed in 1999 by: Pine, B. J. and Gilmore, J. H. (1999), *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage,* Harvard Business Press, Boston.

c)    Tourism & Events Queensland (n.d.), *Experience Development* (online), available at: https://teq.queensland.com/industry-resources/how-to-guides/experience-development (20-07-2016).

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Strong themes that evoke experience differentiate a destination, raise its profile, generate visits, and benefit local businesses. They provide the framework for the development of tourism products and experiences, both by the public and private sector, and have become a cornerstone of contemporary destination management and marketing.

**Key point:**

In a sense, all tourism of a cultural nature is *experiential.* The visitor's primary goal is to have experiences that move, intrigue, excite and delight. Without a sense of experience, a tourism theme is dry and dead, and the value of travelling and being in a new environment is lost.

## 2.3      Experiential marketing

Themes help destinations move towards a more targeted focus on specific segments of the market, such as the retired, young families, food lovers and sports enthusiasts. Segments best suited to the destination are more easily attracted and more likely to stay. With the market fragmenting into specific sectors, cultural tourism in particular is experiencing strong growth, to become the largest market segment in motivating travel choices.[5]

Experience also implies events, and **events-based marketing** has become a staple of destinations that are developing experiential tourism.

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Example 2.4          **Themes and festivals**

Some towns have developed their tourism themes through the launch of a successful festival that puts the town on the map. One example is Angouleme, France, which has established itself as the capital of the *bande dessinée* (cartoons for adults). Originally a small, local festival, it has become a hub for the cartoon industry. Similarly, Hay-on-Wye near the English–Welsh border is chiefly known for its literary festival. As a result, tourists come year-round to browse in the many bookshops. Many well-known book festivals are held in small towns, including Aubrac, France; Mantua, Italy; Burlington (Vermont), United States of America; and Trujillo, Peru.

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Experiential marketing describes a style of marketing that has evolved to match the demands of the 21st century consumer for experiences rather than neutral messages. The goal is to make an emotional connection, where sensory and participatory elements engage the consumer in an interactive and dynamic way, to create more personal and lasting impressions.

Experiential marketing has been described as a "cross-media promotional activity which encourages two-way interaction and direct physical immersion into a brand";[6] and also as messaging designed to "create a closer bond between the consumer and the brand by immersing them in a fun and memorable experience"[7].

In practical terms, for the purpose of this handbook, the marketing is the experience, whether through media or at first hand.

**Key point:**

If experience is at the heart of tourism, then it must also be at the heart of tourism marketing. As can be seen at any travel show or in the commercials of tour operators and destinations, the goal is to engage the senses and the emotions of the consumer, through their eyes, their ears, their taste buds, or through any other means!

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5   World Tourism Organization and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015), *World Conference on Tourism and Culture: Building A New Partnership* (Siem Reap, Cambodia, 4–6 February 2015), UNWTO, Madrid, p. 75.

6   Marketing made simple (n.d.), 'Experiential Marketing' (online), available at:
    http://marketing-made-simple.com/articles/experiential-marketing.htm (19-07-2016).

7   Econsultancy (2014), *10 very cool examples of experiential marketing* (online), available at:
    https://econsultancy.com/blog/65230-10-very-cool-examples-of-experiential-marketing/ (10-11-2017).

## 2.4     Drivers of experiential, theme-based tourism

Looking at this transition to experiential, theme-based tourism and the parallel dramatic growth of cultural tourism, there are both demand and supply side drivers that have stimulated development.

On the demand side, these drivers include:

– A growing desire for unique visitor experiences based on authenticity and an opportunity to connect with the local community; and a corresponding wish for self-actualisation and creative expression while travelling;

– The traveller's access to information over the Internet and the ability to search using specific themed descriptive terms, such as wine tourism;

– Changing holiday patterns and behaviour; a growth in shorter trips that increase the desire and expectation for unique experiences that are immediately accessible; and

– A growing interest in popular culture, contemporary arts and intangible heritage; and a greater willingness to embrace the unknown and the unusual, particularly when on holiday.

On the supply side, experiential theme-based tourism has been driven by:

– DMOs' growing awareness of the value of theme-based tourism as a strategic approach in an increasingly competitive market place – for all the demand side reasons given above;

– The enhanced capacity of both DMOs and private tourism operators in segmenting the market and targeting specific segments;

– Pressure from cultural institutions and associations to valorise and preserve cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible;

– Pressure also from natural heritage sites, and the bodies that represent them;

– Increased interest from suppliers in related economic sectors – for example, local farmers seeking to develop agri-tourism or using tourist circuits for the sale of local produce; and

– Heightened recognition by local authorities that theme-based tourism is often best suited to create jobs and opportunities for small businesses.



It is no longer enough to just see and taste foreign foods. Today's tourists want to know how to make it, or to have a go at making it themselves. © Frederic Thomas.

In addition to these drivers, new forms of marketing and tourism are being driven by emerging technologies and changing consumer behaviour. Consumers are increasingly "bypassing established media […] and consuming content, sharing, and communicating via entirely new social and media platforms".[8] Experiential marketing operates most effectively across new, interactive social media platforms.

There is also a convergence between tourism and the creative industries[9] as

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8    Hanover, D. and Smith, K (2016), *Experiential Marketing: Secrets, Strategies, and Success Stories from the World's Greatest Brands,* John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey.

9    OECD (2014), *Tourism and the Creative Economy,* OECD Publishing, Paris.

new techniques have evolved in the realm of interpretation and storytelling, enhancing experiences and stimulating emotional connections with places and people. The creative industries are working more closely with the tourism sector to develop *content* and to link this to the traveller through storytelling; and visitors are increasingly interested in experiencing the local culture by participating in artistic and creative activities where the emphasis is on the exchange of knowledge and skills between host and guest.

As the OECD report notes: "The developing field of creative tourism is therefore more than just a new tourism niche, but an expansion of tourism as a whole, a source of innovation and a new means of disseminating tourism experiences."

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**Example 2.5      Talking statues**

This innovative project brought life to statues in London and Manchester, England. Walking past a statue, visitors can use their smartphone to receive a call from Isaac Newton, Abraham Lincoln, Queen Victoria and other famous characters from history or fiction.

Swiping the phone on a nearby NFC tag, scanning a QR code or typing in the short URL[a] will result in the visitor receiving a call from the adjacent statue – the *voice* bringing the story of the person to life. Using near field technology, the project animates public outdoor city spaces, taking elements of the museum or art gallery experience out into the streets and market squares.[b]

a)   NFC, or Near Field Communication, is a short range wireless communication technology; QR code is abbreviated from Quick Response Code and is a machine-readable code comprised of black and white squares, generally used for storing URLs; a URL is a uniform resource locator and is the identification for any resource connected to the web.

b)   University of Leicester (n.d.), *Talking Statues* (online), available at: www2.le.ac.uk/ (12-07-2016).

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Together, these drivers have resulted in the global growth of theme-based tourism and increasing segmentation of the marketplace. Whether themes are activity or lifestyle focussed (e.g., cycling, golf, wellness, wine, music) or centred on the underlying story or personality of the destination (e.g., cultural heritage, tangible and intangible themes), they now represent a core strategic approach to building the identity of the destination.

An interesting phenomenon is the role that literature and screen (television and film) are playing on the development of theme-based tourism.

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**Example 2.6      Literary themed destinations**

The growth of tourism related to the filming location of major blockbusters is well documented: for example, the "Middle Earth" effect in New Zealand following the release of the "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" films has been marked – the Hobbiton Movie Set is now one of New Zealand most popular attractions with over 350,000 visitors per year.[a]

Prince Edward Island on the east coast of Canada has a strong association with the novel, *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery – published in 1908. The Island offers a range of themed attractions and Tourism PEI has developed a 3-day itinerary for travellers wanting to immerse themselves in the theme and the life story of the author. Over 125,000 people visit Green Gables Heritage Place at L.M. Montgomery's Cavendish National Historic Site each year.[b]

a)   Business Insider (2015), *The Hobbiton Movie Set is one of the biggest tourist attractions in New Zealand* (online), available at:
www.businessinsider.com/the-hobbiton-movie-set-is-a-top-tourist-attraction-in-new-zealand-2015-6 (12-07-2016).

b)   Tourism Prince Edward Island (n.d.), *Anne Quick Facts* (online), available at: www.tourismpei.com (12-07-2016).

## 2.5        The benefits of themed networks and routes

For DMOs, the benefits of thematic tourism include:

–        Enhanced abilities to promote the unique attributes of a destination or destinations – "thematic branding will heighten a region's distinctiveness, particularly when it shares a similar geography and culture with its neighbours"[10].

–        The potential to spread demand: with a themed approach, a destination can generate benefits in peripheral regions or at specific times of year.

–        The chance to redefine a mature destination and rejuvenate its growth. Theming can create a new profile for existing product offerings and can provide an innovative framework for strategic product development.

–        Capacity to develop a greater level of cohesion within the tourism industry and the supporting commercial community, and to instil a sense of pride within resident populations.

Theming can therefore be a strategic tool in promoting economic development and regeneration.

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| Example 2.7 | **Red tourism** |
|---|---|

In 2005, the Chinese State Tourism Administration launched a programme based on highlighting a range of locations with historical significance to Chinese Communism. In 2010, thirteen Chinese cities signed a "China Red Tourism Cities Strategic Cooperation Yan'an Declaration" to develop "red tourism". In 2015, a communist-themed family park opened in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province, highlighting important facets of Communist Party history, and other initiatives are underway, including linking sites along the route of the Long March. These initiatives address high interest in Red Tourism, both domestically and internationally, and recognize that the various sites may be located great distances from each other.

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The Yan'an Declaration is a statement of intention to create a route of a *network* type (see 1.5 above). Routes are important mechanisms in developing sustainable tourism, and play a fundamental role in promoting regional development and integration. A recent UNWTO discussion paper highlighted the following benefits which are applicable to all routes, whether intranational or transnational.[11] Routes:

–        Provide an excellent opportunity to develop new and innovative visitor experiences in keeping with market trends associated with *new tourism;*

–        Create a pulling factor that attracts new market segments, repeat visitors and special interest segments – often generating a higher-yield visitor;

–        Support regional distribution of wealth and have the capacity to reduce pressure on key attractions;

–        Revitalise declining areas and/or open up new destinations; creating new employment opportunities; providing an impetus to foster public-private partnerships and stimulate entrepreneurship; and, enhancing conditions to attract funding or private sector investment;

–        Create opportunities for transboundary cooperation and collaborative destination marketing;

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10    World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission (2010), *Handbook on Tourism Destination Branding,* UNWTO, Madrid.

11    World Tourism Organization (2014c), Thematic Discussion: The Role of Tourism Routes in Fostering Regional Development and Integration, (Executive Council Ninety-eighth Session, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 4–6 June 2014, Provisional agenda item 5) CE/98/5, UNWTO, Madrid.

- Develop cultural understanding and strengthening of social cohesion and the cultural links between people at the local, regional, national and/or international levels; and

- Protect and promote the natural and cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible, through generating income for preservation and providing economic viability to activities which might otherwise be "lost", particularly those related to more traditional sectors such as agriculture or handicraft.

> **Key point:**
>
> Theme-based tourism reinforces the identity of the territory, both internally and to the outside world. It coordinates and shapes the energies of local tourism agencies and authorities, and the activities of private businesses and associations.

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**Example 2.8**   **Wild Atlantic Way**

In January 2015, the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's first long distance themed touring route, was awarded the National Impact Award at the 2015 Community and Council Awards. The National Impact Award recognizes a project which has had a positive effect upon the nation as a whole, enhancing the environment, cultural or social activities, transport links or the economic stability or growth of the local and national communities who use it.

Recognizing the economic decline of the west coast of Ireland and the decline in international tourism to this area particularly following the 2008 global recession, Fáilte Ireland (the National Tourism Development Authority for the Republic of Ireland), developed the Wild Atlantic Way as an initiative to rejuvenate tourism and stimulate job creation. The concept involved repositioning the entire west coast as a compelling new international tourism *experience,* under an over-arching brand which brought cohesion to the individual destinations and businesses. The route covers almost 2,500 km and was formally launched in early 2014 with Fáilte Ireland investing EUR 10 million in rolling out the initiative in the first year.

The project has had a very positive response from within the Republic of Ireland. Strong market awareness of the brand is already evident in international markets, and it is expected to become a significant driver of international visits.

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## 2.6    Building themes and bundling experience

The challenge is to identify a set of visitor experiences, sites and attractions based on a common theme; a geographic area that provides a cluster of themed experiences.

An association is thereby built between a destination and a theme. There are many examples in the field of food and agricultural produce: Greece for its olives, western Spain for its pork products, Chile for its wines, Lebanon for its subtle vegetable dishes; and so on.

| Example 2.9 | **New wine tourism, Georgia** |
| --- | --- |

The Georgian Wine Association (GWA) launched in 2010. It represents the industry in national and international markets, working to raise awareness of the Georgian wine sector.

Though wine tourism in Georgia is still niche, many local and global tour operators have developed wine itineraries. Visit Georgia and Georgianwine.travel offer wine themed package deals (including local accommodations, transportation and Georgian traditional meals) and tours of local wineries. Georgianwine.travel is owned and managed by the GWA.

The Georgian Wine Club organizes an annual New Wine Festival in Tbilisi, inviting international journalists and bloggers to spread the word. In 2015, the event had 102 family vineyards and 78 wine companies presenting their products from that year's harvest.

Where the underlying theme relates to unique landscapes, natural systems or cultural heritage sites, the destination may be recognized nationally or internationally as National Parks, World Heritage Sites and so on. Attractions and activities within the officially designated area can leverage the designation and can generate higher levels of interest through this association.

The sites and experiences may be scattered geographically and only the umbrella theme *unifies* the product in the mind of the visitor. This concept of an umbrella theme is familiar to travel and tour operators. Where a theme is perceived to have market appeal or is emerging as a new trend, the market quickly follows, bundling experiences and developing innovative itineraries. This precedes, in many cases, any initiatives by DMOs or local tourism authorities.

| Example 2.10 | **Commercial bundling of themes** |
| --- | --- |

**Cultural cycling tours in Asia**

Spice Roads Cycle Tours is a tour operator specialising in cycling holidays across Asia. Heritage tours take visitors to the cultural sites of visited countries, sports and challenge tours focus on mountain biking trails throughout Asia, including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The mountain bike tour takes riders through the grasslands and into the Tien Shan mountains, enabling riders to experience a scenic challenge and the opportunity to interact with nomadic Kazakh tribes and horsemen.

**Wine cruises**

AMA Water Ways runs riverboat cruises across Europe, Africa and South-East Asia. The most popular themed cruises are wine related, for example the Romantic Danube wine themed cruise descends the Danube, through four countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany and Hungary) and the Enticing Douro wine cruise sails between Spain and Portugal. Activities include on board wine tastings, lectures and excursions to local wineries.



Visitors observing coffee beans during a tour.
© Dreamstime image library.

**Coffee Tours**

Coffee based tourism is a niche market that has been growing in popularity over the last few years. The core of coffee tourism is in South America, though there are coffee tours available in new locations such as South Africa, Hawaii, the Middle East and South-East Asia. Tour operators like South America Travel, Uncover Colombia, Britt's Coffee Tours, Peru Explorer and Gallon Jug Estate Coffee Tours offer itineraries in Colombia, Costa Rica, Belize, Brazil, and Peru. Travellers can visit coffee farms and producers to taste local coffees, as well as visiting museums and heritage sites dedicated to the history of coffee.

**Antarctica**

Many tour operators offer Antarctica destination themed itineraries, mostly cruise-based, for example Intrepid Travel, National Geographic Expeditions and Polar Cruises. Intrepid Travel offers itineraries of 10 to 14 days starting in Argentina or Chile, where visitors stop off at a number of sites around Antarctica to experience the continent's wildlife and scenic beauty. Allowing for weather conditions, tours only run during the summer and Intrepid Travel may bundle Antarctica with other reasonably close destinations such as the Falkland Islands and South Georgia Island.

In addition to *routes* or *trails* over long distances, attractions can also be grouped or *clustered* together, for promoting to visitors. This is often the case with city centre attractions.

Example 2.11          **City trail, United States of America**

The Freedom Trail in Boston (Massachusetts), United States of America, is a 4 km red-lined route that guides visitors around 16 historically significant sites, including museums and meeting houses, churches, and burial grounds. It tells the story of the American Revolution, which began in Boston and shaped the nation. Visitors looking for an immersive experience can join daily guided walks led by Freedom Trail Players, 18th century costumed guides. Alternatively, the Freedom Trail® mobile app features all 16 official historic sites and is designed to offer a similarly rich experience for visitors who prefer to explore on their own.

Such trails are not just for local interest; the model can be replicated across different sites, even at a transnational level.[12]

Routes may be developed with the aim of preserving local traditions and reviving interest in them. In Scotland, a collaborative tourism initiative was launched in 2007 to promote Gaelic language and culture throughout the Hebrides and West Highlands. A group of partners set up six Gaelic circuits that wind through the islands and western mainland and include several ferry rides. The tours are aimed at all visitors and seek to promote the richness of the Gaelic language and culture. Each circuit has its own history, landmarks and legends to share, and together they highlight the significant role Gaelic has played in Scotland's past and its relevance in today's modern world.[13]

Not all transnational themes are land-based, and not all initiatives are set up to promote cultural activities and traditions as their main focus. In the seas off Borneo, diving routes have been developed by professionals, which include sites in the territorial waters of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. British Columbia Marine Trails is a consortium of paddling clubs that has a vision of developing a world-class marine network of access points and campsites along the entire British Columbia Coast, in association with the provincial government and other stakeholders, to ensure continued coastal access by kayak, canoe, and other non-motorised and motorised small boats.

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12   Members of the Columban Way, in Bangor (Northern Ireland), Luexeuil-les-Bains (France) and Bobbio (Italy) are coordinating the design of app-based 'meditation trails' in each town, each trail promoting the others.

13   Other examples of language as a theme include the 'Route of the Spanish Language', that highlights historic monuments, cities and the homes of famous Castilian authors, and includes heritage sites that have a strong connection to the emergence and development of the Castilian language.

**Key point:**

There are many ways to bundle experiences and thereby build themed tourism, whether clustered locally or spread over a wide geographical area. These initiatives can be driven by the private sector by national and regional authorities, or by both.

## 2.7    Case study 2: Experience and storytelling – the Via Francigena

**What this case illustrates:**

The power of determination in developing and marketing a transnational route – over 15 years, it has been built up, piece by piece. It has tapped into the ever-growing market for pilgrimage walking, and demonstrated that social and economic benefit in rural areas can be an effective by-product of a well branded, clearly marked walking trail.

NTOs and DMOs interested in emulating such results should note:

–    The Francigena's success in lobbying at a government and local authority level, to obtain institutional support;
–    The grass-roots work with local mayors and cultural associations, to trace the route and provide services for walkers, including accommodation;
–    How the Francigena has positioned the initiative within a cultural context, promoting local food, crafts, cultural events and tourism;
–    Its marketing actions, including publications, merchandise and branded events; and
–    The high-quality information provided online, which is being progressively enriched.

### 2.7.1    Origin and purpose



Branded signage and route marking is clear to all visitors, no matter their nationality. © Luca Bruschi.

On 22 April 2001, 34 Italian local authorities situated along the pilgrimage route taken by the English Bishop Sigeric the Serious, signed the acts forming the European Association. Over a hundred territorial bodies now represent the itineraries of the Via Francigena,[14] including 139 European communes. In 2007, it was designated a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

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14   Or more accurately 'Vie Francigene', as there are a number of alternative and additional routes within the overall framework.

## 2.7.2    The theme

The Via Francigena corresponds to the medieval route that connected Canterbury in the United Kingdom to Rome. The intention is to extend it to include the pilgrimage route towards the harbours of Puglia in the south of Italy, where pilgrims would embark for Jerusalem, or the Holy land. It was possible to recreate the path thanks to pilgrims' travel diaries, in particular that of Sigeric, who described the route and the places where he stayed along the way (see: www.viefrancigene.org/en/).

It is used by some as a pilgrimage to visit the Holy See and the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. However, it is primarily a slow travel and tourism initiative. Surveys indicate that only 15% of users travel for religious reasons. The others are more interested in discovering local culture, gastronomy, landscape, or active outdoor sport.

## 2.7.3    Marketing work

Marketing is driven by:
–    The Via Francigena website, which received over one million visitors last year. Alongside the main website, a specialised site (visit.viefrancigene.org) caters directly to consumers with information (tips, maps and accommodation providers), Apps to download and package tours to purchase;
–    Specialised tour operators, recognized by the European Association of Francigena Ways, such as the Italian tour operator SloWays and Francigena Ways, offer self-guided or group walking and cycling travel on Via Francigena;
–    An official Magazine, published twice a year in English, French and Italian, disseminates news, events, activities. Subscribers receive a regular newsletter;
–    Products developed for the Via Francigena, mainly related to gastronomy, including cheese, wine or vegetables that can be found along the way;
–    Merchandise available for travellers to buy as souvenirs or gifts. T-shirts, pins, jewellery, caps, key rings, mugs, etc., are available locally or through an online shop; and
–    Active social media channels with significant numbers of followers, keeping up-to-date with news of the Via Francigena.

Many marketing actions are sponsored or supported by public or private sector donors. Travellers also contribute to the activities budget. In addition to their expenditure on merchandising, there are Pilgrim Passports, available for EUR 3 (EUR 2 allocated to the Via Francigena Association, EUR 1 goes to the local organization). In 2015, between 10,000 and 15,000 passports were sold.

Over 30 branded events are held every year. The annual Via Francigena Festival takes place between May and October, and in six years has grown to comprise more than 700 events along the route from Canterbury to Italy. In 2016, it was extended to include Turkey.

The Via Francigena is promoted at international tourism fairs by the regions of the route, such as Tuscany or Puglia.

Partners use the logo in their products, materials and events, and this has increased brand recognition. A Vademecum or handbook of the route is being distributed (as of June 2016), focussing on accommodation, signposting, communication, and promotion.

A new guide for pilgrims is also in preparation, starting with the Italian section of the route.

As with most other pilgrimage routes, information is available on the number of pilgrims, and detailed information on the activities of the Association and its members, but little statistical information on the route's tourism impacts exists.

### 2.7.4    Future ambitions and issues

Future goals include increasing pilgrimage numbers (i.e. numbers of passports purchased) to over 50,000, with an equivalent impact on non-tourism development. A core objective of the route managers is to increase awareness of the route's historical importance and potential, particularly within local communities so that they can benefit from its development. Another ambition is to develop a management Master Plan, to convince country members to include the Via Francigena in their regional development policies and strategies. The Italian Government allocated EUR 20 million for the route's development in 2016.

The Via Francigena partners are extending the route to southern Italy, to connect with the Via Egnatia towards Turkey, and then on towards Jerusalem. This challenging project will require high-level cooperation, and phased development, plus the involvement of local communities and the private sector to be commercially viable.

UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination is currently under preparation in Italy, and promotion of the Via Francigena using local trains as a means of transportation, is under discussion with the Italian train company TrenItalia.

Crucially, private-sector tourism stakeholders are starting to appreciate the economic importance of the route, with a perception that new jobs are being created in accommodation, activities and food services, supporting local communities. This dynamic can be reinforced, working with local and regional organizations and institutions, including universities.

### 2.7.5    Conclusions and learning points

The Via Francigena is a model for the development of itinerary-based tourism through stakeholder engagement.

The approach is pragmatic and opportunistic, developing infrastructure and services piece by piece to create momentum. On the strength of grass-roots level successes, the route managers are now confident enough to engage with national governments for funding.

The criticism could be that the initiative is not truly transnational; that implementation is essentially in Italy; and that the Italian approach to territorial development is not transferrable to other countries.

The website visit.viefrancigene.org shows maps, itineraries, tourism assets, walkers' tools and services that cover only Italy, a small part of Switzerland and the Canterbury-to-Dover stretch of the Via Francigena in the United Kingdom.

The managers respond that:

– Many other stretches are under development, particularly in France (although not fully marked) and are used by walkers;

– The successful development in Italy serves as a model for other countries – a model flexible enough to be adapted to local conditions; and

– The success of the Via Francigena in Italy is proof that walking and cycling itineraries on a theme can develop from grass-roots for implementation on a large scale, can engage and bring tangible economic benefits to rural and remote communities along the way.

The next five or ten years will show to what extent the Via Francigena can become truly European, with an equally powerful dynamic emerging in partner countries; also to what extent the stakeholders in the different countries will be able to work together effectively.

The latter challenge is the biggest test of transnational themed tourism.

# Chapter 3

# Making theme-based tourism transnational

This chapter discusses the application of themes to the development of **transnational tourism experiences.**

It demonstrates the power of extending themed tourism across borders and across broad geographical areas; and why transnational tourism is of particular value and interest to the consumer.

Inherent challenges to transnational development are summarised, starting with the issue of **border controls,** but also covering **administrative and cultural differences** and questions of **branding** across borders.

The importance of policies and frameworks that permit collaboration across borders are highlighted; in particular, the wide range of **policy factors** that can facilitate transnational themed tourism.

## 3.1 The power of transnational themes

International tourism is not new. In Roman times, wealthy citizens travelled "from the lost city of Troy to the top of the Acropolis in Athens, from the fallen Colossus at Rhodes to the Pyramids of Egypt, ending with the obligatory Nile cruise at the very edge of the Empire."[1] In modern times, the number of tourist arrivals (to international destinations) has passed the one billion mark annually. Crossing borders for tourism purposes is becoming ever easier and usual for consumers.

However, it is striking, when reading travel brochures or weekend supplements, how few tour operator products concern more than visits to a single country, with the evident exception of cruise lines. For over a century, tourism has been structured along national lines, and is only just beginning to break free.

Among the drivers of transnational tourism are a handful of high-profile initiatives, such as the UNWTO Silk Road, the Camino de Santiago de Compostela and the Danube tourism partnership. These are serving as models and inspiration to others that are in early stages of development.

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1    Perrottet, T. (2003), *Pagan Holiday: On The Trail of Ancient Roman Tourists,* Random House Trade Paperbacks, New York.

Example 3.1          **Route 66, United States of America**

Celebrated in novels, poetry and rock n' roll lyrics, Route 66 is the legendary route that runs from Chicago to Los Angeles, more than 3200 km all the way, crossing eight states. In the 1960s and 1970s, the progressive construction of the Interstate Highways decimated traffic along the route, some of the road was virtually abandoned and many small towns went into decline.

However, the romantic myth and rebel image never died and Route 66 is being reborn to tourism. It is driven by websites and mobile apps that promote the destinations along the way for nostalgic travellers, for example roadtripusa.com, the-route66.com, route66news.com, national66.org and others. As well as preserving, some of the route's heritage assets, new motel accommodation, restaurants and souvenir outlets are opening up to meet growing demand.

These major trans-state or transnational initiatives are applying the theme-based model described in the previous chapter, across wide geographical areas. They are demonstrating that, if the theme is strong enough, tourism assets of different kinds can be assembled and marketed coherently. Also, the transnational nature of these links can be highly attractive to consumers.

There are case studies of transnational collaborative networks or routes towards the end of this handbook, including some very high-profile initiatives and others that are less ambitious. They show that the development of a major route has the capacity to reshape the tourism landscape:

–   The *Camino de Santiago* (The Way of Saint James) has redefined the *walking holiday* and established spiritual pilgrimage as a significant sector of the tourism economy;

–   The UNWTO Silk Road has put central Asian destinations on the tourist map and created a land link between the Chinese market and tourism markets of the West, in the minds of travellers; and

–   Thanks to partnerships between the public and private sector in half a dozen countries, the Danube has become a major tourism asset, bringing economic benefits to all.

Despite these examples, transnational theme-based tourism is still in the early stages of development. Very few of the cases and illustrative examples presented have histories of over ten years. Even fewer can confidently say they have a fully developed and operational tourism strategy.

**Key point:**

Transnational travel has been with us for millennia, but structured products involving several destinations are still relatively rare. Initiatives such the Silk Road are demonstrating the potential interest.

## 3.2     The challenges of transnationality

Given the potential rewards described above, why are there not more structured transnational tourism initiatives under construction?

In simple terms, themed tourism is easier to develop where language and culture are shared, within a homogeneous landscape and, particularly, within a single administrative jurisdiction. Even in a single country, developing tourism collaboratively is complex. The crossing of political borders, whether intranational or international adds further levels of difficulty.

At the simplest level, cross-border tourism is dependent on policies and procedures relating to visas and border control. Progress has been made in recent years thanks to multilateral agreements that may exempt travellers from the visa requirement.[2]

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**Box 3.1**        **Easing of border controls**

Between the years 2010 and 2013 a total of 44 destinations significantly facilitated the visa process for citizens of over 20 countries by changing their visa policies from "visa required" to either "eVisa", "visa on arrival" or "no visa required". In 2012, joint research by UNWTO and the World Travel & Tourism Council presented to the 4th T20 Ministers'[a] Meeting in May 2012, demonstrated that improving visa processes could generate an additional USD 206 billion in tourism receipts and create as many as 5.1 million jobs by 2015 in the G20 economies. As a result of this research the G20 leaders have recognized the role of tourism as "a vehicle for job creation, economic growth, and development"; and have committed themselves to "work towards developing travel facilitation initiatives in support of job creation, quality work, poverty reduction, and global growth".[b]

In November 2015, ETC published a report on the European situation: *Improving the Visa Regimes of European Nations to Grow Tourism.*[c] The report considers that more flexible visa procedures and rules would lead to a considerable increase in inbound trips, and welcomes the streamlining proposed by the European Commission, which has estimated that the Schengen area currently loses out on a potential of EUR 5.5 billion in direct contribution to GDP every year.

a)   The T20 Ministers refers to the Tourism Ministers of the G20 economies. The G20 economies are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

b)   World Tourism Organization and World Travel & Tourism Council (2012), *The Impact of Visa Facilitation on Job Creation in the G20 Economies,* UNWTO and WTTC, Madrid and London.

c)   European Travel Commission (2015), *Improving the Visa Regimes of European Nations to Grow Tourism,* ETC, Brussels. Also presented at WTM, London, in 2015.

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These changes have an impact on the growth of transnational tourism and as progress in visa facilitation continues, opportunities for this form of tourism will expand.

Other challenges exist and need to be understood and worked through. Some are of an *administrative* nature:
–   The reluctance of DMOs to pursue cross-border opportunities, given their mandate to develop tourism within their own boundaries, to differentiate their destination, to brand it and promote it;
–   Similarly, the reticence of governments to support initiatives that appear to encourage travel out of the jurisdiction;
–   Difficulties in coordinating tourism policies and strategic priorities, and the need to develop inclusive governance models; and
–   Variations in administrative structures, modes of funding, and decision-making processes.

Others are more of a *cultural* nature:
–   Cultural differences between territories, particularly where they are not contiguous, and the differences in working practices and expectations;
–   Differences in economic development and sophistication of the tourism sector from country to country;

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2   World Tourism Organization (2013c), *Tourism Visa Openness Report: Visa Facilitation as Means to Stimulate Tourism Growth,* UNWTO, Madrid.

- Language differences, which can be especially notable at the grassroots level between tourism operators;
- Issues relating to branding, brand ownership and determining the *hierarchy* of brands (see 3.3 below); and
- Problems associated with making elements of the story and theme meaningful given that travellers may only experience one part of the route or destination.[3]

**Key point:**

The development of transnational routes and networks encounters hurdles of an administrative and of a cultural nature. Partners need to work to overcome them, individually and collectively.

## 3.3    Issues in transnational branding

The transnational nature of these initiatives raises challenges in terms of branding and marketing, best illustrated through an example:

Example 3.2    **Big Bend National Park and Maderas del Carmen, Mexico and United States of America**

The National Park covers part of the Chihuahuan Desert along the Rio Grande in Texas and borders the Mexican National Protected Area of Maderas del Carmen. In 1932, the United States Government reached out to Mexico to create a Peace Park on the US American–Canadian model; a project that was abandoned for economic and political reasons. Since then, there have been further difficulties, including strict border regulations and differences in local interests and national strategies. Regional authorities and scientific bodies in each country remain keen to build connections between Big Bend and Maderas del Carmen, and have worked on binational projects such as Cooperative Action for Conservation in the Big Bend–Rio Bravo Natural Area of Binational Interest.

The largest step towards national level cooperation was the re-opening of the Boquillas del Carmen border crossing in 2012. Plans for tourism development are tentative but progressing step by step Each partner will be answerable to their State tourism authorities. Discussion and compromise may be necessary and there are few precedents or guidelines for creating a common brand. Collaboration will tend to be on an ad hoc basis.

In this case, the desire for transnational collaboration has been driven in part by scientific and conservational concerns, in part by a wish to develop tourism and the economy. All parties recognize the interest of collaboration, but also the restrictions, pressures and regulations that make it difficult.

Local territorial brands operate within regional and national frameworks:[4]

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3    Adapted from World Tourism Organization (2015b), *Affiliate Members Report, Volume Twelve: Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries,* UNWTO, Madrid.

4    Skema Business School, Tourism Brand Structures, David Ward-Perkins.

Figure 3.1        **Tourism brand structure**



**Local or product identities**
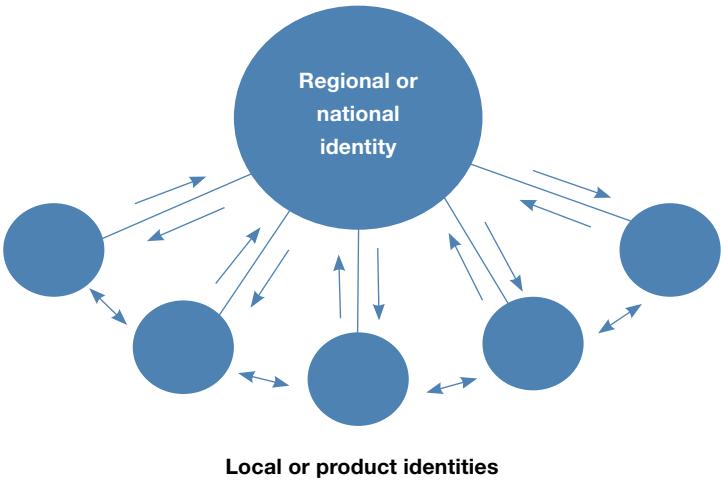
Source: David Ward-Perkins, *Tourism Brand Structures,* Skema Business School.

The umbrella brand influences messages used at the local level, including for specific tourism products. These local products, services, or initiatives complement each other, each of them contributing to reinforcing the overall message.

Figure 3.2 shows ad hoc tourism collaboration between local authorities (e.g., counties or communes) across a frontier, despite branding allegiance to the tourism authorities on one side of the frontier or the other.

Figure 3.2        **Ad hoc tourism collaboration diagram**
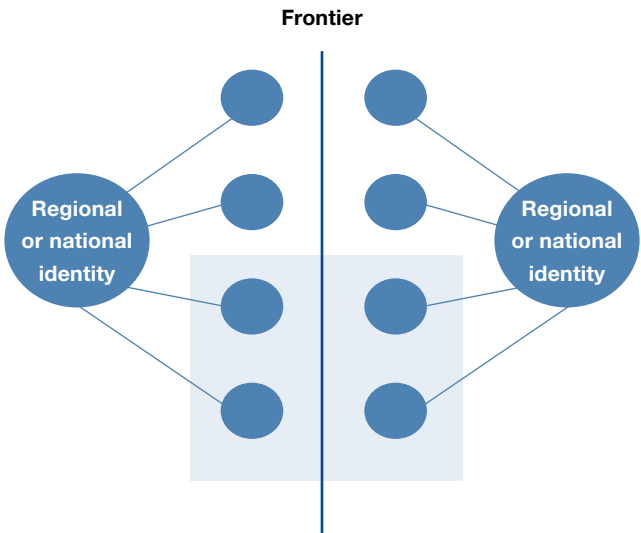


Source: David Ward-Perkins, *Tourism Brand Structures,* Skema Business School.

Another model for cooperation is the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC):

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Example 3.3          **Eurocity Chaves-Verin, Portugal and Spain**

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Chaves-Verin Eurocity is a cooperation initiative created by the cross-border cities of Chaves, Portugal, and Verin, Spain; as a development tool to help the implementation of projects and improve the quality of life for citizens through shared and cooperative projects in different fields, with the overall aim to "adopt a new model of European citizenship"[a]. The Chaves-Verin Eurocity adds value and efficiency to the two small towns in the fields of research and development (R&D), trade, education and culture, with tourism as an important engine of development. Cross-border tourist themes include thermal springs and spas, archaeological heritage, gastronomy and cultural events.

a)   Eurocity of Chaves-Verín (n.d.), *Chaves-Verín Eurocity: an instrument of economical and social development* (online), available at: http://en.eurocidadechavesverin.eu/project/presentation (12-07-2016).

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Building such a framework is a lengthy process, requiring a fundamental change in mind-set, but it can pay huge dividends.

**Key point:**

There is a significant difference between ad hoc cross-border collaboration seen in the Big Bend/Maderas del Carmen example, and formal partnerships for marketing and tourism, as practiced by the EGTCs. Without formal partnership, the brand remains fragile, and shared promotion will be on a case-by-case basis only.

## 3.4     Visitor perceptions of transnationality

Visitors do not perceive political boundaries as reasons to constrain travel, unless there are specific entry restrictions. Crossing borders has a certain appeal, as travellers seek to explore new cultures and to understand the differences between destinations.

Looking at transnational tourism development opportunities from a visitor perspective, there are three key motivating factors for pursuing collaborative initiatives:

1.   A transnational destination may be perceived as more attractive by travellers who are seeking *multi-cultural aspirational experiences.* Many tourists relish covering extensive territories and enjoy the changing scenery and lifestyles, whatever the mode of travel. The success of Eurail[5] and the ability to undertake extensive travel through different countries is indicative of this motivation;

2.   The *critical mass* of the transnational destination and its related theme is significantly enhanced through collaboration, and the increased range of thematic experiences will add to the travel appeal of the destination or route itinerary. This is evident in the examples of Route 66 and of the Danube; and

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5   Eurail (n.d.), *Discover Europe by Train with Eurail* (online), available at: www.eurail.com (12-07-2016).

3. Travellers with an interest in *extensive natural systems* that cross-political boundaries – ecological, topographical, or geological – will have a richer experience and understanding. The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site is an example. It is the largest unbroken system of intertidal sand and mud flats in the world, spanning 500 km and the coastline of three countries – Germany, Netherlands and Denmark – and is managed and presented to the visitor as a transnational ecosystem.[6]



Mount Hermon area, Lebanon – civilisations which span the Mediterranean provide a basis for transnational themes. © Jourmana.

The benefits of developing structured transnational themed products are most evident in regions such as Europe, where the tourism assets of smaller countries may not be sufficient to attract visitors from around the world, and where countries can collaborate effectively in marketing a common theme. But, even larger nations are seeing the interest of developing and marketing their frontier regions, in collaboration with their neighbours.

**Key point:**

Despite the potential difficulties, there are many reasons to work collaboratively on tourism marketing across borders. One reason is simply that cross-border themes match emerging tourism trends and travel patterns.

## 3.5    The policy context

It is not the remit of this handbook to analyse the politics and public policies behind the creation of transnational tourism products; however, it is useful for tourism managers to be aware of their influence.

Table 3.1 shows a range of different transnational themed tourism products, from strategic policy-driven multi-national high profile initiatives at one end of the spectrum, to small ad hoc cross-border projects that have evolved through a gradual building of cooperation at the other end. While not exhaustive, it serves as a useful introduction to the understanding of these policy issues.

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6    See Case Studies for more detail on the Wadden Sea.

Table 3.1        **Policy factors driving transnational themed tourism products**

| Policy factors | Examples |
| --- | --- |
| Strategic policy-driven multi-national initiatives to strengthen tourism at the transnational level, while complementing national policies | **Europe** is at the forefront of this type of development. Following the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and the 2010 Communication, there has been considerable growth in *cultural routes,* transnational itineraries and a **wide range of sustainable thematic tourism products,** all aimed at stimulating the competitiveness of Europe as a destination and increasing tourism flows. The Council of Europe's Cultural Route programme, and the certification of these routes, is a key component of this policy driven work. |
| Transnational coordination encouraged through the work of global organizations, e.g., UNWTO and UNESCO with their efforts to promote dialogue and stimulate economic growth through tourism | **The UNWTO Silk Road Programme** involves 33 Member States working together to foster tourism development along the ancient route between the east and the west. The initiative is a framework concept and a unique network of tourism destinations and heritage corridors with significant potential for growth and cross-cultural exchange through tourism development. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) developed the Investment Guide to the Silk Road in 2014, and has identified tourism as one of eight investment priorities. |
| Intergovernmental economic cooperation and trade facilitation | **The Greater Tumen Initiative** in North-East Asia (China, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation), supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) where tourism is one of five sectors (tourism, transport, trade and investment, energy, and environment). The goal with the tourism sector is to facilitate growth in the number of cross-border visitors to the region. |
| Cross-border niche/specialised activity routes – formal and informal | **The Great Divide Mountain Bike Route** (GDMBR) from Banff in Alberta, Canada, to Antelope Wells in New Mexico, United States of America, is an informal initiative. The route follows the continental divide and is the world's longest off-pavement cycling route. The GDMBR was developed and mapped in 1997 by the Adventure Cycling Association and is approximately 4,350 km long. It is best known for the Tour Divide, an annual self-supported race. |
| Shared ecosystems where collaborative planning enhances sustainable development and tourism simultaneously | **Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park,** the world's first International Peace Park established in 1932 through joining together Glacier National Park in Montana, United States of America, and Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta, Canada. |
| Unofficial transnational tourism routes | **The Cape to Cairo** epic route runs from South Africa to Egypt, through Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia – for travellers generally on motorbike and 4x4 vehicles. |
| Collaborative transnational promotion of designated landscapes | **Drifting Apart** – a collaborative partnership of designated and aspiring Global Geoparks involving partners from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Iceland, Canada and the Russian Federation in an initiative that will strengthen the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the interconnected geological heritage of the Northern Periphery and Arctic region, in a way that contributes to social and economic prosperity through tourism. |
| Localized cross border initiatives developed through industry-driven collaborative initiatives | **The International Selkirk Loop** encircles the Selkirk Mountains in eastern Washington and northern Idaho in the United States of America and south-eastern British Columbia. The Loop was formed as a non-profit membership-based corporation designed to enhance the local economy on either side of the United States of America and Canadian border. |
| Cross-border commemorative attractions | **The international Peace Garden** is a 9.5 km$^2$ park located on the international border between Canada and the United States of America, in the state of North Dakota and the province of Manitoba. This garden was established in 1932 to celebrate the peace between Canada and the United States of America that had been in place for over 200 years. |

Transnational tourism is encouraged by influential international bodies:

– **UNESCO,** which first added *cultural routes* as a specific category on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1993. Over 30 World Heritage items are transnational, including many featured in this handbook. The full list is provided in annex 3.3;

– **UNWTO,** always a strong supporter of transnational initiatives,[7] was the catalyst and founder of the Silk Road initiative, which has influenced all other initiatives. In 2010, a specialised Silk Road Programme was set up within the UNWTO secretariat;

– **ICOMOS,** the International Council on Monuments and Sites that, in 1996, set up the Scientific Committee for Cultural Routes;

– The **Council of Europe,** and its organ the **European Institute of Cultural Routes;** the *cultural route* designation has influence well beyond the continent of Europe. The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, initially drawn up in 2010, extends the creation of cultural routes to countries across North Africa, the eastern Mediterranean and the Caucasus[8], and the Cultural Route model has been emulated worldwide; and

– **ETC** (European Travel Commission) was established in 1948, with the objective of promoting Europe as an attractive tourist destination, assisting member NTOs in the exchange of knowledge and providing members and partners with access to essential material and statistics regarding inbound tourism in Europe. Specific initiatives of the ETC include the Tasting Europe Portal of Food and Gastronomy Tourism, and the VisitEurope App that allows users to search for destinations, access user generated content, and plan and book their itineraries.

Within Europe, transnational tourism has been greatly encouraged by funding instruments such as the European Territorial Cooperation programme, better known as INTERREG. This handbook also features examples of tourism initiatives within EGTCs (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation), which enables neighbouring public authorities to collaborate across borders and deliver joint services, including cultural, sports and tourism services.

Annex 1 contains further information on these institutions and on policy questions.

## 3.6    Case study 3: Making it transnational – The Alaska Highway

**What this case illustrates:**

Crossing frontiers holds a fascination for visitors, and border towns and regions offer rich tourism opportunities. This case is of interest to all frontier regions, whether the link to its neighbour is by road, by boat or by bridge.

It illustrates the challenges of managing a project that depends on two separate national authorities, and the benefits of successfully doing so.

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7    For example, through: World Tourism Organization (1985), *The Role of Transnational Tourism Enterprises in the Development of Tourism,* UNWTO, Madrid.

8    Council of Europe (n.d.), *Countries crossed by Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe* (online), available at: http://culture-routes.net/cultural-routes/countries (01-09-2016).

### 3.6.1    Origin and purpose

A joint Canadian/US American Commission was formed in 1930s to assess various route proposals for a highway through Canada to Alaska, but the Depression and a lack of interest in what was perceived to be a road to nowhere, resulted in the project gaining little traction. With the onset of the Second World War, it was agreed to construct a Northwest Staging Route to strengthen military defences, a secure land transportation route for goods, materials and men from the lower 48 states, through Canada to Alaska.

### 3.6.2    The theme



The Alaska Highway starts at Dawson Creek in British Columbia, Canada, and ends at Delta Junction in Alaska, United States of America; a length of 2,232 km, through the vast and untamed wilderness of both countries. It has been described as the largest and most difficult construction project since the building of the Panama Canal.

The Alaska Highway transnational route. © Destination BC.

### 3.6.3    Marketing work

Today, the efforts to market and brand the Alaska Highway as a tourism route lack the international collaboration that brought about the building of the Highway. Despite substantial grass-roots efforts to develop a stronger partnership-based model between provincial and state DMOs, the marketing remains fragmented and the messages are somewhat inconsistent.

An initiative involving provincial and state funds from British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon and Alaska has resulted in the North to Alaska project, but the concept of the Alaska Highway is buried within the promotion of the Rocky Mountain Route which highlights various ways to travel north and south. Other initiatives work independently; with many of the web-based marketing messages only promoting the section of Highway that falls within the individual jurisdictional boundaries.

Consumer research conducted in 2003 indicates that over half the travellers are Canadians, largely from the western provinces, 45% are US Americans, and overseas markets account for 6%. The market characteristics vary on a seasonal basis with earlier season travellers more likely to be from the United States of America and over 55 years of age, and summer month visitors tending to be Canadian and younger. While this research is somewhat dated, it is still regarded as representative of today's visitors.

### 3.6.4   Future ambitions and issues

The push to work more collaboratively is largely led by regional stakeholder associations, such as the Alaska Highway Community Society in British Columbia. Recognizing that the Alaska Highway is a significant economic driver and that the fragmented approach to positioning the route is under-utilising its potential as a transnational themed tourism product, the current emphasis is on developing a community-driven approach to ensuring that the Highway is recognized as one of North America's most significant historical routes.

The Alaska Highway Community Society in British Columbia and the Alaska Highway Heritage Society in Yukon are seeking to commemorate and promote the shared history of the Highway's cultural landscape, and to work with communities to protect and interpret key historic sites and resources of cultural value. The societies have worked together with the Peace River Regional District government (British Columbia) to prepare and submit a nomination of the Alaska Highway Corridor as a National Historic Site of Canada to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in late 2015.

In the meantime, the emphasis is on destination planning and the development of a regional heritage strategy – initially for the British Columbia stretch, that will leverage other regional initiatives such as the recent designation of the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark.

### 3.6.5   Conclusions and learning points

Despite this fragmented approach, the route attracts 300,000 visitors mid-May to mid-September. The market place clearly perceives the Alaska Highway as a *must-do* transnational experience.

A successful outcome to the discussions between the British Columbia and Yukon authorities would be a catalyst in promoting a more collaborative transnational approach to marketing and development.

# Chapter 4

# Six types of transnational themed tourism

This chapter proposes a classification of transnational theme-based initiatives that will be helpful for project leaders structuring projects. It is referred to throughout this handbook.

Initiatives are grouped into six types, each with different management and marketing requirements. Each type is described in turn, providing two or more illustrative examples.

## 4.1    Proposed classification of transnational initiatives

The authors of this handbook have assembled a worldwide Database of Themed Initiatives whose purpose includes transnational marketing. At the time of publication, the database lists 129 items and can be found in annex 3. It represents the most comprehensive inventory and overview produced to date.[1]

It total, 71 of them are in Europe, reflecting the active promotion of transnational cooperation and encouragement of such initiatives by the European funding bodies and by the Council of Europe.

The database demonstrates the wide variety of initiatives. From a management and marketing viewpoint, they may have very different requirements. To better understand these requirements, they are divided into six groups as follows:
1.    Localized, cross-border initiatives;
2.    Itineraries and travel corridors;
3.    Thematic or cultural networks;
4.    Sustainable environmental management;
5.    Promotion of thematic experiences; and
6.    Strategic regional cooperation.

Chapter 3 presented nine institutional *policy factors,* to show how they affect the nature of tourism on a transnational level. Although there are some similarities, the classification below is of a different kind. It groups initiatives **according to their essential purpose and intention,** whatever their ownership, funding model or legal structure.

Any classification is a simplification, as evidenced when addressing specific cases. There are many variants and, in some cases, a project could be classified under more than one of these headings. However, this table is a useful guideline for the process of defining the project.

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1    Ten consultants and research assistants contributed to its assembly, representing an estimated 600 hours of work.

## 4.2    Localized, cross-border initiatives

This is the simplest case: two or more regions or towns that are separated by a border see an interest in developing and promoting tourism based on a common theme.

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**Example 4.1         Localized cross-border initiatives**

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**Iguazú/Iguaçu National Parks – Argentina and Brazil**

Located on the Argentina and Brazil frontier, the **Iguazú/Iguaçu National Parks** host one of the world's most stunning natural sites. The massive waterfalls have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1984. Across a width of almost 3 km, the Iguaçu River drops vertically 82 m in a series of falls. While Argentina, with 80% of the falls, has more trails and activities (pedestrian walkways, hikes, waterfall boat rides), the Brazilian side, with tours leaving from Foz do Iguacu, offers the finest views.

**Euroregion Country of Lakes – Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus**

The **Euroregion Country of Lakes**[a] stretches across the border regions of Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus and was established in 1998. A key goal is to promote cultural and historical identity of each region and attain balance between tourism development and environmental protection.

Tourism related projects have included "Culinary heritage as a method of development regional tourism network in Euroregion Country of Lakes" (2005–2006). In their 2020 strategy, the development of cycling routes and infrastructure is planned, alongside a project called the Cool Tour, promoting cultural tourism through three major festivals.[b]

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a)    European Commission (2004), *Cross-border Cooperation in the Baltic Countries and North-West Russia* (online), available at:
      http://ec.europa.eu/ourcoast/download.cfm?fileID=988 (01-09-2016).

b)    Euroregion Country of Lakes (2014), *Strategy 2020 of Euroregion "Country of Lakes"* (online), available at:
      www.ezeruzeme.lv/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/EN_Strategy_of_ER_CoL_2020_SHORT.pdf (01-09-2016).

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## 4.3    Itineraries and travel corridors initiatives



Danube cycling route. © Danube Competence Centre.

Any transnational initiative based on an itinerary can be considered a *travel corridor,* whether travelled by car, by train, on foot, or by any other means. As stated in section 1.5, an itinerary is a common way of structuring a transnational theme.

Several examples of itineraries can be found in the case studies, including the Alaska Highway (United States of America and Canada), the Ancient Tea Horse Road (China) and Masar Ibrahim (primarily developed in Palestine).

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Example 4.2          **Itineraries and travel initiatives**

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**Colonial and Volcanoes Route – Central America**

The Colonial and Volcanoes Route is a Central American tourist product featuring more than 100 colonial and natural destinations. It stretches from Antigua, Guatemala, to Panama, along the old Camino Real developed by the Spanish on pre-existing indigenous routes near the volcanic mountain ranges of the region's Pacific. It was created in 2006–2010 by the Central American Integration System with the support of the Spanish cooperation agency, and has been helped by a 5-year project (2011 to 2016) primarily implemented in Nicaragua.

**Lewis and Clark Expedition Trail – eastern United States of America**

The Lewis and Clark Expedition Trail is a part of the American National Trail System and was created to commemorate the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804 to 1806. The route starts in the eastern United States of America passing through eleven different states including Kansas, Oregon and Montana until it reaches the Pacific Ocean in Washington state. Visitors can follow the route by car, bike, canoe, or walking in some areas, passing historical and heritage sites relating to the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the native peoples of the United States of America.

**The Bibbulmun Track – south Australia**

The Bibbulmun Track is one of the world's great long distance walk trails, stretching 1,000 km from Kalamunda, a suburb in the hills on the outskirts of Perth, to the historic town of Albany on the south coast of Australia. It passes through the heart of the scenic south-west of Western Australia. The Track is for walkers only and is signposted with yellow triangular markers symbolising the Waugal, the rainbow serpent of the Aboriginal Dreaming. The Bibbulmun Track Foundation, which manages the trail, also tailor-makes packages for walking groups including an 8-day Highlights of the Bibbulmun Track itinerary and a Bibbulmun & Beyond itinerary. These incorporate many accommodation providers, restaurants and attractions in the towns along the Track.

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There are organizations dedicated to the development and marketing of travel corridors. Three European examples are:

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Example 4.3          **Developers of itineraries and travel corridors in Europe**

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**Rail travel**

The railways of Europe were once under threat, but have proved remarkably resilient in the face of competition from road and air transport. Past decades have seen increasing interest in railways as a sustainable form of travel. The Eurail Pass, for example, allows travel across Europe by train using a single pass, providing access to networks in 27 countries.

**European Greenways**

The European Greenways Association (EGWA) was created in 1998 in Namur, Belgium, bringing together nearly 50 different organizations from 16 European countries involved in the development of greenways. These greenways consist primarily of canal towpaths and unused railway lines. The main objectives are to preserve infrastructure, as well as historic routes, encourage use of non-motorised transport and exchange expertise between partners.

**EuroVelo**

EuroVelo functions as a network of 15 long distance cycle routes connecting and uniting the whole European continent. The routes can be used by cycling tourists , as well as by local people making daily journeys. European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) owns the trademark for EuroVelo and coordinates development at European level. The objective is to implement high-grade cycle routes in all countries of Europe, promote the cycling routes and encourage European citizens to use a more sustainable and healthy mode of transport. At national levels, the development and operation of the routes are undertaken by National EuroVelo Coordination Centres and Coordinators (NECC/Cs), including government bodies, tourism organizations, relevant NGOs, public transport companies and service providers.

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There are many other national or transnational cycling routes, linking in most cases to the EuroVelo network. These include the Vennbahn Cycle Route which crosses Belgium, Germany

and Luxembourg, and is one of Europe's longest converted railway embankment bike tracks. The 125 km of trails combine nature with Vennbahn stories that revolve around the iron link between the coalfields of Aachen in the Netherlands and the north of Luxembourg , as well as the coffee smugglers that were found in the Belgian–German border. Tourists can also visit a variety of historical and cultural sites including the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Aachen.

## 4.4      Thematic or cultural networking initiatives

The basis of this model is partnership between destinations, local authorities, cultural sites, academic institutions or other bodies, based in several different countries.

The initiatives are led by groups or associations, bringing together public and private partners (defined as "members"), enabling collective decisions. They are often supported by a Scientific Committee.

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| Example 4.4 | **The networking model** |

**International Jesuit Route – South America**

The Society of Jesus in South America was behind a series of impressive achievements in town planning, architecture and the applied arts, as well as social and economic planning. About 30 major sites, dating from 1609 to the mid-18th century, are spread across modern-day Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. Initiatives to develop tourism around the sites have been underway for some time, with private-public partnerships offering marketing workshops and tour packages. In August 2016, the Ministers of Tourism of these six Cono Sur countries signed a strategic development agreement that would, in the words of the Argentine Minister of Tourism, "transform the Jesuit Heritage of South America into an integrated, competitive and sustainable tourism product.[a]

**Baihai, China, to Ha Long, Viet Nam: the Silk Road on the Sea**

This sea link from China to Viet Nam was essentially developed for tourism on the theme of history and landscape, and is seen as an early step in creating a Silk Road on the Sea. Two thousand years ago, the beautiful and romantic city of Beihai was one of the two departure harbours of China's silk trade. Viet Nam's Ha Long Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a popular tourism destination. Initially opened in 1998, the sea route promotes tourism cooperation between China and Viet Nam. Further routes to other South-East Asian countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia, are expected in the future.

a) Caribbean News Digital (2016), *Seis países de Sudamérica crean una ruta jesuita turística* (online), available at: www.caribbeannewsdigital.com/noticia/seis-paises-de-sudamerica-crean-una-ruta-jesuita-turistica (01-09-2016).

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Examples of thematic networking in the case studies include the Federation of Napoleonic Cities, the European Historic Thermal Town Association and the Hansa, all Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

## 4.5      Sustainable environmental management initiatives

There are several environmental organizations that operate on a worldwide, transnational basis and are instrumental in developing sustainable tourism policies. Members of UNESCO Geoparks Network are featured in this handbook, such as the Marble Arch Caves, between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and the Muskau Arch Geopark, between Germany and Poland.

The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) is composed of government and civil society organizations, and provides knowledge and tools to enhance economic development and nature conservation. It has a Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist (TAPAS) Group that is part of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). Objectives include: to strengthen effectiveness of protected area managers and policy makers in sustainable tourism; to offer advice to governments on sustainable tourism; and generate case studies and best practices on tourism and protected areas.[2]

Many organizations concerned with environmental protection operate Europe-wide or else federate the work of national or regional bodies. These include Natura 2000, the European Environmental Bureau, European Environment Agency, Coastal Europe, and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. In most cases, tourism is a consideration, but not the primary purpose.

An exception is the Europarc Federation, a non-governmental organization working with national parks in 36 countries in Europe. The Federation views these parks as catalyst spaces where sustainable tourism can be developed. In 1995, the Federation was instrumental in drafting the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Approximately 73 million tourists visit the Europarc parks on an annual basis. This translates into an average of 1.5 million visitors per park. Alongside such tourism potential, it offers groundwork for the parks to deliver social, environmental and economic benefits.

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Example 4.5        **Sustainable environmental management initiatives**

**Altai Mountains – Russian Federation, Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan**

The Altai Mountains spread across the Russian Federation, Mongolia, China and Kazakhstan, and draw visitors from all four nations and further afield, for their landscapes and wildlife. Golden Mountains of Altai is the name of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which is described as "the most complete sequence of altitudinal vegetation zones in central Siberia, from steppe, forest-steppe, mixed forest, subalpine vegetation to alpine vegetation. The site is also an important habitat for endangered animal species such as the snow leopard"[a]. Nearby Lake Baikal attracts large numbers of Chinese tourists, for its spectacular scenery, and is developing as a major tourism destination. Specialised tour operators offer treks in the area.[b]

**Neusidlersee-Seewinkly and Ferto-Hansag Transboundary National Park – Austria and Hungary**

The park links eastern Austria and western Hungary, and is owned and managed by seven local authorities. Designated as a World Heritage Site in 2001, the bilateral agreements between the two countries for both national parks began in 1956 based on regulating water levels in Lake Neusiedl. Opening formally in 1994, the tourism strategy of the park is closely aligned with that of its managing partners.

a) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (n.d.), *Golden Mountains of Altai* (online), available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/768 (01-09-2016).

b) Baikal Discovery (n.d.), *The expedition "Altai – Golden Mountains"* (online), available at: www.baikal-discovery.ru/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=90&Itemid=8 (01-09-2016).

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2    International Union for Conservation of Nature (n.d.), 'IUCN WCPA Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist Group' (online), available at: www.iucn.org (01-09-2016).

## 4.6    Theme and experience initiatives

In the case of *theme and experience promotion,* the link to specific initiatives or institutions is much looser than in the previous examples. The goal is to promote a type or style of tourism, including values and life-style.

These two examples, one from the Caucasus, the other from Europe, concern wine, which is marketed as a *lifestyle* product.

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Example 4.6        **Theme and experience initiatives**

**Wines of the Caucasus – Black Sea**

Wine-making is one of the oldest activities in the Black Sea and Caucasus region and several countries today produce a rich variety of the finest wines. Georgia boasts the oldest, continuous, uninterrupted tradition of wine making in the world, which goes back 8,000 years.[a] Interregional and cross-border Wine Routes are being developed for tourism, initiatives which will contribute to intercultural dialogue in the region. There are several projects in development and these include the Wine Routes of Azerbaijan, and Vine and Wine Routes of Armenia. Specialist tour operators are already offering combined wine tours in the region (e.g., http://oldworldwinetours.com/en).

**Secret Wine Tours – Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain**

The Secret Wine Tours Project, involves partners in Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain. Through the Network for Small European Wine Areas (VINEST) the project promotes small European wine areas to protect and enhance the variety and individuality of wines, lands and cultures. Secret Wine Tours promotes cycling, hiking and (motor) biking tourism trails through these wine growing areas. The project has developed mobile phone guides, a guide for participating establishments to follow basic principles and a Vinest Passport for tourists.

a)    World Tourism Organization (2012), *Global Report on Food Tourism,* UNWTO, Madrid.

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A good example in the field of food tourism, Tasting Europe,[3] is a "gastronomy portal" that aids visitors to plan their European holiday. Travellers can find overviews of food fairs, festivals, and routes, and experience the soul of Europe's culinary culture, traditions and heritage. The portal is an initiative of the European Travel Commission. Its website offers recipes on traditional dishes and information on European food labels. Routes such as the Via Francigena and the Chocolate Way are promoted on the site, as well as events such as the Baja fish festival or the Copenhagen cooking festival. Tasting Europe can be found on Twitter and Instagram. With the hashtag #tasteeurope, it encourages locals and visitors to share their food and culinary experiences.

Food and drink can also be promoted in more specific ways. For example, thecheesesofeurope.com seeks to create awareness about how to incorporate cheese into diets and lifestyle. TATRA (Tastes of Trappists), with partners in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, represents eight Trappist monasteries promoting tourism based on regional products, religious heritage, walking and cycling routes.

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3    Visit Europe (n.d.), *The food travel portal of Europe* (online), available at: www.tastingeurope.com/ (13-07-2016).

## 4.7    Strategic regional cooperation initiatives

At the highest level, tourism is a strategic economic tool; policy decisions are taken and cooperation agreement signed between governments to promote transnational tourism. Notable examples, included in case studies, are the Silk Road and the Greater Mekong subregion economic cooperation programme.

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**Example 4.7        Strategic regional cooperation initiatives**

**The Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand Growth Triangle**

The goals of the IMT-GT, formed in 1993, include the increase of tourist arrivals, the improvement of tour packaging and infrastructure development. It covers 14 provinces in southern Thailand, nine states of peninsular Malaysia, and 10 provinces of Sumatra, Indonesia. The strategy markets the sub region as a single destination through its shared historical, cultural and religious heritage.[a]

**Great Tea Road – China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation**

Development of the Great Tea Road that crosses China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation was jointly agreed in 2015 by the Presidents of the three countries, as a backbone for tourism development, initially to run from Beijing, across Mongolia, to Irkutsk.[b]

**Lake Constance foundation (Bodensee-Stiftung) – Switzerland, Germany and Austria**

The International Bodensee Conference (IBK) is an intergovernmental organization of the region's federal states, founded in 1972, and consisting of Cantons of Switzerland, States of Germany and Austria, and the Principality of Liechtenstein. It serves as a forum for local governments and a network for cross border cooperation.

a)    Asia Development Bank (2012), *Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle Implementation Blueprint 2012–2016* (online), available at: www.adb.org/sites/default/files/page/34235/imt-gt-implementation-blueprint-2012-2016-july-2012.pdf (01-09-2016).

b)    The Siberian Times (2015), *New tourist route follows The Great Tea Road* (online), available at: www.siberiantimes.com (01-09-2016).

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**Key point:**

Each of these six models has different requirements, needs different skills and resources, and will be developed and marketed differently. These differences should be considered in the following chapters.

## 4.8    Case study 4: Grass-roots cultural initiatives – The Trail of Tears

**What this case illustrates:**

– The Trail of Tears demonstrates the tremendous power of an emotional and tragic theme;
– For the most part, such themes are kept alive for the sake of memory, without much thought for the wider public. However, in the 21st century, with easier travel and communication, they can reach a much wider audience; and
– This form of tourism – empathy with hard times in history – is often called *dark tourism,* and is being developed actively in many countries and regions.

### 4.8.1     Origin and purpose

The Trail of Tears is a cultural initiative coordinated by the United States National Parks Service.

### 4.8.2     The theme



Members of the Cherokee nation on a Trail of Tears memorial walk.
© National Parks Service.

The Trail of Tears commemorates the survival of the Native American people who, following the passing of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, were forced to relocate from their homelands in Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee to live in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. They travelled by foot, horse, wagon, or steamboat between 1838 and 1839, across nine states and thousands of kilometres of land and water routes which today form the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail managed by the United States of America National Park Service[4].

### 4.8.3     Marketing work

The Trail of Tears is marketed in different ways. There are Cherokee Nation memorial walks and bike rides, including annual events. As part of the United States National Park Service, visitors can purchase a Passport to Your National Parks and collect stamps when travelling through the Trail of Tears sites. Programmes and activities are available at developed sites and in communities along the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. In the Trail of Tears State Forest in southern Illinois, there is a bird adoption event for bird-watchers and lovers of hummingbirds. The weekend after Labour Day an annual *PowWow* gathering of Native American people is organized. It celebrates their rich heritage, encourages socialising with old and new friends and educates visitors through demonstrations and storytelling.

### 4.8.4     Future ambitions and issues

Actions are underway to continue projects to improve the trails and interpret the Trail of Tears for visitors. A restoration guide was created in January 2016 by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University and the National Trails Intermountain Region of the National Park Service, to aid masonry buildings on and associated with the history of the Trail of Tears. Many of these buildings are recognized landmarks, while others have been abandoned or forgotten. The guide aids property owners to better understand the buildings' architectural and historical legacy

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4     Trail of Tears Association (n.d.) *Trail of Tears* (online), available at: www.nationaltota.org (01-09-2016).

and to offer advice and solutions regarding restoration and preservation by addressing common problems faced by property owners and construction/preservation professionals.

In March 2015, the National Trails Intermountain Region and the Shawnee National Forest held a design *charrette* to consider the possibility of, and alternative alignments for, a new looping historic trail experience along the ferry routes followed by the Cherokee on the Trail of Tears between Jonesboro and the two ferry crossing sites on the Mississippi River. The aim was to create one or more possible alternatives for comprehensive development and interpretation of the Trail of Tears routes, and to develop resources and suggest media to improve the interpretation experience for visitors on this section of the route.

### 4.8.5    Conclusions and learning points

The Trail of Tears demonstrates the tremendous power of an emotional and historically tragic theme.

This case study lists a few of the actions being undertaken, both at a global and a local level. They demonstrate a true sense of *ownership* of the theme by those involved, a willingness to take responsibility, and a determination to carry things forward.

The project leaders, across the United States of America, have created a framework within which individual people and groups can take initiatives.

Although the Trail of Tears is part of the National Parks Service and it benefits from promotion and being part of Passport to National Parks, for instance; further work in improving the trails and the historic sites, as well as in the interpretation of its rich heritage is strongly needed.

# Chapter 5

# European mapping of transnational theme-based tourism

## 5.1    Introduction to the European mapping

Before going into detail on the challenges, opportunities and functioning of transnational themed products, this section of the handbook provides an overview of transnational tourism, specifically looking at Europe.

Europe was chosen for the richness and variety of examples it provides. This *mapping* of the continent covers many themes, but also illustrates theme differences from north to south and east to west. An ambition of this study is to encourage new opportunities and identify potential themes that can be explored transnationally across the continent.

The section therefore highlights major trends and opportunities for each region. Examples are classified according to the six categories of transnational initiative presented in chapter four.

### 5.1.1    Europe as an example

The marketing of tourism themes is complex and operates at many different levels; so, it is useful to approach the subject through example. This European overview or *mapping* shows the initiatives currently being implemented, and what kinds of opportunities are open to development.

European examples are richer and more varied than in other parts of the globe, for several reasons:
– Distances are short between tourism attractions and population centres in different countries;
– Europe's rich history and multi-layered culture offers many opportunities for the development of transnational themes; and
– There are financial incentives to cooperate, more than in other parts of the world, with funding provided through European institutions for cross-border initiatives, including tourism.

Six initiatives and themes are presented regionally, as follows:
1.    Western and central Mediterranean covers the borders and maritime links between Portugal, Spain, southern France, Italy, Malta and the Maghreb;[1]
2.    The Balkans and eastern Mediterranean covers frontiers and partnerships within Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Turkey;
3.    North-eastern Europe includes frontiers that connect and divide Poland, the Baltic states, Belarus, Finland and neighbouring areas of the Russian Federation;

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1    Although technically not part of Europe, much of the Maghreb is part of the Enlarged Partial Agreement, and its countries are frequent partners in transnational initiatives.

4.    Scandinavia and the Baltic covers Norway and Baltic Sea countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland, northern Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the north-western parts of the Russian Federation;

5.    The United Kingdom, Ireland, North Sea and Channel includes the regions of the United Kingdom, as well as Ireland, northern regions of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and north-western parts of Germany; and

6.    From the Rhine to the Vistula and the Elbe to the Danube represents the region between these important rivers, thus, Central Europe. Germany has a significant role in this region with the addition of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Switzerland, Hungary, Slovenia, northern Italy, and eastern regions of France.

This section shows what is possible in terms of transnational partnership around themed tourism. The variety of themes on which to build a transnational tourism initiative is virtually infinite. These examples and suggestions may trigger ideas than can turn into effective partnerships. Each overview entails:

–    A presentation of the region;

–    A small selection of existing initiatives as examples; and

–    Some opportunities to explore.

The Transnational Themed Tourism Database contains many more examples, both for Europe and the rest of the world. Where relevant, the text also refers to the case studies in the concluding section of the handbook.

## 5.2    The western and central Mediterranean initiatives

Figure 5.1    **Western and central Mediterranean: Portugal, Spain, southern France, Italy, Malta and the Maghreb**
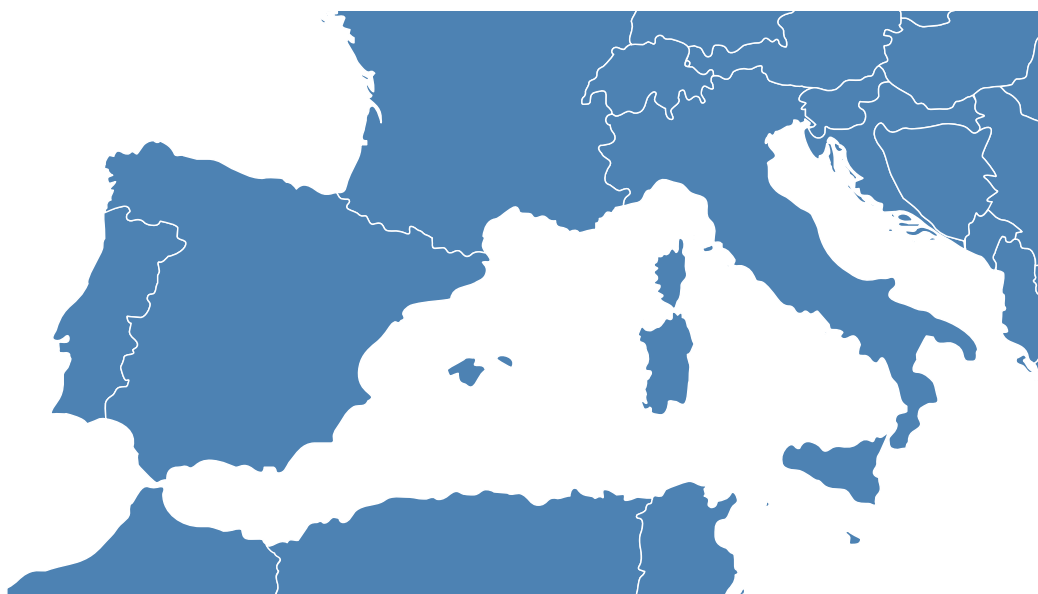


Source:    based on © Antuanas | Dreamstime.

Western and central Mediterranean countries share a common history, including times of intense exchanges during the period of the Phoenicians, of the Roman Empire, of the Islamic Caliphate, of the Hapsburg Empire, and of the modern colonial era.

There are also strong links across the Mediterranean. A collective heritage, shaped after centuries of exchange, has formed a culture that links Europe to Africa. On the islands and northern shores, Latin-based languages, customs, architecture and lifestyles share similar roots, throughout Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Mediterranean islands.

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Example 5.1          **Western and central Mediterranean initiatives**

**Iter Vitis: landscape and agricultural tradition – thematic network**

Supporting sustainable tourism development across 18 countries, Iter Vitis recognizes the importance of safeguarding vineyard landscapes, production methods and traditional know-how as part of the European (specifically Mediterranean) identity. In a promotional spin-off, the three French regions of Pays Bastides, Vignoble du Gaillac and Pays de Thau have created an annual VitiPassport, to encourage access to participating local tourist attractions.

See: www.itervitis.fr

**ODYSSEA: maritime and coastal tourism – thematic experience**

The ODYSSEA Cultures Euro-Med project involved 22 Mediterranean Basin countries, to improve international awareness of local and regional coastal tourism and positively impact the economy. Public and private sector partners cooperated on cluster activity relating to e.g., cruises, leisure, culture, agrotourism, research and development, capacity building, environment and innovation. They also developed a joint web portal featuring offers, products, cultural and heritage resources of all European and Mediterranean cities, ports and rural areas.

See: http://odyssea.eu/odysseus/odyssea-cultures-euro-med

**Routes of *El Legado Andalusí:* forging cultural links through history – thematic networks and itineraries**

The routes of *El Legado Andalusí* (The Legacy of Al-Andalus) are managed by a Spanish public foundation of the Andalusia regional government and connect cities in the south of Spain. The Almoravid and Almohades Route, is also part of a series of itineraries exploring the Al-Andalus heritage and covers castles, towers and citadels in Spain, Portugal, North Africa and the Middle East. The Ummayad Route retraces the journey of the Ummayad (Arab) dynasty from its capital in Damascus to southern Spain. The most developed sites and itineraries are to be found on the Iberian Peninsula.

**MEET – The Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism – sustainable environmental management**

The MEET project aims to develop an Ecotourism Model for 10 Mediterranean Countries (Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Spain and Tunisia). Based on the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, about 20 ecotourism packages were designed, tested and selected using a participatory planning approach focussing on at least 3 days in the off-season, and for small groups.

See: www.medecotourism.org

Additional examples can be found in the Pyrenees – Mont Perdu National Park (France and Spain), and the Parco Naturale delle Alpi Marittime and Le Parc National du Mercantour (France and Italy).

**Prehistoric Rock Art Trails: ancient cultural heritage – thematic network**

The Council of Europe Cultural Route 'Prehistoric Rock Art Trails' offers 112 archaeological and rock art sites of scientific, cultural, artistic and archaeological interest. Rock art manifestations first appeared in Europe 42,000 years ago, dating from the Palaeolithic Age until the Early Iron Age. Sites exist in Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Portugal, and receive more than 1.5 million visitors every year. The symbolic value of the first Europeans' art is recognized in UNESCO's World Heritage List as "the first major cultural, social and symbolic expression that we possess of humankind".

See: www.prehistour.eu

Opportunities for transnational theme-based tourism in the western and central Mediterranean include the following:

–   Food and drink tourism, with vineyards, olive trees, and the common, shared landscape of the Mediterranean basin;
–   Maritime life, including nautical routes;
–   Transnational historic heritage, including both Christian and Muslim traditions;
–   Ecosystems and landscapes, creating opportunities for ecotourism and outdoor activities;
–   Pilgrimage routes and spiritual travel; and
–   The arts, including painting, architecture, sculpture, literature and music.

These are not new themes, and all are exploited by private businesses, such as tour operators and cruise companies.

Most examples exploit historic or cultural themes. As in the Iter Vitis and MEET examples above, DMOs can use the *raw material* of a cultural or environmental theme, to build a platform for the development and marketing of tourism products, in collaboration with the private sector.

The process from theme to product is developed in the Practical Guide section of this handbook.

## 5.3     The Balkans and eastern Mediterranean

Figure 5.2     **Balkans and eastern Mediterranean: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey**



Source:    based on © Antuanas | Dreamstime.

Bordered by five seas (the Adriatic, Ionian, Mediterranean, Aegean and the Black Sea), this region's geography comprises mountains and untouched terrains. The Ottoman occupation had

a strong cultural influence in terms of lifestyle, religious views, and cuisine, along with the many mosques, bridges and palaces that the empire built. It has been a crossroads and meeting point for the civilisations of Orthodox and Catholic Christianity.

The region also has a heritage of conflict, struggle and grief; between the Austro–Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, during the two world wars, and in the 1990s.

In the eastern Mediterranean, Turkey is the sixth most visited country in the world with around 40 million international tourist arrivals in 2014. Alongside Greece, these countries have immense cultural, historical and religious heritage, as well as representing an important destination for sun, sand and beach tourism. In the western Balkans, sun, sea and sand tourism is emerging, with Croatia as a pioneer.

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Example 5.2 **The Balkans and eastern Mediterranean initiatives**

**Taste the Mediterranean: food tourism – thematic experience**

The popularity of Balkans' and eastern Mediterranean cuisine is increasing, shaped by tradition and the use of common products like olive oil. This Croatian gastronomic festival brings together prestigious chefs from France, Morocco, Italy, Croatia and other international talents passionate about Mediterranean foods. The festival includes talks on ecological/organic agriculture and partners a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) sustainable food project called Fish Forward.

See: www.tastethemediterranean.eu/en/

**Sultan's Trail: history and hiking – thematic itinerary**

This long-distance footpath of 2,200 km passes through Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. It marks the route taken by the armies of powerful Ottoman Emperor, Suleiman the Magnificent, to the Siege of Vienna, and links each country's Ottoman influences and shared cultural history.

See: www.sultanstrail.com

**Peaks of the Balkans: mountain walking itinerary**

The Peaks of the Balkans trail encompasses Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro. Tourists can choose to stay in traditional stone houses, mountain huts and small mountain lodges, and to taste homemade, fresh and local dishes with ingredients mainly sourced from organic alpine farms. A balanced focus on environmental protection, community education and economic development saw the initiative win the World Travel Council (WTC) Tourism for Tomorrow Awards in 2013.

See: www.peaksofthebalkans.com

**Bulgaria (Montana) and Serbia (Nish) Cross Border Programme: cross-border initiative**

This programme has initiated seven thematic routes between the two countries' regions. These include cultural tourism, ecotourism, religious, culinary, recreational, business and folklore. The culinary route begins in Varshetz with a talk on the history of the region's gastronomy and visits other towns to taste local specialties and to see cultural attractions.

See: http://tour-montana-nis.com/?cid=32

See also the Danube Competence Centre in chapter 10 – Strategic regional cooperation and travel corridor.

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The region is increasingly popular for its cultural and architectural heritage, derived from past empires as mentioned above. Bulgaria also showcases historical, ethnic and cultural tourism in addition to its winter and seaside resorts.

Due to the relatively small size of the countries in the Balkans, it is easy for tourists to combine two or more countries into a single Balkans itinerary. Private operators already do so, and run

tours, for example, starting in Dubrovnik (Croatia) through to Mostar and Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and ending in Novi Sad (Serbia).

Specific *opportunities* include:

–   Exploitation of the early heritage of Greece and Turkey, across the Ionian Sea, as of the first millennium B.C.E. (before the Common Era) and up to and including the Ottoman period. The individual sites are well known, but there is still much to develop, in the form of themed trips and holidays;

–   Growth of themed tourism in the Balkans, still largely undeveloped for European tourism, outside of Slovenia and Croatia. Themes could include local architecture, culinary traditions, music, and the heritage and histories of the cultural groups that make up the region; and

–   Further development of the trail networks, according to the models described above, in the Pindus, Carpathian and other mountain ranges.

In short, the opportunities are massive. The challenge is to develop the infrastructure and skills, and to build collaboration between states that have historically been in conflict.

## 5.4    North-eastern Europe

Figure 5.3    **North-eastern Europe: Poland, the Baltic States, Belarus, Finland and neighbouring areas of the Russian Federation**



Source:    based on © Antuanas | Dreamstime.

The countries of north-eastern Europe share a long and dynamic past that can be exploited across borders, for theme-based transnational tourism. There have always been exchanges across the Baltic and along the wide corridor from Saint Petersburg and Moscow to Western Europe via Poland and Germany.

The tourism industries of the southern Baltic States are relatively young. There is cooperation between the tourism authorities, but examples of well-developed, strongly branded transnational themed tourism are rare. Poland's tourism, also under development, tends to focus on the major cities, or else on outdoor activities, looking more towards Germany and the West, which are its primary sources of international tourism. Cross-border tourism initiatives involving the Russian Federation and Belarus remain rare due to visa restrictions and recent political tensions.[2]

Transnational tourism in north-eastern Europe focusses mostly on trails and cycle routes, historic heritage, and ecosystems and landscapes.

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Example 5.3 **North-eastern Europe initiatives**

**Baltic Museums Network – cultural networking**

An initiative of museums, cultural institutions and tourist organizations that jointly promote the region and the Baltic identity through an online database (see: http://balticmuseums.ning.com/) with interactive mapping of museums in Finland, Estonia, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation. Currently numbering 37 partner museums, their goal is to create an active network and umbrella organization.

**Maritime Atlas of the South Baltic: maritime heritage – thematic experience**

The Maritime Atlas of the South Baltic (Germany, Lithuania, Sweden and Poland) lists, describes and locates the region's maritime heritage sites, events and festivals. These include museums, lighthouses, historical ships and warships, ports and shipyards and natural attractions, most of which are open to the public as tourist attractions.

See: www.maritimeatlas.eu

**Latgale and Aukstaitija Themed Villages: rural tourism – cross-border initiative**

This cross-border initiative between Latvia and Lithuania encompasses 14 villages, which offer a range of diverse experiences focussed on taste and sight.

See: www.latgale.lv/en/village_heritage/villages

**Bialowieza Transborder Trail: landscapes – itinerary and travel corridor**

The Bialowieza Transborder cycling trail covers 204 km between Poland and Belarus. It features natural landscapes, historical monuments and the region's multicultural character with Orthodox and Catholic churches , as well as local wooden houses. On the Polish side, the trail leads through small settlements in the proximity of Białowie a Forest, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

See: http://powiat.hajnowka.pl/ctrpb/transborder_trail_eng

See also the Hanse (cultural network) and the Iron Curtain Cycle Route (itinerary and travel corridor) in chapter 10.

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Individually, these countries have low visibility on the international tourism *radar*. Grouped by theme and interest, however, they could have considerable power.

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2    An exception is the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation, a coastal enclave between Lithuania and Poland, where cross-border tourism initiatives have benefitted from significant EU funding.

In terms of *opportunities,* more could be made of the history and heritage of these ancient nations. If the assets were structured and promoted by theme, rather than by country, they would have greater impact.

An interesting example, supported by European funding, is the Baltic Sea Culinary Route, a theme with exciting potential in terms of development of gastro-tourism, involving Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. As the initial INTERREG funding cannot take this product to market, tourism authorities in the Baltic, working with the private sector, should raise its profile, and develop a platform for local towns, villages and businesses to create and market products.

Another area of opportunity is sporting routes. The Iron Curtain Cycle Route (covered in the case studies section of this handbook) is a good model for development. It has high-level support and coordination, including from EuroVelo, and is progressively building local level engagement. Major arteries such as this one can develop smaller routes in a fishbone pattern. There are opportunities to develop other networks of sporting routes across the region, including for hiking or riding.

## 5.5    Scandinavia and the Baltic

Figure 5.4    **Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania**



Source:    based on © Antuanas | Dreamstime.

This section focusses more on the Nordic countries of Denmark, Norway and Sweden that share many historic and cultural references with Finland and Iceland. The Scandinavian Tourist Board

(STB) was established in 1986 to promote the region's countries to the Asian market, and still manages joint promotions to attract tourists from around the world.

Most transnational collaboration today is around cultural and historical themes and Scandinavia's exceptional natural landscapes.

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**Example 5.4**  **Scandinavia and the Baltic initiatives**

**Destination Viking: seafaring heritage – cultural network**

Viking heritage is central to early Scandinavian history. These seafarers plundered and traded throughout Europe and the Baltic Sea, and across the Atlantic. Destination Viking brings together partners from many different countries, to develop transnational tourism products. Across Norway, Sweden and Denmark, museums, cemeteries, churches, battlefields and fortresses connected to the Vikings are involved. See also the case example of Destination Viking under Multi-Regional Initiatives below.

See: www.destinationviking.com

**Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park: arctic wilderness – sustainable environmental management**

Between the Russian Federation, Norway and Finland lies the Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park, comprising wilderness areas and national parks. Established in 2008, this trilateral cooperation aims to enhance sustainable nature based tourism, where visitors can attend bird watching events to view migratory birds, participate in winter activities such as dog sledding and snow-mobiling, and hike the park's trails. Cultural life is incorporated in the tourist offer by visiting communities and towns inhabited by the Sami people and witnessing their traditions and way of life.

See: www.pasvik-inari.net

**St. Olav Ways – Nordic Pilgrimage itinerary**

St. Olav Ways is a series of pilgrimage routes that lead to Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim, Norway where the tomb of the king, Saint Olav lies. Pilgrims have used these routes since the 11th century and the network covers 5000 km in northern Europe. The routes are also used by hikers and cyclists to experience the beautiful landscape and cultural monuments of the region.

See: http://pilegrimsleden.no/en/

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Scandinavia covers a vast surface area, with spectacular landscapes and a relatively sparse population. There are many opportunities to develop trails for hiking and mountain biking, horse riding and skiing.

A hiking trail that could be developed in the Arctic region is the Nordkalottruta, with a total length of 800 km, passing through Norway, Sweden and Finland. National parks could be the drivers of this initiative.

Tourism in Scandinavia is concentrated in the short summer season, but interest in sustainable winter activities is growing internationally, and will be further fuelled by global warming. Opportunities could include dark skies tourism, observation of the Northern Lights *(aurora borealis),* contact with the Sami people and their reindeer herds, dog sledding and many more.

On a wider scale, facilitation of visa procedures between the Russian Federation and countries to the west would open up new opportunities. While this is a long-term goal, the city of Saint Petersburg has already achieved significant progress, in partnership with Scandinavian countries.

These are directions that tourism authorities are already taking at a local level. Working transnationally would lengthen tourism visits, and thereby increase benefits for local communities.

## 5.6     The North Sea, Channel and Atlantic fringe

Figure 5.5     **The North Sea, Channel and Atlantic fringe: United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, northern France and north-western Germany**

Source:    based on © Antuanas | Dreamstime.

The United Kingdom and Ireland share a long common, sometimes troubled, history, and have strong political and economic ties, as they do with neighbouring countries across the narrow seas. On the northern continental coast, transnational tourism initiatives are well developed between countries benefiting from the open-border Schengen Agreement.

The past twenty years have seen collaboration between the County of Kent and the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France, encouraging economic exchange. In 1987, the two regions created the Trans-Channel Euroregion, supporting shared tourism initiatives across the English Channel.

Visit Cornwall has cooperation agreements over tourism with the Finistère Département of Brittany, based on common cultural goals. The two organizations are working to develop tourism on cultural and nature-based themes, in support of local rural economies, and to boost tourism inflows.

Transnational theme-based tourism between these countries tends to be of three types: transnational historic heritage; ecosystems and landscapes; as well as cycling and walking routes and circuits.

Example 5.5        **The North Sea, Channel and Atlantic fringe initiatives**

**The Great Lighthouses of Ireland: coastal heritage – promotion of thematic experiences**

This Irish initiative brings together 12 lighthouses island wide. The project enables local people to protect the history, tradition and heritage of Ireland's lighthouses, and to tell their stories, alongside showing visitors what the role of modern lighthouse keepers is. Visitors can travel to one or many lighthouses, take a tour and listen to stories and histories of the lighthouse, or stay overnight.

See: www.greatlighthouses.com

**Liberation Route Europe: World War II tourism – thematic itineraries**

This international remembrance trail follows the route taken by the allied forces at the latter part of World War II, focussing on the liberation of Nazi occupied Europe and the lasting consequences of the War. The route offers day and multi-day trips from the beaches of Normandy, to war memorials in France, following into Belgium and the Netherlands and through Germany to Berlin. The Liberation Route aims to combine sustainable tourism products and special offers to make the history of the Liberation more visible and accessible to all visitors (see figure 5.6).

See. http://liberationroute.com/

**Marble Arch Cave Global Geopark: geological tourism – cross-border environmental management**

The Marble Arch Cave Global Geopark crosses the border of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In 2001, it became Europe's first designated Geopark. The park spans over 18,000 ha and contains over 40 geological and cultural sites with geological formation almost 900 million years old. Principal activities of the park are tourism, education, conservation and research, with events hosted to attract visitors by offering "informal education in a relaxed environment". Such activities respect the Geopark's ethos, to improve the economy of the area through ecological sustainable tourism.

See: www.marblearchcavesgeopark.com

**North Sea Cycle Route: cycling – itinerary and travel corridor**

Known as EuroVelo 12, this 5,900 km cycle route was created as an international project between the partner countries that border the North Sea (the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway). Private operators offer cycle tours of the whole route to cater for cyclists who want a challenge. The North Sea Cycle Route has an interactive website allowing cyclists to map their path and calculate their distance travelled.

See: www.northsea-cycle.com

Figure 5.6        **The Liberation Route Europe**



Source:    © Liberation Route Europe.

The last two decades have brought political stability to Ireland, opening up the potential for transnational tourism and for north and south to work together on shared projects.

Ireland is increasingly looking at northern France as a partner for transnational initiatives. Between Ireland and Brittany there is a strong sense of cultural kinship, and there are many opportunities for transnational initiatives, around the themes of music, dance and religious heritage, in particular.

Other specific opportunities include:
–    Creation of themed routes along the northern continental coast (France, Belgium and the Netherlands) based on their rich and turbulent history (the Eighty Years' War, the Habsburg period[3], etc.);
–    The development of trails and greenways across frontiers, along the lines of the North Sea Cycle Route;
–    Seafood tourism, for example on the theme of grey shrimp, which is fished mainly in the southern North Sea (Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom); and
–    Further development of Great War products, which have been boosted by the hundredth anniversary.

On themes ranging from the time of Julius Caesar to D-Day, there are many opportunities to develop transnational themed products and routes between the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Many of these themes are already exploited by private operators, but would benefit from greater formalisation.

## 5.7     From the Rhine to the Vistula, the Elbe to the Danube

This overview covers transnational themed tourism in the heart of Europe, from the Baltic and North Sea in the north to the Adriatic in the south. With iconic cities, crossed by great rivers and mountain ranges, the region is where Germanic and Slavic cultures meet. The countries share similar historical references, such as the Holy Roman and Austro–Hungarian Empires. An abundance of cultural tourism opportunities exists relating to classical music, history and cuisine.

In the heart of Europe, Germany is the leader per capita of outbound tourism in the world, but also a major inbound tourism destination, ranking seventh in the most visited countries, with 33 million international tourist arrivals in 2014. The Netherlands, Belgium and Austria are also major inbound and outbound markets, as is the Rhine Valley.

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3    Several initiatives already relate to the Habsburg period, in particular the Via Hapsburg, a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, opening up opportunities to develop these historical themes further, for tourism, on a partnership basis.

Figure 5.7     **From the Rhine to the Vistula, the Elbe to the Danube: France, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia**
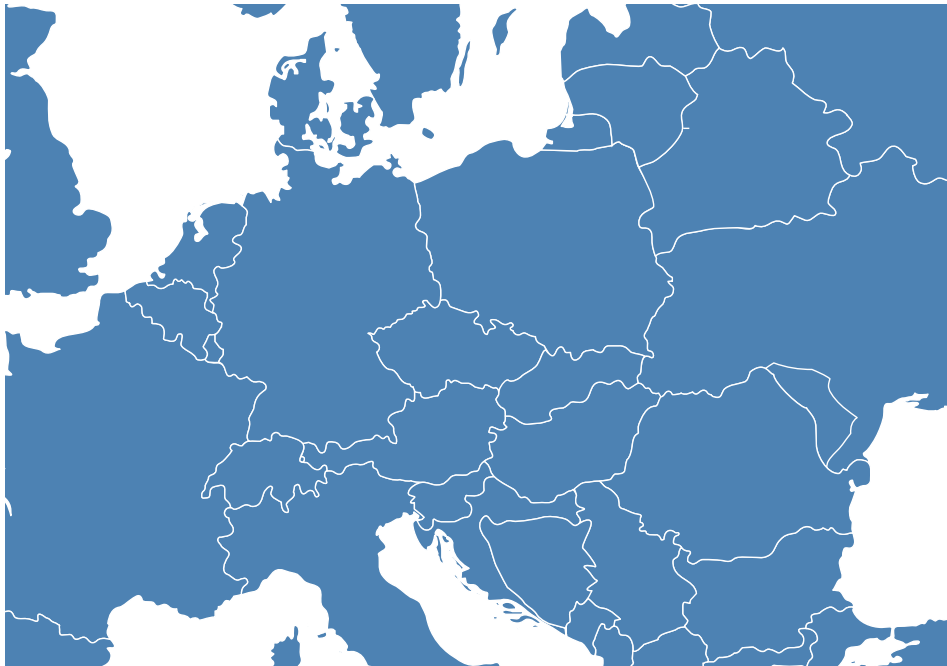


Source:    based on © Antuanas | Dreamstime.

There are good examples of **strategic regional cooperation**[4] through tourism:

– Four Central European countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) formed the Visegrad Four (V4), with an aim to promote themselves as a single tourist destination. Tourism promotion instruments include presentations at trade fairs, workshops, trade familiarization and press trips, brochures and promotional websites. The four countries showcase and market under a single brand, emphasizing joint historical roots and complementary cultural traditions, including architecture, art, religion and folklore; and

– The Danube tourism brand is being used to develop and promote tourism between Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Hungary (see: www.danube.travel). This is under the management of the Danube Competence Center (DCC) and covered in chapter 10.

Also of cross-border initiatives:[5]

– The Eurodistrict Saar Moselle is a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) between the German state of Saarland and the French department of Moselle, in the region of Lorraine. The Route du feu[6] features ten sites with industrial heritage sites, including museums, factories and car manufacturing plants. The Velo Visalis is a cycle track of around 330 km, linking lakes and towns on both sides of the border; [7] and

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4    Strategic regional cooperation is one type of transnational themed initiative identified in chapter 3.

5    See chapter 4.4.2.

6    La Route du feu (n.d.), *La Route du feu* (online), available at: http://route-des-feuers.eu/ (01-09-2016).

7    Velo visavis (n.d.), *Grenzenloses Radvergnügen* (online), available at: www.velovisavis.eu/pdf/broschuere.pdf (01-09-2016).

– Eurometropolis Lille-Kortijk-Tournai is an EGTC that links Lille Métropole in France with the cities of Kortijk (West Flanders) and Tournai (Wallonie Picarde) in Belgium. Its dedicated tourism website[8] provides information on cultural sites, accommodation, walks, events, food products and so on.

In central Europe, a host of themes have been developed around landscape and natural systems; and cultural and historical heritage. Walking and cycle routes are well developed, particularly in France, Germany and Austria.

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**Example 5.6          From the Rhine to the Vistula, the Elbe to the Danube initiatives**

**Neusiedlersee-Seewinkly (Austria) and Ferto-Hansag (Hungary) Transboundary National Park: cross-border initiative**

Across the borders of Austria and Hungary, this park was defined as a Transboundary World Heritage Site in 2001. On the Austrian side, it is managed by a public corporation whereas the state manages the Hungarian side. A key area for bird migration between Europe and Africa, it also consists of a cultural landscape with historical sites that can be visited such as Esterhazy Castle in Austria and Esterhazy Palace in Hungary.[a]

**Martin Luther Routes: religious history – cultural network and itineraries**

The year 2017 marks 500 years since Martin Luther proposed his 95 theses in Wittenberg, Germany. The National Tourism Board has designed eight routes to display key waypoints of his route, which includes 36 Luther sites. One of the eight routes, called Beyond Borders: Roads to Europe, is transnational, passing through Germany, France and Switzerland. This 820 km route links to other influential reformers from Strasbourg, Basel and Zurich to showcase important Reformation sites.[b]

**Lake Constance (Bodensee) – regional cooperation and cross border initiatives**

Four countries border Lake Constance: Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria, which has been an important tourism destination for over 200 years. With its common history, culture and language, the area was homogeneous with a long history of cooperation in tourism, well before pursuit of the more formal trans-border cooperation. The politically motivated collaboration has therefore had less impact on tourism as cooperation was already in place, although it has enhanced efforts in environmental protection.[c]

**Krkonose/Karkonosze Mountains National Park – cultural cross-border initiative**

On the border of the Czech Republic and Poland, this national park was designated as the Transboundary UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve in 1992 and is part of EUROPARC. Tourism in the park includes religious and cultural sites with around 30 regional museums, wooden log cabins that are local to the area and 20 downhill ski areas. The National Park management has designed a project named "Via Fabrilis – way of craft traditions" to support tourism development and preserve cultural heritage.[d]

**Oranje Route: holiday driving, cycling and hiking – cultural itinerary**

Oranje Route is a holiday driving route of 2,500 km running from Amsterdam through north and central Germany. Passing through the Netherlands and nine German federal states, the route connects towns with links to the House of Orange-Nassau and features palaces, churches, gardens, museums and forts. Starting from Nassau Castle, it focusses on the origins of the Dutch Royal Household and shows the political, cultural and social influence at sites open to visitors. For sports enthusiasts, there are also hiking and cycling trails and water sports available, particularly in the Brandenburg state in Germany with its many lakes.[e]

**European Route of Brick Gothic: holiday driving, history and hiking – cultural network**

Sharing the common heritage of the Hanseatic League and the Vikings, a European Route of Brick Gothic connects Denmark, Poland and Germany. This 1,500 km route showcases Middle Ages architecture with abbeys, town halls, red cathedral towers and mansions where the red brick architecture is a distinctive factor in the buildings. The route offers the opportunity for tourists to also enjoy hiking and biking in natural landscapes.[f]

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8    Eurometropolis (n.d.), *Who are we?* (online), available at: www.eurometropolis.eu/who-are-we/overview.html (01-09-2016).

**Via Sancti Martini – cultural network and itineraries**

Via Sancti Martini was launched in 2009 to promote St Martin through cultural and pilgrimage tourism, and showcases Hungarian-Slovenian heritage through trails encompassing cities in both countries. It is a part of the main Saint Martin of Tours European Cultural Route. Taking Szomathely as the central focal point of the route, the trails include Croatia, Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.[g]

a)   Europarc Federation (n.d.), *Neusiedlersee-Seewinkl & Fertö-Hanság* (online), available at: www.europarc.org/neusiedlersee-seewinkl-ferto-hansag/ (01-09-2016).

b)   Stiftung Luthergedenkstätten in Sachsen-Anhalt (n.d.), *Luther 2017* (online), available at: www.luther2017.de/en/ (02-09-2016).

     German National Tourist Board (n.d.), *Luther Routes* (online), available at: www.germany.travel/en/specials/luther/luther-routes/luther-routes.html (02-09-2016).

c)   Tourist Board of Lake Constance Bodensee (n.d.), *Bodensee Lake Constance* (online), available at: www.bodensee.eu/en (02-09-2016)

d)   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2016), *Ecological Sciences for Sustainable Development* (online), available at: www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/europe-north-america/czech-reppoland/krkonosekarkonosze/ (02-09-2016).

e)   German National Tourist Board (n.d.), *De Oranjeroute - Een vorstelijke vakantie* (online), available at: www.germany.travel/nl/ms/oranjeroute/home-page.html (01-09-2016)

f)   European Route of Brick Gothic (n.d.), *European Route of Brick Gothic* (online), available at: www.eurob.org/index.php/1/4 (01-09-2016)

g)   Via Sancti Martini (n.d.), *Saint Martin European Cultural Route* (online), available at: www.viasanctimartini.eu/en.

Central European states have an opportunity to increase cross-border tourism, through transnational initiatives. NTOs could strengthen and replicate the principles of the Visegrad Four, i.e. to extend shared marketing actions to other central European countries. Also, to develop an increasing number of products that cross borders. A good starting point would be to look at initiatives already under development by individual NTOs; or to those being developed by EGTCs, as shown above.

The region has ample cultural and natural assets, to form the basis of such products. A wide range of examples is included in this handbook and in the accompanying database. Specific *opportunities* would include:

– Further extension and connection of hiking and cycling routes, to link western and eastern Europe;

– Gastronomy networks, for example based on the Pilsner tradition, linking Bavaria and the Czech Republic;

– Exploitation of the rich classical music traditions of Central Europe; and

– Industrial heritage, on the model of the Eurodistrict Saar Moselle.

There is no lack of raw material or ideas in this region. The challenge is to carry them forward on a transnational basis; NTOs and DMOs should look across frontiers for collaborative opportunities, based on their existing products.

**Section 2:**

**A practical guide to developing transnational themed routes**

# Introduction to the practical guide

From here on, the handbook moves from general principles to focus on *practical implementation* through the marketing process stage by stage.

Figure I.1    **Marketing of transnational themes and routes in four steps**

| Step 1: Planning and preparation (chapter 6) |
| --- |

↓

| Step 2: Targeting the customer (chapter 7) |
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| Step 3: Developing the product (chapter 8) |
| --- |

↓

| **Step 4: Taking it to the market (chapter 9)** |
| --- |
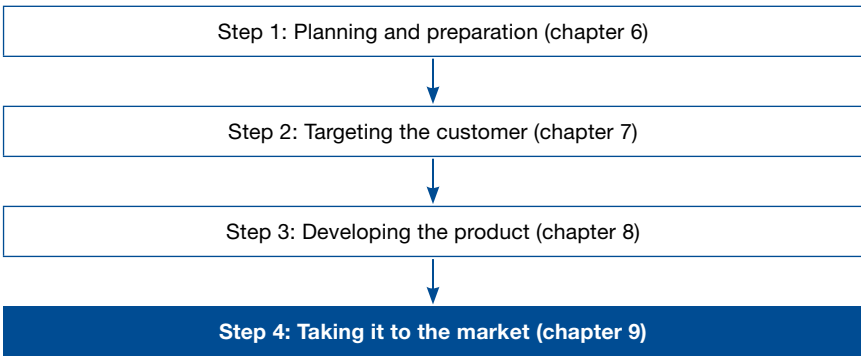
This handbook does not attempt to replicate the excellent manuals and toolkits that have already been published on tourism marketing.[1] It specifically considers principles and activities that are appropriate to tourism on the basis of a **theme** and involving **transnational collaboration.**

The literature on transnational tourism development is limited, but there has been some publication on cross-border collaboration, mostly in the context of environmental areas.

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1    Including the following publications:

World Tourism Organization (2011a), *Policy and Practice for Global Tourism,* UNWTO, Madrid.

World Tourism Organization (2007), *A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management,* UNWTO, Madrid.

World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission (2014), *Handbook on E-Marketing for Tourism Destinations – Fully Revised and Extended Version 3.0,* UNWTO, Madrid;

World Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission (2011), *Handbook on Tourism Product Development,* UNWTO, Madrid.

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Box I.1                **Cross-border cooperation**

Different levels of cooperation have been identified:

1.    Coexistence with minimal levels of partnership;

2.    Cooperation based on initial efforts between adjacent jurisdictions to address common problems and opportunities;

3.    Collaboration where binational relations are stable and well established, and where partners seek to actively work together on development issues; and

4.    Partnerships where the regions are functionally integrated with regard to tourism, with each entity waiving a degree of sovereignty in the name of mutual progress.

Source:    Dallen, J.T. (2000), 'Cross-Border Partnership in Tourism Resource Management: International Parks along the US-Canada Border', in: Bramwell, B. and Lane, L. (eds), *Tourism Collaboration and Partnerships – Politics, Practice and Sustainability,* Channel View Publications, Clevedon, pp. 20–43.

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A transnational marketing strategy can only be envisaged at the third or fourth of the levels mentioned above.

**Key point:**

Transnational tourism means having to work collaboratively, including through compromise; getting the support of partners both of the public and private sector; and delivering a consistent and powerful experience, despite differences of culture, language and administrative practice.

The following chapters are structured according to this step-by-step table:

Table I.1     **The practical guide – step by step**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Chapter 6:**<br>**Planning and preparation** | 6.1 | Pre-assessing the project |
| | 6.2 | Determining the model |
| | 6.3 | Formulating the theme |
| | 6.4 | Situation assessment (including assets and market) |
| | 6.5 | Consultation and team-building |
| **Chapter 7:**<br>**Targeting the customer** | 7.1 | Understanding the market |
| | 7.2 | Positioning and differentiation |
| | 7.3 | Adding visitor value (experiences and storytelling) |
| | 7.4 | Branding |
| **Chapter 8:**<br>**Developing the product** | 8.1 | Keep things simple |
| | 8.2 | Harnessing local energy |
| | 8.3 | Structuring and clustering |
| | 8.4 | Maintaining quality |
| | 8.5 | Building development capacity |
| | 8.6 | Following the market |
| **Chapter 9:**<br>**Taking it to market** | 9.1 | Engaging with the tourism industry |
| | 9.2 | Engaging with the media |
| | 9.3 | Working with tour operators |
| | 9.4 | Choosing the right tools |
| | 9.5 | Social networks |
| | 9.6 | Marketing through events |
| | 9.7 | Capacity building |

# Chapter 6

## Planning and preparation

This chapter corresponds to the **first** of the five stages, from the table on the previous page. It covers:

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**Planning and preparation**

1. **Pre-assessing the project** to be sure it is viable, and likely to succeed;

2. **Determining the model** and the method for development;

3. Ensuring that there is a clear **formulation of the theme:** one that makes sense to all stakeholders;

4. Conducting a **situation assessment,** including an evaluation of the assets of the destinations and of the potential market; and

5. **Consultation and team-building.**

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## 6.1    Pre-assessing the project

Building a sustainable tourism product offer with market appeal is significantly more complex when undertaken transnationally. The first step is to pre-assess the potential and consider its chances of success. The following table provides a useful checklist for assessing viability.

Table 6.1    **Preliminary checklist of key requirements**

| Requirement | Factors for consideration |
|---|---|
| **Strength of the offer** | Does the transnational nature of the initiative strengthen the overall destination offer for potential visitors? |
| **Impact on visitation or stay** | Is it likely to attract additional visitors, lengthen the visitor's stay, and/or increase the level of tourism related expenditure in the destination? |
| **Engagement** | Will it increase the visitor's interaction with the destination? |
| **Local authority benefit** | Does it bring evident benefits for the local authorities involved, those that are working on the ground? |
| **Local tourism operators** | Does it facilitate or enrich the work of local tourism operators, such as accommodation providers, restaurant managers or guides? |
| **Interest for the tourism industry** | Does it make the offer more attractive for tour operators, and for inclusion in tour packages? |
| **Media interest** | Does it provide a stronger story, likely to be picked up by the media, including social media channels? |

Source:    TEAM Tourism Consulting (2016).

If the answer is negative to two or more of the questions in table 6.1, the project leaders should consider repositioning or reshaping the project.

## 6.2    Determining the model

Chapter 4 (see table 4.1) identified six possible models of transnational themed tourism:

1.    Localized, cross-border initiatives;
2.    Itineraries and travel corridors;
3.    Thematic or cultural networks;
4.    Sustainable environmental management;
5.    Promotion of thematic experience; and
6.    Strategic regional cooperation.

Project leaders should identify the model that corresponds to their initiative, ensure that their partners understand it thoroughly, and consider the implications of applying it.

Table 6.2 is useful in partnership discussions, as a way of understanding the options and challenges. The partners should also use the case studies and examples presented in this handbook as a reference, and consider which ones are relevant to their project.

Cases do not always fit neatly into one or other of the categories. For example, Qhapaq Nan and the Via Francigena are itineraries, i.e. *travel corridors,* but they also have rich cultural objectives. The Trail of Tears is an example of a networking initiative, but the notion of route itinerary is also important.

Table 6.2        **Model identification table**

| Model | Goal | Examples | Challenges |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Local cross-border** | Create a cross-border tourism destination. | See European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in annex 2. | Recruiting local associations and businesses to support the initiative. |
| **Itinerary or travel corridor** | Develop an itinerary as a catalyst for tourism. | See following case studies:<br>1.   Iron Curtain Trail chapter 10.5; and<br>2.   Buddhist Circuit in chapter 10.8. | Planning and funding the logistical work of developing the route for the long term. |
| **Thematic or cultural network** | Collaborate at a distance, using a common theme. | See following case study in chapter 10.3: EHTTA and Napoleonic Cities. | Agreeing and implementing a common branding strategy. |
| **Sustainable environmental management** | Market a sensitive natural area across borders. | See following case study in chapter 6.6: Wadden Sea. | Finding resources for marketing and tourism development. |
| **Promotion of thematic experiences** | Promote a theme and lifestyle internationally. | Tasting Europe (ETC). See for more information chapter 4.6. | Getting local businesses to engage and contribute. |
| **Regional cooperation** | Build a strategic international partnership. | See following case study in chapter 8.7: Danube Competence Centre. | Ensuring that high level decisions are implemented on the ground. |

Source:   TEAM Tourism Consulting (2016).

## 6.3     Formulating the theme

The *theme* sits at the heart of the initiative, and is its principal marketing tool. It anchors and positions the whole project. Every interaction with a partner or a customer and every marketing message will be determined and shaped by the theme. In other words, it will be the *basis* of the route or network's brand.

To better understand, consider simply the names of the following:

–    *Taste the Mediterranean* festival (Croatia) – the name itself explains the proposition (www.tastethemediterranean.eu/en/) –, as does the *Cheeses of Europe* website (http://thecheesesofeurope.com/);

–    The *Inca Trail* (South America) and the *Nativity Trail* (Israel, Palestine and Jordan) – the historical references are clear;

–    The *Iron Curtain Cycle Route* (www.ironcurtaintrail.eu/en/) – the itinerary is already explained in the name;

–    *European Greenways* (www.oevv-egwo.org/) – a short, efficient, evocative definition; and

–    The *Ancient Tea Horse Road* (China) – it is about history, travel, tradition and trade.

These names speak clearly and directly to potential visitors. For the most part, they include a term that has a strong cultural echo (Inca, Iron Curtain, etc.) and that locates the initiative. From this initial understanding of the theme, the visitor can progressively discover added levels of meaning.

A clear, evocative name also facilitates communication to stakeholders and partners, and makes the gradual process of collaborative development and marketing easier between transnational partners. These are the functions of a strong brand.

With few exceptions, a strong name is usually the reflection of a well-constructed theme:

–    Thought out;

–    Researched;

–    Discussed;

–    Critiqued and refined; and

–    Agreed between the stakeholders.

### 6.3.1     Theme construction

The process of constructing a transnational theme, and thereby laying the groundwork for the development of the brand, is as follows:

1.    An **initial formulation** of the theme, discussion between partners, and agreement on its interest. At this point, there may be several possible names on the table, or no name at all;

2.    Different aspects of the theme are **researched,** from a cultural, historical and practical point of view. The tourism assets are evaluated, as is the market potential. The output of this initial high-level research will be a **situation analysis;**

3.    The situation analysis is typically followed by **consultation** with stakeholders, in particular with local communities, businesses and residents, who have confirmed its interest; and

4.    A **team** is formed, to develop the theme, representing different areas of expertise. This team will evolve, to become advisers to the project over the long term.

**Key point:**

Time invested in the clear definition of the theme, and the engagement of stakeholders, in all countries involved, will lead to savings in time and human resources, throughout the project.

If there is doubt about the name, it is usually a sign that the concept is still unclear, or that there is disagreement over the concept, among the stakeholders.

The process of formulation is not made easier when the theme is of a highly evocative or emotive nature, as different stakeholders will interpret the theme in different ways. A good illustration is the Slave Routes, described in chapter 10, which is also an excellent example of storytelling.

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Example 6.1          **The Slave Routes theme**

The Slave Routes have been defined by UNESCO as a scientific project aiming to study the deep-rooted causes and methods of the Slave Trade and shed light on its cultural consequences, and the interactions it generated in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, and Europe. The Slave Routes is not a unified transnational tourism initiative but rather a collection of initiatives, under a broad coordinating banner.

UNESCO's engagement resulted from many previous initiatives, publications and discussions. In turn, it has triggered or reinforced many other initiatives: from visits to slave castles or slave markets, to conferences, heritage festivals, pilgrimages and developing teaching/educational materials about the Slave Routes. The creation of a more formal, long-distance network of routes (itineraries) has often been discussed, and may progressively develop over the years.

Source:    United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (n.d.), *The Slave Route* (online), available at:
           www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/ (01-09-2016).

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When there are many stakeholders, it may be difficult to impose the theme, and it may need to emerge progressively from work and discussion.

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Example 6.2          **The Salt Road: clarifying the theme**

The Salt Road is a trading route that used to cross the Alps, from the Mediterranean to the plains of northern Italy. In those days, there was no frontier between the communities on each side of the Alps. Even today, they speak similar dialects and have similar traditions. Traces of the old road remain, and are used as walking trails.

The project partners include the regional authorities on each side, the towns and communes crossed by the path, two National Parks, a history club, several sports federations, representatives of local farmers, and a number of other groups and interests. At preliminary meetings, many different ideas are put forward. The Salt Road will be "a way to rediscover a shared history", "an exceptional product for hikers", "a promotion tool for local and sustainable food", and so on. All of these ideas are interesting but, at first sight, they create confusion: what is the true aim of the project?

It is agreed to do further research, and then for the partners to reconvene, to determine and focus the theme.

There are many other Salt Roads in Europe, of which this is just one example: which adds to the complexity of its branding.

Source:    Beyond (n.d.), *Route de Sel* (online), available at: www.beyond.fr/themes/routesel.html.

## 6.4      Situation assessment, including asset and market evaluation

Although too early for proper market research (see chapter 7), the project leaders and partners will need some assurance that the project will be viable, to secure seed funding and resources. They will need high-level answers to three main questions:

1.    Can this theme be the basis of a strong tourism offer transnationally?

2.    Will it be interesting to professionals and to the public? and

3.    If so, how should it be defined and expressed?

**The asset evaluation needs to cover:**

–      The origins, history and cultural background of the territories, in all the countries concerned;

–      Their ecology, landscape and natural assets;

–      The characteristics of the towns, villages and countryside, in terms of economic activity, demographics and population;

–      The culture, traditions, festivals, gastronomy;

–      The economy of the territories, including its weaknesses and dependencies; and

–      The industries, crafts and skills.

Figure 6.1      **Different aspects of the asset evaluation and how they interact**
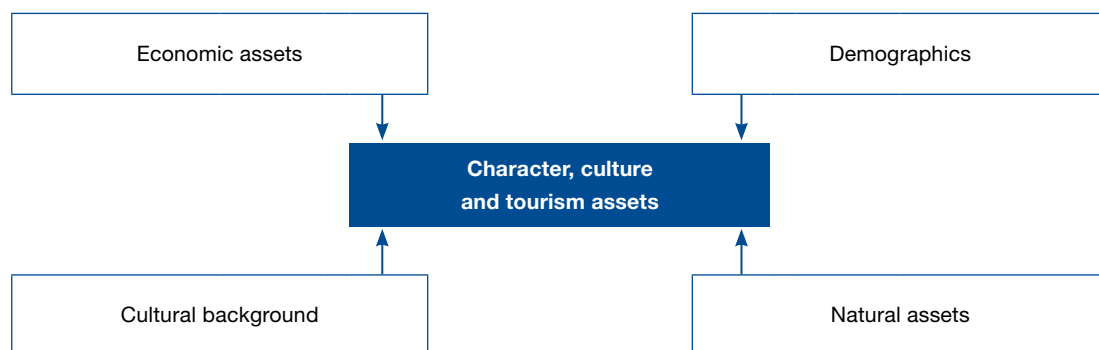


If possible, this research is given to specialist consultants. Where budget is limited, it can be undertaken in part by the stakeholders, according to their skills. A sporting federation may, for example, take on research relating to current activities and potential sporting assets; the economic analysis may be assembled from previous studies; and so on.

**The market evaluation will cover, among other things:**

–      The expected profiles of future visitors – including from the evidence of current visitors;

–      The size and nature of the domestic market – including proximity of major towns and cities;

–      Access to the territories concerned and to key sites, whether by air, road or other means; and

–      Comparison with other transnational initiatives on the same theme.

The output of the research is a **situation assessment,** which is likely to include:

–      A detailed description of the context;

–      Benchmarking against comparable initiatives;

– Conclusions of Asset and Market Evaluations;

– An evaluation of the interest of the project to the future partners and members: how critical it is to their future tourism strategies;

– A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats); and

– Recommendations that emerge from the above regarding tourism development, theming, branding, marketing, and implementation.

**Key point:**

Project leaders and partners should take time developing a convincing Situation Assessment, to ensure that its results and conclusions paint a clear, accurate picture of the context, potential and challenges.

## 6.5    Consultation and team building

The Situation Assessment enables project leaders to develop a clear proposition for the theme, and how it will be developed, marketed and promoted. The proposition should be put to the stakeholders, through **consultation** with representatives of the public and private sectors, at all levels.

Consultation with the public, including residents of the territories concerned, is advisable if the impact of the tourism initiative is significant. For example, a tourism project that can bring significant economic benefits to the populations of the regions concerned.

**Key point:**

The input of local inhabitants, producers and businesses is essential. A consultation exercise will raise awareness and interest, and information should be made permanently available to local stakeholders, through web and social media pages or other means.

Consultation also serves to identify the **resources and skills** that local stakeholders can contribute to the marketing of a transnational theme. To take a simple example: to develop and market a walking trail that crosses a frontier may require the input and support of national and local rambling federations on both sides of the border; of the local mayors and regional administrators; of engineers to guarantee security; of tourism professionals, including accommodation providers, restaurant owners, and guides; of managers of the protected areas that may be crossed by the trail; of hunters or farmers who have rights over the land; of tour operators; and of many others besides.

## 6.5.1     The process of consultation

Consultation is a process of team building. Through meetings and exchanges, the project leaders recruit the stakeholders that can best contribute, and form effective operational teams.

These may be organized into committees, which will include a Marketing or Tourism Development Committee. The committee will include representatives of the different countries involved.

This **Tourism/Marketing Committee** must be multi-skilled, but also capable of working within two (or more) cultures, and forging partnerships on an ad hoc basis: recruiting representatives of the various public and private bodies as needed, to move the project forward.

At a local level – for example between two territories that are geographically close – the project leaders and members of the Marketing Committee will operate through personal networks, through their own contacts and those of friends and colleagues. At a higher, regional or multi-regional level, it will be essential also to have an **Advisory Board** that covers the skills required and has the necessary contacts in each country.

The Council of Europe recognizes the importance of having access to supporting skills. To obtain certification as a *Cultural Route,* and to maintain that status, a project must demonstrate that it has an active **Scientific Committee** – the word *scientific* being something of a misnomer, as it must cover a broad range of skills.

In some cases, such committees are underused, and play a secondary role. They also tend to be heavy on academic members, who are easier to recruit, and light on active professionals. However, if properly used, they can be extremely useful.

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Box 6.1              **The value of a Scientific Committee**

The Routes of the Olive Tree launched in 1998, on the initiative of the Euro Mediterranean Olive Tree Cultural Foundation based in Messenia, Greece. It became a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe in 2005. A key objective is the economic development of *olive tree civilisations,* where heritage and tourism play an important role.

The Association manages projects across the Mediterranean, through partnerships with universities, chambers of commerce and other organizations. The Scientific Committee is an essential management tool, being composed of experts from the following fields: history of civilisations, international relations, archaeology, museology, ethnology, economy, agriculture, tourism and environment.

According to the route's Executive Director "the Scientific Committee is a tool without which we could not operate".

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The marketing strategy and plan for a transnational project will follow standard guidelines for the marketing of tourism destinations, which are an essential complement to this handbook. The primary differences between transnational and intranational destination marketing is the overriding need to establish networks, forge partnerships, and constantly manage complex teams.

**Key point:**

These early steps may seem slow, but the evaluation, assessment, consultation and team building will enable the project leaders to draft their marketing strategy and plan confidently, and to cost that plan.

## 6.6    Case study 5: Step-by-step planning – the Wadden Sea

**What this case illustrates:**

The Wadden Sea is a best-practice example of the development of a transnational environmental area, and its relation to tourism and marketing.

The issues raised will be recognized by many managers of transnational ecological sites. They include:
–    The critical balance between environmental protection and tourism;
–    The importance of raising awareness among the public, and the managers' mission of education;
–    The importance of the brand for coherence in marketing, and of ensuring that all stakeholders respect it; and
–    The interest but also the challenge of World Heritage status.

### 6.6.1    Origin and purpose

The Netherlands, Germany and Denmark have been cooperating to protect the Wadden Sea as an ecological entity since 1978. This was first formalized in 1982 with the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Protection of the Wadden Sea, and more recently updated in 2010. The Guiding Principle of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation is to "achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way"[1].

In 2009 Wadden Sea was inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage List in recognition of the "outstanding universal value" of the area and the more than 30 years of cooperation between a wide range of partners in protecting and managing the site. The *Wadden Sea Plan* serves as the overall management plan for the World Heritage Property (see: www.waddensea-worldheritage.org).

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1    Wadden Sea Secretariat (n.d.), Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (online), available at: www.waddensea-secretariat.org/ (16-07-2016).

## 6.6.2     The theme

"Wadden Sea is the largest unbroken system of intertidal sand and mud flats in the world, stretching for 14,700 km$^2$, with undisturbed geological and ecological processes throughout most of the region. The World Heritage Property includes 11,000 km$^2$ of the area protected and managed as national parks and conservation areas".[2]

## 6.6.3     Marketing work



The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site welcomes 10 million visitors annually. © Beate Ulich/Die Nordsee GmbH.

The area has traditionally been a tourism destination and tourism is a significant contributor to the regional economy. 10 million tourists visit the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination each year with about 50 million overnight stays and 30 to 40 million day-trippers every year, generating an estimated annual turnover of EUR 3 to 5 billion.

With World Heritage inscription, the ministers at the 11th Governmental Wadden Sea Conference in 2010 agreed to develop a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy for the entire area – one where the world heritage status would be the central consideration for the development of tourism.

Balancing tourism development and nature conservation work for the Wadden Sea as a transnational World Heritage Destination takes place through an international project entitled "PROWAD: Protect and Prosper – sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage" which was co-financed by the INTERREG IVB North Sea Region Programme. It has three objectives:
1.    To develop a consistent tourism strategy and an action plan;
2.    To establish a transnational network of local and regional stakeholders; and
3.    To develop sustainable, high quality tourism offers.

To enhance synergies all activities are carried out in close cooperation with local and regional Wadden Sea stakeholders and marketing organization, and the trilateral Task Group Sustainable Tourism Strategy acts as the project advisory group.

In 2014, the Tourism Strategy was published. It has four key objectives:
1.    To ensure all stakeholders have a transnational understanding and appreciation of the values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage property;
2.    To ensure stakeholders have responsibility for, and contribute to, the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value through involvement in tourism management and product development;

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2    Quoted from: Wadden Sea Secretariat (n.d.), Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (online), available at: www.waddensea-secretariat.org/ (16-07-2016), Trilateral Task Group Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2014), *Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.*

3.   To ensure the tourism sector provides consistent communication and marketing, and promotes the high-quality tourism offers of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination; and

4.   To ensure nature conservation, tourism and local communities benefit from the world heritage status.

An *Action Plan 2014–2017*[3] supports implementation of the strategy. The emphasis has been on developing the concept of a transnational Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination and attention has focussed on:

–   **Raising awareness of the World Heritage status** among stakeholders through materials for internal marketing, local events and forums, and extending the official World Heritage website as a central hub for World Heritage information for stakeholders.

–   **Providing stakeholders with the capacity and tools** to manage tourism effectively through training, including courses offered in English as a way of promoting an active use of the English language, and a proposed *qualification* concept.

–   **Developing educational resources** to enhance pride and understanding, including the development of a *World Heritage Teaching Kit – Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea* for teachers which provides material on the Wadden Sea as a natural area and as a model region for sustainable tourism, with insights on the implications of balancing tourism and nature conservation.

–   Involving stakeholders in **tourism planning, management and product development** and developing a consistent visitor management plan for the entire World Heritage Destination, with specific work proposed or currently taking place on:
    –   Integrated services for visitors covering sustainable transport, accommodation, gastronomy products, information and interpretation;
    –   Monitoring systems to assess impact of tourism;
    –   Harmonising visitor research tools;
    –   A code of conduct on tourism activities;
    –   A new visitor information system to ensure a consistent approach; and
    –   Creating video examples of good practice to show how entrepreneurs are offering sustainable nature experiences in all areas of tourism.

–   **Creating a strong trilateral World Heritage brand** as a starting point for the development of quality products, services, and facilities, including:
    –   An interactive Stakeholder Toolkit for Communication and Marketing, including a Brand Manual, fact sheets and briefing slides for a range of communication needs, and social media;
    –   Quality standards for the use of the World Heritage brand in different tourism sectors such as accommodation, catering and regional products, public transportation and tour operation, and information and interpretation;

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3   Wadden Sea Secretariat (n.d.), road map Wadden sea world heritage strategy 2014 – 2017 (online), available at: www.waddensea-secretariat.org/ (16-07-2016).

–   Nature experience offers related to World Heritage themes and content to provide unique experiences while balancing issues of accessibility and vulnerability of places; and

–   Integrated services and packages for visitors covering sustainable transport, accommodation, gastronomy products, information and interpretation.

–   **Developing a joint marketing approach for products, services and facilities** which includes developing a World Heritage portal that connects visitors to bookable offers in cooperation with other distribution partners, business-to-business marketing to promote offers to tour operators and travel agents, and cooperation with the national tourism organizations to integrate the Destination themes into international marketing.

–   **Ongoing joint communication and information activities** to raise the profile and visibility of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination through developing information campaigns with stakeholders, merchandising materials, and an official World Heritage Guide including an App, website and a brochure in four languages; and through enhanced cooperation with the media and the use of social media.

## 6.6.4   Future ambitions and issues

The inscription of the Wadden Sea as a World Heritage Property has acted as a catalyst for the review of trilateral cooperation practices, and the establishment of a more harmonised approach to the development of policies and programmes that consider and include multiple regional, national and international stakeholders, local businesses, visitors, educational institutions, and related associations and pressure groups.

The process has been a journey of discovery – there is no worldwide model for establishing such a partnership programme across different countries and involving a variety of business sectors. As such, the initiative offered the opportunity for specific research to assess the feasibility of establishing a transnational framework for a Wadden Sea World Heritage business cooperation programme.

While there was relatively strong cooperation between institutional conservation groups, the research report[4] highlights the many challenges to building this type of cooperation at a grassroots level, among others:

–   Local communities can be resistant to change and to the concept of external involvement of governments and institutions, particularly when new *rules* appear to diminish recreational and related economic opportunities in favour of conservation values;

–   Municipalities do not necessarily see the value in a wider regional model of collaboration, nor do residents consider themselves a part of the Wadden Sea region, and the sea itself acts as a significant physical and social barrier as entrepreneurs operating on the islands have hardly any contact or cooperation with colleagues from other islands and sub regions of the Wadden Sea; and

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4   inspektour and NL RNT (2015), World Heritage Cooperation Program for Business Partners "Three Countries – One Wadden Sea – One Global Heritage": Feasibility Study, Hamburg and Breda.

–     Joint marketing cooperation is still at a relatively low level since the promotional organizations of the individual islands are mainly concerned about their own tourism business and have yet to show attachment to the *bigger story* of the Wadden Sea.

Progress is being made, and the process highlights the need for intense dialogue with local communities. Opinions are changing, and there is growing understanding that alternative business models exist and that the conservation of natural values is key to the sustainability of new business approaches. Entrepreneurs are increasingly using the natural environment within their sales positioning, and are gradually embracing new opportunities in tourism associated with developing nature-themed experiences.

### 6.6.5    Conclusions and learning points

Even at the institutional level, the *landscape* varies between the three countries (Netherlands, Germany and Denmark) and cooperation is not always straightforward. However, synergies are emerging and there is an expressed need for a stronger bottom up approach to building a cooperation programme for the World Heritage Destination. It will take time to develop a region-wide understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, and ongoing dialogue is essential. The feasibility study suggests that it can take up to ten years to build a strong working cooperation programme.

Despite these issues, which can be expected with a transnational initiative of this nature, the work on developing sustainable tourism is regarded as a worldwide model for other sites supporting the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the new UNESCO Tourism Programme associated with the Convention. The head of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat noted that "This is […] because [the] strategy does not merely focus on making tourism more sustainable, but on how tourism engages in the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value while at the same time benefitting from this engagement."[5]

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5    Tourism and nature conservation strengthen collaboration in the Wadden Sea World Heritage, news release (online), available at: www.waddensea-secretariat.org/news-and-service/news/15-15-05tourism-and-nature-conservation-strengthen-collaboration-in-the-wadden (12-07-2016).

# Chapter 7

# Targeting the customer

This chapter corresponds to the **second** of the four stages presented in the Introduction to the Practical Guide.

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**Targeting the customer**

1. The process of segmenting and thereby **understanding the market;**
2. **Differentiation** of the product, and its positioning;
3. Adding **visitor value,** which includes how **tourism experiences** are developed, and the process of *storytelling;* and
4. **The branding of the tourism product.**

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Compared to the marketing of a single visitor destination, analysis and planning for a route or network requires much greater coordination and collaboration between partners.

The goal is for the visitor to **engage** with every step of the route.[1] It requires an understanding of the customer, to create products that meet or exceed their expectations.

## 7.1    Understanding the market

Any route or transnational network needs to understand visitor likes and interests, and what motivates them to travel, so that the experience can be tailored more effectively.

The project managers will look for motivations that are meaningful to all the partners involved, and will agree to focus their efforts on preferred segments – visitors who share similar characteristics and motivations. Countries such as Canada, Australia, Ireland, France and South Africa that have embraced the concept of experiential tourism have all developed **psychographic approaches** to customer segmentation that gives DMOs and operators an insight into visitors' travel values and those segments that align most closely with the destination *offering.*

If the same psychographic approach is used in all countries, it provides a common language for all the participants.

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1    Kotler, P.; Bowen, J. and Makens, J. (2014), *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism,* 6th Edition, Pearson.

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Example 7.1          **The Explorer Quotient®**

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Destination Canada has undertaken research to look at why people travel and why different types of travellers seek out different experiences. The result has been the development of Explorer Quotient® (EQ) – a market segmentation tool that defines people according to social and travel values, a tool that is used in every Province of Canada. The tool helps users identify and understand their best customers, to better align their market, and product development efforts.

EQ breaks each geographic market into different psychographic groups called Explorer Types. Each is associated with particular characteristics that arise from their social and travel values, travel motivations, and behaviours. The research has become a key tool in the development of experience-based products.

Source:    Destination Canada (n.d.), *Explorer Quotient* (online), available at: http://en.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/explorer-quotient (19-07-2016).

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The cost of such research can be high, and managers of routes and themed tourism products may not have the same resources as NTOs. They can, however, share the costs. This means that they will all get the same information: the key characteristics of their customers, including their motivations, who they travel with, their values and the type of experiences they are seeking.

Knowing what is important to visitors will help all partners and stakeholders, including local businesses, shape more meaningful experiences and develop more effective marketing messages. Above all, they will be able to discuss the results meaningfully, between partners. In the following example, the research has been funded by the European Union.

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Example 7.2          **Analysing cycle tourism**

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According to the German Cyclists' Federation, the economic impact of cycle tourism in Germany is about EUR 9 billion per year, 10% of the tourism market.[a] A 2012 European Parliament commissioned study, indicates that European day and overnight cycle trips are worth over EUR 44 billion per year.[b] Recognizing the value and potential of cycle tourism, the DEMARRAGE (a transnational project with 18 partners from Switzerland, France, Germany and Netherlands) commissioned market research to evaluate the potential of transnational long-distance cycle tourism in partner countries and to identify opportunities for growth.[c] The research recognized that to target and address the market with products or offers, "it is essential to get to know how people think and feel, understand their values, aims in life, ways of living, and their attitudes". Two values-based perspectives were included:

1. **Activity and lifestyle approach** cyclists were segmented according to the nature and preference of their cycling activity. A *sophisticated connoisseur* for example, looks for high quality accommodations, prefers gourmet meals, comfortable flat paths and sometimes cycling in groups. The report notes that while improving service and infrastructure quality, the Rhine Cycle Route should focus on this segment, as they are the highest spending target group with significant economic impact.

2. The **Sinus-Milieus approach** looks at lifestyle, taste and value orientation. The Sinus-Milieus segments for Germany were looked at to identify those that would have an affinity with cycling and the findings were cautiously applied to partner countries. For each segment identified, the report highlights values, characteristics, and level of interest in cycling and notes the segments with the greater level of potential for growing cycle tourism on the Rhine Cycle Route.

The research addressed a range of other issues that contributed to the discrepancy between a high ranking in terms of market awareness of the Rhine Cycle Route, and a much lower ranking for word of mouth recommendation. However, one clear recommendation was the need for a targeted approach to market segmentation and the importance of understanding the characteristics of these markets for product development and marketing communications.

a)   EuroVelo Panel Discussion 'Cycling for All' at the ITB Berlin 2016, available at:
      http://silvercyclists.eu/eurovelo-panel-discussion-cycling-all-itb-berlin-2016/ (19-07-2016).

b)  European Parliament (2012), *The European Cycle Route Network EuroVelo: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Tourism, European Union, Brussels* (online), available at: www.europarl.europa.eu (20-07-2016).

c)  Demarrage (2011), *Rhine Cycle Route: Maret Analysis Report on the Rhine Cycle Route* (online), available at: http://demarrage.eu/uploads/media/DEMARRAGE_Market_Analysis_long_version_EN.pdf (20-07-2016).

As the integration of Big Data and social media continues to move forward, and travel managers have an increasing ability to utilise context-based marketing (i.e. customised marketing content and messages to a traveller within the travel context), the ability to match experiences to expectations and aspirations of travellers will grow.

**Key point:**

A shared investment in market research provides a common platform and language for discussion, which will be valuable throughout the project.

## 7.2    Positioning and differentiation



At Riga market, local experiences help to create a distinctive offer. © Jackie Ellis.

A destination or route cannot be everything to everyone. However, it can be distinctive in the marketplace.

Distinctiveness emerges from the work described in chapter 1 to define and clarify the theme. It is refined through consultation and planning, described in the previous chapters. It enables communities and businesses in all the countries involved to begin developing experiences that are coherent with the theme and that make the route or destination interesting and meaningful to the target markets.

This work can be summarised in a positioning statement, which sets out the essence of the product:

"The Positioning Statement offers a point of connection for your whole region to hook into – consumers, tourism operators, conservation organizations, media and government.

"Large-scale market research at an international level would have been prohibitively expensive not long ago. Easy online access to data makes market research easier and more affordable."

Australia's National Landscape Program (2012)

Defining this positioning successfully is key to creating a hierarchy of visitor experiences within the destination, ranging from "iconic", "signature" or "must see" experiences and attractions, to supporting experiences, such as local foods and gastronomy. The following trans-state example illustrates what is involved:

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Example 7.3        **Australia's National Landscapes Program**

The programme is led in partnership by Tourism Australia and Parks Australia. It promotes Australia's high quality visitor experiences in 16 National Landscapes; increasing the value of tourism to the regional economies; and enhancing the role of protected areas in those economies. A Positioning Statement has been developed for each of the 16 National Landscape which sets out the *emotional essence* of the landscape. The landscape positioning guidebook is designed to help stakeholders in identifying and showcasing their *points of difference.* On this basis, stakeholders worked together to develop Experience Development Strategies for each designated area.

Some National Landscapes, including the Green Cauldron National Landscape, have produced Experience Development Workbooks to help operators and tourism related businesses understand how to build on their positioning and how to create, enhance and market experiences that support the underlying proposition.

The Great Barrier Reef positioning guidebook notes: "this […] Landscape Positioning is not about an advertising campaign, a new logo or even a tag line. Positioning is the engine that drives the way you offer and deliver your product […]. It permeates all experiences, creative approaches, communication and marketing […]. The more people (directly or indirectly) who have some involvement projecting the positioning, the quicker your target audience will understand what it is that makes your Landscape unique".

Source:    Australian Government, (2012b), *The Great Barrier Reef: A Guide Book to Making the Most of Your Landscape Positioning* (online), available at:
           www.ecotourism.org.au/assets/the-great-barrier-reef-a-guide-book-to-making-the-most-of-your-landscape-positioning-1.pdf (19-07-2016).

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## 7.3    Adding visitor value

This work of positioning and differentiation allows the partners of a transnational initiative to add value to the tourism experience. This is a step-by-step process, through progressive strengthening and enriching of the theme.

Traditionally, a tourism route might focus on the development of its various assets, which might include cultural monuments, landscapes or natural areas; and on developing infrastructure to manage access and to serve the visitor. They might then offer activities and services, such as boat or cycle hire facilities.

A new shift is now taking place, focussing on **experience** and offering, for example, unique ways to connect and engage with local people and gain insight into local lifestyles, cultural heritage and *sense of place.* These can include unique, more intimate, customised experiences that reflect traveller values and aspirations, or larger cultural events and festivals that reflect the personality of the territories concerned. Table 7.1 shows how different transnational initiatives might add value.[2]

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2    David Ward-Perkins & Associates (2015).

Table 7.1          **Examples of added value by transnational initiatives**

| Transnational initiative | Base offer | Added value | Engagement |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Walking route** | Signage, maps and markers | Services | Reception in local communities |
| **Multi-country cultural theme** | Cultural attractions to visit | Events to see and enjoy | Active participation in activities |
| **Wildlife park** | Access to wildlife (e.g., safaris) | Experiences (e.g., night under the stars) | Involvement in environmental work |
| **International gastro-tourism guide** | Descriptions of food and restaurants | Menus, online booking | Interaction with chefs and bloggers |

As destinations and individual tourism businesses advance along the visitor value spectrum, the experience becomes increasingly differentiated from its competitive set and visitors' willingness to pay a premium for a personalised experience increases.

**Key point:**

The potential to boost the value of the visit lies in every product and every destination. It may not require additional investment: just a repositioning of the product.

To further understand how visitor value can be increased, it is important to look at the **creation of experiences, personalisation,** and the art and science of **storytelling.**

### 7.3.1    Creating experiences

An extensive tourism product, such as a route, can create great customer experiences.[3] The experiences will be:

– A source of long-term competitive advantage;
– Differentiated by stimulating emotion;
– Enabled through inspirational leadership and facilitated by culture;
– Revenue generating, and can reduce costs; and
– An embodiment of the brand.



The world's most northerly vineyard in Telemark, Norway – such places are popular settings for delivering personal experiences. © Jackie Ellis.

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3    Shaw, C. (2005), *Revolutionize Your Customer Experience,* Palgrave Macmillian.

| Box 7.1 | **What is an *experience*?** |
|---|---|

"An *experience* is what your visitor gains from the combination of activities, settings and personal interactions they participate in when they visit your destination and your product. The kinds of things that mean they will post a photo on Facebook or Tweet about it straight away and still be talking about it at parties and social gatherings for months or even years later."

Tourism & Events Queensland (2015),
Hero Experiences Guidebook: Creating Memorable Visitor Experiences

"It's no longer just about trekking to Buddhist monasteries in Bhutan or sipping Malbec in Mendoza. It's about how we experience those places viscerally, and how they change us when a monk or winemaker provides a new way to understand our world."

SKIFT The Rise of Experiential Travel 2014

Tourism Northern Ireland has developed a valuable overview to illustrate the difference between buying a traditional tourism *product* and buying an *experience*.[4]

Table 7.2       **Buying a *product* versus buying an *experience***

| **Buying a *product***<br>(e.g., a hotel room, a museum pass or hiring a bike) | **Buying an *experience***<br>(e.g., a family-friendly interactive exhibition, a cycling and whiskey tour) |
|---|---|
| Focus on what it does | Focus on how it makes you feel |
| Is what you buy | Is what you remember |
| Bought as a single activity | Stimulates interactions with wider communities and businesses, to deliver authentic experiences |
| Is what it is – no links to anything else | Promotes whole geographic areas around themes |
| Usually a standalone offer and price driven | Driven by value and can attract a premium price |
| Limits the stay to the single activity. Little opportunity for spending | Lots to see and do and so likely to stay longer and spend more through creative cross selling |
| Can be impersonal and feel cold and uncaring about them | Is usually warm, personal and interactive |
| Is easily forgotten once the activity has ended | Creates strong memories and associations |
| Not generally talked about | Encourages word of mouth recommendations and opportunities for social media |

Source:    Tourism Northern Ireland (2013), *A Practical Guide to Experiential Tourism in Northern Ireland: Overview Report* (online), available at: www.tourismni.com/globalassets/grow-your-business/toolkits-and-resources/insights--best-practice/insights-practical-guide-to-experiential-tourism.pdf (02-09-2016).

In working with businesses and communities along a route or within the wider themed destination, the following checklist for transnational routes and networks is a useful starting point.

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4    Although this is not a transnational example, it is particularly clearly expressed.

Table 7.3    **Developing a visitor experience transnationally – memorable, engaging and inspirational**

| Goal | Points to be considered |
| --- | --- |
| **Aligned to the route or network's proposition** | Does the experience bring the umbrella theme to life in some unique or exciting way? |
| | Does the experience make your route or network truly unique? |
| **An inspirational story** | Does the experience: |
| | – Feature an inspirational story or theme? |
| | – Tell local stories – of personalities, customs, cultural or natural heritage, along the route? |
| **Engaging and authentic** | Does the experience provide visitors with the opportunity to interact with and learn about your territories? |
| | Is the experience authentic? Is it characterised by quality? |
| | Is the experience multi-sensory and does it evoke emotion? |
| | Does the experience make visitors feel like they are part of the local life, in all of the sites and cities of the route or network? |
| **Added extras – a "backstage pass"** | Does the experience: |
| | – Make your visitors feel truly special? |
| | – Feature an element of surprise or a special way to engage with visitors that may not be available to the general traveller? |
| **Provide lasting memories** | Will the experience provide lasting memories and inspire visitors to talk about the experience online and with friends? |

Source:    adapted from: Tourism and Events Queensland (2015), *Hero Experiences Guidebook: Creating Memorable Visitor Experiences* (online), available at: https://teq.queensland.com/~/media/d8ab2695794b4627a67ab7aa1ebc9863.ashx?la=en-au&vs=1&d=20150717T155549 (01-09-2016).

## 7.3.2    Personalising experience

Experience is personal, and there is increasing recognition that different visitors may live experiences differently.

The following Buddhist Circuits example shows how the managers of a transnational theme can work with different interpretations, using them to enrich the experience of all visitors.

Box 7.2    **The Three pillars of the Buddhist Circuits**

The Buddhist Circuits are positioning the theme (or brand) to different tourism segments on the basis of three positioning pillars, as seen in the diagram below. These can be used by the local tourism authorities, religious bodies and tour operators as a basis to build products for their markets.

According to the Buddhist Circuits strategy: "Expanding tourism along the circuit involves occupying, promoting, and developing a market position that appeals to a spectrum of potential visitors and capitalizes on the variety of resources and assets offered in the area."

**In the footsteps of the Buddha**

| Pilgrimage | Mind, body and spirit | Ancient heritage |
|---|---|---|
| – In the Buddha's footsteps<br>– Buddhism's four holiest sites<br>– Origins of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha<br>– Worshipping and offering<br>– Opportunity to learn and get deeper understanding<br>– Support for monasteries | – Engage in health and wellness activities such as meditation, yoga and healthy eating<br>– Meditation and self-reflection at Buddhist sites<br>– Reflect and reconsider priorities and lifestyles | – Stupas and temples<br>– Art, sculpture and relics<br>– Buddha's life story and locations<br>– Local traditions and culture |

**Pillar 1 – Pilgrimage:**

The religious significance of the area is high for Buddhists. The Buddha spent his entire life here, and the Dharma and the Sangha originated here.

**Pillar 2 – Mind, body and spirit:**

The character and ambience of the sites are the perfect environment to engage in therapeutic practices like meditation and self-reflection, yoga and healthy eating.

**Pillar 3 – Ancient heritage:**

Many of the circuit sites and relics date back as far as 300 B.C.E. and the location of the circuit in and around the historic Ganges Valley provides for an exceptional experience of ancient history, traditions, and architecture.

**Key point:**

*Personalisation* is not a question of developing and managing all possible interpretations of the product, but of identifying the primary motivations of visitors, and of keeping the positioning open to different interpretations, while ensuring coherence between them.

### 7.3.3    Storytelling

Themes are often stories in themselves. One can take just three examples, where the stories are already in the titles: Trans-Siberian Railway; Camino del Gaucho and Roman Emperor and Danube Route. Each of these titles evokes a narrative.

Cultural routes in particular are likely to be based on a story (history, mythology or iconic concept) that has captured the imagination. In other types of transnational themed tourism (e.g., Tasting Europe or the International Peace Park), there is also a rich potential for storytelling.

In all cases, the theme provides the framework for developing and recounting stories, which allow travellers to connect with tradition, local culture, history and the natural world. Stories bring destinations to life and can transform them. They make tourism experiences easy to relate to, to talk about during the visit and to remember and pass on once the visit is over.

Example 7.4        **Stories along the road**

The Vennbahn Cycle Route uses story telling as a core element of the online trip-planning phase. The history of each section of the trail is portrayed through the use of customised cartoon illustrations and introduces the cyclist to the underlying stories associated with the converted railway cycling routes.

Complementary products are now being developed that includes audio tours and a new Vennbahn film "Vennbahn – A Path of Transmission" that won the Golden City Gate 2015 prize at ITB for the category of TV commercials. This film was developed in partnership with the East Belgium Tourism Agency and presents an emotionally charged and visually intense view of the former railway's history and its modern destiny as a cycle route, criss-crossing three frontiers – a tale of transmitting something of value from one generation to another (see: www.vennbahn.eu). The 125 km trail is on a EuroVelo route, and passes through Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Example 7.5        **Stories of tragedy**

The Trail of Tears was created to "preserve the story, the routes, and support the associated sites that commemorate the Cherokees' forced migration". Visitors travel one of the many routes taken by the Cherokee people, and learn the stories and history of those affected by the migration.

They can meet with members of the modern Cherokee nation, to hear how the memory of the Trail of Tears has affected and shaped their community. Visitors can join in Trail of Tears commemorative walks with the Cherokee Nation, or activities such as the yearly cycle or motorcycle ride.

Note: Fully developed in chapter 10.

As these examples show, telling the story of a theme or destination not only adds value to the visitor experience, but can be the entire basis for differentiation, in other words of the unique brand.

**Key point:**

Every journey is a story, with a developing plot and a beginning, a middle and an end. Every traveller or visitor will be looking to relate to and integrate the stories of the places, landscapes and sites that they see. If this connection can be made easier, the experience of the customer will always be the richer.

## 7.4        Branding

The core of the branding work resides in the theme formulation. Chapter 5.3 covers this area in detail.

Once the theme of the route or network is developed, the brand can be constructed on the same principles as any tourism product brand;
–    Clear formulation of the **brand essence:** what it represents, for whom and how;
–    Agreement by all key stakeholders on the **values and key messages;**
–    Development of a **brand strategy,** including how the brand will be expressed within the partnership and to the outside world, including through words and imagery; and
–    Progressive **rollout** of the brand, through documents, meetings and other events.

These principles are well covered in any publication on tourism branding. An example of strong identity development is the Cultural Route Destination Napoleon, detailed in annex 1 of this handbook.

## 7.5        Case study 6 – Sacred sites in the Kii Mountain Range

**What this case illustrates:**
This short case study is a best-practice example of the managed and structured development of a partnership of world-class heritage sites, including over their marketing.

### 7.5.1        Origin and purpose

In Japan, the Kii Peninsula has attracted pilgrims to the sacred sites of Yoshino and Omine, Kumano Sanzan and Koyasan since the 11th or 12th centuries. Gaining its place in the UNESCO World Heritage Site List in 2004, the site attracts 15 million annual visitors.

### 7.5.2        The theme

The Kumano Kodo pilgrimage routes, once used extensively by the imperial family, preserve a highly authentic experience which reflects the fusion of Shinto and Buddhism. Consisting of streams, rivers and waterfalls, the region enables tourists to connect with nature, hike the selected routes and visit sacred temples and shrines.

### 7.5.3    Marketing work

The Tourism Bureau created a reservation system and integrated this into their own website for easier access by potential tourists. The Kii Peninsula pilgrimage routes can be merged with accommodation, transport and guides and purchased online. There are detailed insights on the route, duration, choice of shuttles, guides, information on weather and Japanese holidays (and therefore expected level of visits), walking degree of difficulty, maps and a selection of itinerary highlights. In addition, there are suggestions on local cuisine and day by day journey details including elevation levels and transport.[5] The website contains brochures on local dishes with their pictures, as well as their corresponding English names.

Although not a transnational route, the initiative has a joint programme with *Camino de Santiago* (Saint James' Way). Visitors who have walked both pilgrimage routes are recognized as a *Dual Pilgrim,* receiving a pin badge and the option to be featured on a dedicated website which recognizes their achievement, providing visitors have registered themselves at either the visitor centre Turismo de Santiago in Spain or in Tanabe City in Japan. The programme creates a means to share stories and celebrate spiritual pilgrimages and the unity of civilisations through completion of these two UNESCO World Heritage Routes.[6]

### 7.5.4    Future ambitions and issues

Increasing numbers of English speaking tourists, particularly from Australia, the United States of America and Britain, are visiting the region to walk one of the trails in three to four days. This requires appropriate infrastructure including efficient translation of trail signage since literal translations of Japanese to English requires an appreciation that prospective tourists may not have of Japanese history. The increase in inbound tourist numbers, particularly after the UNESCO inscription, means the Tourism Bureau and locals are vigilant in monitoring any negative effects.[7] The objective is to concentrate on developing sustainable tourism, where visitors are encouraged to respect local history and culture.

### 7.5.5    Conclusions and learning points

This case is remarkable for the care that has gone into the tracing and maintenance of the routes and services for visitors, supported by local stakeholders, including individual landowners.

As a result, the experience for the visitor is seamless, and the walks are a true *meditation* on the landscape and heritage.

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5    Kumano Travel (n.d.), *Kumano Kodo Trek* (online), available at:
     www.kumano-travel.com/index/en/action_ModelCourseDetail_Detail/id58 (12-07-2016).

6    Spiritual Pilgrimages (n.d.), *World Heritage Pilgrimage Routes* (online), available at: www.spiritual-pilgrimages.com/ (12-07-2016).

7    Chow, V. (2014), 'Numbers aren't everything: the Japanese way of handling tourism at UNESCO world heritage site Kumano Kodo', 8 September 2014, South China Morning Post (online), available at: www.scmp.com (12-07-2016).

# Chapter 8

## Developing the product: the keys to success

This chapter corresponds to the *third* of the four stages presented in the introduction to the practical guide. There are five essential steps to *developing and marketing* a transnational initiative. They can be summarised as follows:

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**Developing the product**

1.  Keep things simple;

2.  Harnessing local energy;

3.  Structuring and clustering;

4.  Maintaining quality;

5.  Building development capacity; and

6.  Following the market.

---

When many partners are involved, overcomplicating the concept and processes is a constant risk. For this reason, this chapter begins with a recommendation to **keep things simple.**

## 8.1    Keeping things simple

Previous sections have described the difficulties of creating a strong brand across frontiers, and the risks of misinterpretation. The case of the Buddhist Circuits demonstrates the value of maintaining certain simplicity and openness in the way the theme is expressed and developed.

This same principle applies to the project vision and plan. In general, project leaders should not be afraid of simplifying these in their initial communication to stakeholders.

Stakeholders in the partner countries will need time to understand and absorb the proposition and their role in it. If the concept is simple, it is more likely that they will engage with it, and begin to identify opportunities that concern them.

A good example is the Great Lighthouses of Ireland, where the initial idea (visiting lighthouses) is very basic. Little by little, the stakeholders concerned have enriched the idea, extending it to exploration of the heritage of the sea, the life and stories of local communities, and other themes.

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Example 8.1        **The Great Lighthouses of Ireland**

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The Great Lighthouses of Ireland give visitors the opportunity to learn and experience the history of the lighthouses of Ireland , as well as to hear the stories of the lighthouse keepers. Visitors will get to learn about technology used in modern lighthouses and have the opportunity to explore the surrounding coasts and coastal towns. In addition, twelve of the lighthouses offer accommodation and provide an unforgettable experience for visitors. Many of the lighthouses offer tours by local employees or by current lighthouse keepers.

**Key point:**

When launching the concept, the project leaders should avoid the temptation to over-explain the theme and the plan, but let stakeholders discover it, and enrich it with their own proposals.

## 8.2    Harnessing local energy

The Great Lighthouse case is one of several in the handbook to mention *local stakeholder engagement:* the active support from communities and small businesses at grass roots level. This kind of engagement is essential, if the project is to gain traction.

Project leaders may not have the time or resources to be out in the field, stirring up enthusiasm in every site and location. This has to be the work of local groups, associations and entrepreneurs:

– In the case of *outdoor routes and trails,* it should be the work of hiking or cycling clubs, backed by their Federations;

– In the case of *heritage clusters or circuits,* cultural groups and local tourism businesses should take the lead;

– In the case of *natural and rural areas,* environmental groups and farming cooperatives have a role to play; and

– In *all cases,* schools, church groups, community leaders and NGOs can work toward generating enthusiasm.

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Example 8.2        **The Columban Way**

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From Northern Ireland to Italy, passing through the Republic of Ireland, Brittany, eastern Burgundy, Switzerland, Lombardy and the Appenines, groups and associations are dedicated to the memory of the Irish monk Columbanus, who crossed the continent in the sixth century, confronting kings and founding monastic communities on the Celtic model. Every year, there are conferences and festivals in the different regions, school trips, exchanges between choirs; and increasing numbers of visitors, travelling between the sites, including on foot.

Information has always been managed at a town and community level, through word of mouth, posters in the street and low-cost newsletters and fliers, with support provided by the local tourist offices. The festivals are high-points in each town's life, and conferences and lectures are well subscribed, with active participation by local artists, historians and others. Paradoxically, this very effective grass-roots communication has been a handicap in developing a transnational marketing strategy. The managers of the local association are not accustomed to collaborating with other towns, let alone in other countries and in a foreign language.

Step by step, the barriers are breaking down. The Columban Facebook page now has thousands of Friends. Driving, walking and cycling routes are being planned, to cross Ireland from north to south, with extensions under discussion to Brittany. A Scientific Committee has assembled the top scholars of Europe, with representatives of all countries involved. Tourism authorities and tour operators are now showing interest.

It is a slow process, but the roots are deep. The stakeholders have never been dependent on outside funding, so their organizations are resilient. The Columban Way, once constructed, will probably outlast many other, more spectacular initiatives.

The Columban Way is a candidate for certification as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe.

Source:    The Columban Way (n.d.), *The Colomban Way* (online), available at: www.thecolumbanway.eu (02-09-2016).

The reverse side of the coin is that these cultural, sporting, environmental, charitable or commercial groups have their own agendas, which may not match the project leaders' tourism objectives.

Education and training is therefore needed, for local stakeholders to understand the principles of sustainable tourism; and to build trust between the project leaders and themselves.

**Key point:**

An *authentic* experience is one that corresponds to the vision of the local communities involved. This is facilitated if – as in the example above – groups or associations already represent and promote the cultural theme, and can be involved as drivers of the transnational project.

An important source of energy is commercial incentive, in particular when local businesses are involved. In some cases, the partners are highly aware of the commercial value of tourism, and of the economic benefits it can bring to its members.

Example 8.3        **The Chocolate Way**

The Chocolate Way celebrates the cultural heritage of chocolate in Europe. It is supported by associations of chocolate artisans and producers, academics, museums, chocolate boutiques and cafés, municipalities and tourism boards – a mix of public and private organizations. Partners include the commune of Perugia (famous for the Perugina company), the Confédération des Chocolatiers Confiseurs (France), Museo del Cioccolato di Modica and Chocolaterie Defroidmont, etc. For private businesses, the Chocolate Way has the potential to become a powerful marketing platform.

**Key point:**

Commercial self-interest is a powerful engine, and can accelerate the development of tourism if it can be harnessed. There may be an initial distrust of tourism businesses that are "just out to make money", but ultimately it is in the interest of those business to maintain and enhance the quality of the visitor experience, and the objectives of the public and private sector can be aligned through dialogue.

## 8.3     Structuring and clustering

An advantage of working with grass-roots organizations is the rich content that will emerge. The role of the project leaders is to structure this material, in line with the agreed marketing strategy.

The primary tool for structuring tourism at a transnational level is the route (or road, way, circuit, etc.), a very broad concept that covers many types of transnational initiative.

Another important concept is the *cluster*. Working together to create clusters of experiences can significantly strengthen a destination or route at any level – whether local or across a wider geographic area.

> "Clustering refers to aligning and marketing products together to present a rich and diverse palette of experiences that greatly enhance the competitive offering of a destination. It is all about bringing together complementary activities to form compelling and unique experiences".[1]

An example of clustering is Turas Columbanus, an initiative that crosses the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is a local branch of the Columban Way described in this section 8.2.

Figure 8.1     **Map of Turas Columbanus – clustering along the route**



© Paddy Byrne.

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1     Tourism and Events Queensland, (2015), *Hero Experiences Guidebook: Creating Memorable Visitor Experiences* (online), available at:
https://teq.queensland.com/~/media/d8ab2695794b4627a67ab7aa1ebc9863.ashx?la=en-au&vs=1&d=20150717T155549 (01-09-2016).

Turas Columbanus is a tourism route that promotes the early pagan and Christian heritage of the central and rural areas of Ireland. The distance from south to north could be driven in a day. However, the route groups key heritage assets in clusters (circles on the map), thereby encouraging slower travel, with stop-offs along the way.

Clustering generally results in increases to the length of stay, expenditure, and the level of visitor satisfaction. Clustering will also generate additional benefits for businesses through an enhanced ability to network, share information, market cooperatively, and work collectively for trade-focussed activity.[2]

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| Example 8.4 | **Eastern Danube Tourism Cluster: the Romania – Bulgaria cross border area** |

The Eastern Danube Tourism Cluster aims to work like a DMO, with key tourism stakeholders (county councils, hoteliers) as its members. Main priorities include:

– Enhanced accessibility to public and alternative transport, including cycling, to travel to protected areas;

– Financial incentives for locals providing accommodation for ecotourists;

– Environment protection; and

– Training (language courses, technology training).

The Eastern Danube Tourism Cluster Association is tasked with implementing the marketing plan, with an emphasis on promoting locations and attractions. It will play a leading role in deciding strategic marketing products for selected markets; will measure the effectiveness of marketing activities to provide tourism professionals with tools for product development; and acts as an access facilitator for travellers wishing to experience tourism offers across the border. A logo for use by all partners is in development. Press releases and e-newsletters will be distributed to specific markets, in line with campaigns designed by the regional and local tourism associations.

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**Key point:**

However interesting an individual attraction, its profile will be raised and likelihood to visit increased by grouping with other attractions, according to a common theme, and in a coordinated manner.

## 8.4   Maintaining quality

Although local enthusiasm is the essential driver for the project, it brings the risk of diversion and dispersion. Each stakeholder may understand the project differently, injecting their own hopes and concerns; and commercial operators will tend to use the brand as a vehicle for their own purposes.

A transnational initiative can be seen as a *label,* representing quality, accompanied by standards, rules and guidelines, governing its use.

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2   World Tourism Organization (2007), *A Practical Guide to Tourism Destination Management,* UNWTO, Madrid.

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Example 8.5          **TATRA – Taste of the Trappists**

The International Trappist Association is composed of 20 Trappist monasteries in Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Italy and the United States of America, and promotes products produced inside the abbeys. Only these communities have the right to use the trademark which primarily covers beers, but also cheeses, liqueurs and other products.[a]

To earn and maintain the label of Authentic Trappist Product, certain key criteria must be respected:

– Goods must be produced inside the abbey and under supervision of monks;

– Work must respect the values of monastic life;

– Product marketing must be in accordance with Cistercian lifestyle; and

– Any additional profits from sales are to be used for the Trappist community and for social work.

a)    Tastes of Abbeys (n.d.), The Trappist Order (online), available at: www.tastesofabbeys.com (19-07-2016).

      Trappist (n.d.), Protecting the "TRAPPIST" name (online), available at: www.trappist.be (19-07-2016).

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Developing such standards is more important for transnational initiatives, to reassure visitor to different countries of consistent quality.

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Example 8.6          **Vignobles et Découvertes**

The French label *Vignobles et Decouvertes* was launched in 2009, to promote tourism on the Iter Vitis route.[a] The label showcases the collective brand *Vignobles et Decouvertes,* which has been attributed for three years as a touristic and wine oriented destination by the Ministers of Tourism and Agriculture upon recommendation of the Superior Council of Wine Tourism.[b]

a)    Iter Vitis is a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe. See Council of Europe (n.d.), The Iter Vitis Route (online), available at: http://culture-routes.net/fr/routes/the-iter-vitis-route (19-07-2016).

b)    Vignobles et decouvertes en Touraine (n.d.), *Vignobles et Decouvertes* (online), available at: www.vignoblesetdecouvertesentouraine.com/ (19-07-2016).

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In both of the above examples, the restrictions imposed by the label increase the value of the product, and act as a tool for promotion.

The specific quality processes to be followed will depend on the type of transnational product, but should include the following:

– Production by the project steering group of a **standards manual,** for reference by all partners;

– **Communication** of standards to all partners and supporters in a cascading fashion: to the principal stakeholders, who will then communicate to the ground-level operators, in their own terms and language;

– **Training** in quality management provided to local stakeholders; and

– Creation of a **quality monitoring committee**, with representatives of each country, reporting to the steering group and board.

**Key point:**

The managers of any transnational tourism initiative, whether as a route or a network, should impose quality standards of practice and communication such as these, backed by documented tools and published guidelines.

## 8.5     Building development capacity

In their development phase, transnational initiatives are fragile. Without constant reminder, it will be easy for the partners to revert to their traditional ways of administration and marketing. Every step should, therefore, be accompanied by actions to increase awareness and by training programmes and workshops, so that stakeholders become ever more comfortable with the project and programme.

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Example 8.7     **Via Dinarica**

The Via Dinarica hiking trail crosses seven Baltic countries, connecting communities of the Dinaric Alps through a diversified tourism product. This grass roots initiative was modelled after the Appalachian Trail, United States of America, that was first developed and promoted by local stakeholders, then grew to include other regional and cross border tourism bodies, communities and stakeholders. Strong partnerships between local and regional stakeholders are essential in this region, as many countries lack defined tourism strategies and resources for tourism development.

The Via Dinarica is a platform for each country to promote their products under one brand, which they would otherwise struggle to promote individually. The project leaders work with the stakeholders, to ensure that they understand the opportunities and are taking advantage of them. Local workshops and training programmes focus on practical benefits, for example how the sharing of resources can lead to the development and marketing of regional products which are more competitive and attractive to foreign markets and businesses.

Source:     Via Dinarica Alliance (n.d.), *Via Dinarica* (online), available at: www.via-dinarica.org/ (02-09-2016).

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Thanks to such programmes, little by little, local entrepreneurs come on board, and their success serves as a model to others.

The key is to provide evidence on the ground. The more local communities see signs of the developing project, the more likely they are to get involved. This evidence may come, very simply, from signage that the project leaders place in the areas concerned. It is still more convincing if the signage is managed by the local stakeholders.

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Example 8.8     **Via Francigena (Cultural Route of the Council of Europe)**

The Swiss and French stretches of the Via Francigena were mapped out between the national Via Francigena associations and the hiking associations. Members of the associations work with national and local federations to signpost the trail. The English section of the path, from Canterbury to Dover, was signposted by the County of Kent in cooperation with local rambling associations.

Communities along the Via Francigena are encouraged to take innovative initiatives with regard to festivals and greeting of visitors.

Note:     Pilgrimage trails of the Kii Mountains are presented also in chapter 7.

Such grass-roots partnerships are the best guarantee of long-term success. Local communities and associations can be difficult to bring on board, but once convinced of the value and interest, they can be counted on to pursue the work.

**Key point:**

Creating clear evidence of the project, including local events, signage and interaction with visitors, gives a transnational project visibility. To be sustainable, such evidence should preferably be delivered by local stakeholders.

## 8.6    Following the market

As for any tourism product, a transnational initiative should address a known market, identified in the process of segmentation, differentiation and positioning described in chapter 5.

That market will evolve, in size and character, and the project leaders will need to keep track of relevant market trends. For example, many transnational initiatives involve rural areas, where expectations about accommodation have changed significantly over the last ten years. Where the demand used to be for small hotels and classic campsites, it may now increasingly be for bed and breakfasts and self-catering units. Similarly, in rural areas, new markets may emerge – for example on the back of new, fashionable outdoor sports, or a growing reputation for excellent local food.

Very few transnational initiatives have sufficient budget to undertake full-blown market research, but this should not prevent project leaders from keeping close watch on the market through:
– Access to market data and surveys undertaken by the supporting NTOs and DMOs, and publicly available research;
– Statistics and qualitative data collected by local attractions, which can be indicative of larger trends;
– Ongoing monitoring of front-line tourism businesses in the field, such as guides, shopkeepers and accommodation providers – small businesses that will be highly sensitive to new developments; and
– Occasional focus groups, held either with local businesses or with tourists, to dig more deeply into changing motivations.

**Key point:**

Project leaders should see their transnational project and products as living, organic entities, and the corresponding market as evolving and changing accordingly. They may not have the means to undertake *serious* market research but, with some creative thinking, they have the means to follow the market and anticipate the trends.

## 8.7      Case study 7: Building networks – The Danube Route

**What this case illustrates:**

This case is primarily interesting for its complexity: the many countries involved and the multitude of stakeholders to be engaged along the way.

It shows how the Danube Competence Centre has approached the problem: step by step; and how it is possible to gradually obtain critical mass in such an ambitious project.

### 8.7.1      Origin and purpose

In 2010, the European Commission adopted a cooperative EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). This macro-regional strategy is based on three pillars: connecting the region; protecting the environment; building prosperity and strengthening the region.[3]

Under the first pillar – connecting the region – the EUSDR identifies "the need to help people to meet people through the sharing of culture and tourism" (Priority Area 3 of the EUSDR). To advance this priority, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung – BMZ) commissioned the international cooperation agency (Deutsche Gesellschaft für international Zusammenarbeit – GIZ) to improve the framework conditions for cross-border tourism and its promotion in the (middle and lower) Danube Region. The non-governmental organization, Danube Competence Centre (DCC) was founded in 2010 for this purpose – to work as a cross-border platform for the promotion of international tourism in the entire Danube region.



Danube heritage interpretation at Pula.
© Miodrag-mitja-Bogdanovic for Danube Competence Centre.

The ten partner countries, Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine, had very different approaches to the development of Danube tourism – with the degree of development covering an entire spectrum. The particular challenge facing the DCC is the gap between the strong and developed western upper part of the Danube – in particular Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria (Germany), Austria, Slovakia and Hungary – and the weaker tourism industry in the middle and lower Danube region.

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3    European Union (2010), *The EU Strategy for the Danube Region, Regional Policy Publications Office,* Brussels.

## 8.7.2    The theme

Rivers have a significant part to play in the contemporary integration of Europe. The Danube is the most recent river corridor to be used as a framework for working toward a greater sense of inter-regional economic and cultural integration. In this case, the challenge is significant. From the Black Forest to the Black Sea, the Danube's 2,850 km flow through ten countries and the region is home to over 100 million residents. While unified by geography, the economic disparity is significant and the Danube is regarded as a "region of contradictions" with the "highest standards of living in the EU to the lowest", and with "some of the EU's most competitive regions to some of its poorest"[4] (see: www.danubecc.org).

The DCC's main tasks are to:
–    Build and support the network of tourism stakeholders;
–    Enhance transnational cooperation;
–    Represent member interests and create a *Danube community;*
–    Facilitate the development of sustainable tourism products associated with the Danube; and
–    Promote a unique tourism brand for the Danube region.

In seeking to grow tourism, the DCC has focussed effort on the cultural heritage of the Danube region – its natural attractions and potential for active tourism – and creating new frameworks to promote existing tourism products that the DCC members have to offer. Ultimately it is about integrating national interests into a transnational framework of cooperation.

## 8.7.3    Marketing work

The DCC takes a holistic approach to marketing and addresses the tourism product lifecycle stages of planning, investment, operations and management, promotion and marketing, consumption of tourism products and services, monitoring and evaluation, and learning and capacity building. In addition, the DCC recognizes the importance of considering a value chain approach – one that looks at all the different service functions (trip planning, accommodation, catering, attractions and transportation) and the linkages between them in any given supply chain. This comprehensive approach has resulted in a broad cross-section of activities designed to strengthen the Danube Region as a transnational destination.

The establishment of a **Marketing Committee** led to a clearly defined marketing strategy[5] based on solid market research, which also takes into consideration diverse perspectives within its membership. A key element of the strategy is to build the underlying synergies that can be achieved through this type of cooperation by:
–    Strengthening the capacity of the DCC to coordinate marketing activities;
–    Enabling members to collectively engage in marketing activities and the promotion of cross-country products; and
–    Structuring and improving member interaction to enhance the impact of collaboration.

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4    European Union, (2010).

5    Mascontour (2015), *Marketing & PR Strategy for the Danube Region 2016–2018,* Danube Competence Centre, Berlin.

The strategy addresses both trade and consumers. Activities have centred on:

- **The development and promotion of the Danube.travel portal:** this portal was launched in 2013 and is the first website that presents the complete tourist offer of all ten Danube countries. It is a multi-media, interactive web portal that promotes the Region as a new, attractive travel destination and brings together information on all the tourism providers;

- **Facilitating the development of biking and cycling:** the DCC promotes the Danube Bike Trail that connects nine Danube countries and is 2,857 km long. This trail is part of the EuroVelo 6. Work is progressing on developing EuroVelo 11 and 13 through Serbia in collaboration with partners such as the Ministry of Economy;

- **The development and promotion of the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route:** this Council of Europe Cultural Route (as of 2015) relates to the tradition of wine production, which began in Roman times. It connects four countries (Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania), 20 archaeological sites, and 12 wine regions. The route provided a new framework for local development; progress has been made on improving the quality of the visitor experience and a greater sense of internal cohesion is emerging. In 2014, the DCC established a first cross-country product club to bring together tourism stakeholders who share an interest in route related tourism, with the intent of increasing the type and quality of visitor products – a concept that is being explored for other tourism themes;

- **The promotion of members' tourist products** at major trade events such as ITB and at consumer events such as CMT in Germany, together with promotion at specialised fairs such as those related to hiking and biking; and

- **The support of and participation in festivals** aimed at the consumer such as the Danube Blue Week Festival. This event is organized around Danube Day in Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania, and the DCC highlights related tourism experiences in these countries, alongside the concepts of cross-border cooperation and biodiversity.

Other regular promotional activities include:

- Printed material;
- Educational roadshows involving tour operators, travel agencies and the media;
- Online training for travel agencies;
- Familiarization trips for travel trade and media;
- Online marketing and social media; and
- The provision of video material.

Social media activities are both consumer and stakeholder facing. Work is currently underway on refurbishing the portal (see: www.danubecc.org) and on associated elements such as enhancing the image bank.

Results of this marketing work include evident increases in visitor numbers. While it is generally understood that the work of the DCC has generated growth in visitor numbers and the value of the tourism economy, it is difficult to quantify the impact. Each country has its own statistical methodology and there is no unified approach to an overall assessment. Establishing a *tourism observatory* (see http://statistics.unwto.org/mst for more information) to monitor trends has been identified as a priority moving forward.

However, there are measurable increases at the major tourism sites. For example, at the Felix Romuliana, where numbers for the weekend of 13 and 14 August 2016 exceeded 600, as compared to around 100 in previous years. 2016 also sees the launch of 15 new transnational itineraries, through collaboration with sic new tour operators.

Key markets for the Danube region are the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium, with long-haul markets such as North America and emerging markets such as China and India representing secondary and tertiary markets. Market research identified selected themed/niche areas for each market and prioritised activities accordingly. To gain maximum leverage, Marketing Committee members seek to align national marketing activities with the Danube region-wide activities.

## 8.7.4    Future ambitions and issues

The DCC has identified key tourism themes for the Danube region that will require development. While it carries out activities that relate to varied themes over the year, it also selects an annual focus: culture (2015); biking (2016) and culinary (2017).

Table 8.1    **Key tourism themes and products in the Danube region**

| Key tourism themes | Key tourism products |
| --- | --- |
| **Outdoor sport tourism** | Danube Cycling Trail |
| | Danube Hiking Trails |
| **Cultural tourism** | Route of Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route |
| | Fortresses, museums, historic sites |
| **Nature tourism** | Danube Parks and other (protected) natural areas |
| **City tourism** | Cities (Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Bucharest, Ruse) |
| **Culinary tourism** | Fine restaurants in major cities |
| | Gastronomic routes |
| | Authentic rural cuisine |
| | Danube wine route and other wine routes |
| | River cruises with gastronomic focus |
| **Festivals and events** | Music festivals |
| | Film festivals |
| | Gastronomic festivals |
| | Danube Day/Blue Week |
| **Cruise tourism** | Danube River cruises |

Work is underway on developing a new business plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative. The DCC is a public-private partnership: each member contributes an annual fee and there is financial support from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ). Going forward, there are plans to create new commercial revenue streams to augment the existing budget.

## 8.7.5    Conclusions and learning points

Building internal cohesion among a diverse range of members and countries at differing stages of development remains a challenge, but there has been clear progress. Work on the Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route for example, is now in its fourth year and progressing well. Fifteen new market-ready itineraries have been created and countries in the Upper Danube are expressing an interest in joining the initiative and extending the route into Germany and Austria.

Other activities, such as the Danube@ITB create a greater sense of an internal community, while raising the profile of the destination to the wider international trade.

Thanks in part to the DCC, the Danube region is increasingly being recognized as a destination, and individual business operators are working in a much more collaborative way than before. As systems to monitor and measure impact are put in place, it will become easier to illustrate the success of this work.

# Chapter 9

## Taking it to market

This chapter addresses the final and critical stage: taking the route or network to market.

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**Taking it to market**

1.   Engaging and networking with the tourism industry;

2.   Engaging with the media;

3.   Working with tour operators;

4.   Choosing the right tools;

5.   Social networks;

6.   Marketing through events; and

7.   Capacity building.

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## 9.1    Engaging with the tourism industry.

The great trade shows are the biggest and most spectacular reflection of the world tourism industry – ITB, WTM, FITUR and many more. Budgets of transnational routes and networks are limited, but they can be present at such events as spectators, and to network. Indeed, many transnational route project leaders do visit these trade shows, to meet with colleagues and tour operators.

Even if few have the means independently to host a stand, this can be a long-term ambition. In the meantime, they can share space on NTO stands, have literature distributed or find similar solutions.

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**Example 9.1          Transnational themed tourism at international fairs**

Although it is beyond the means of most, transnational initiatives are beginning to make their presence known at international events. A best-practice example in this field is being implemented by the **UNWTO Silk Road Programme.**

The Silk Road Programme is present at most major events and runs annual forums for its members. Since 2011 ITB Berlin hosts annual UNWTO Silk Road Ministers' Meeting and UNWTO Silk Road Tour Operators Forum. UNWTO has also partnered with WTM London and now hosts annual events focussed on social media and the latest marketing tourism trends.

In 2016, the **European Federation of Napoleonic Cities** took out a stand at ITB for the first time, enabling ti to make contact with journalists, tour operators and many other valuable future partners.

**EuroVelo** is present at most European trade shows, to announce new projects and new routes.

On a more modest scale, **Masar-i-Ibrahim** was prominently featured on the Palestine stand at the 2015 World Travel Market in London, with the help of the Siraj Center – demonstrating that limited means need not be a handicap.

It is essential to raise awareness and build solid bridges with the tourism industry, both locally and internationally. In addition to presence at **industry events,** there are two other vital components: relations with the **media,** and with **tour operators.**

## 9.2     Engaging with the media

For higher-profile transnational initiatives, a comprehensive media strategy is needed. National tourism organizations will be familiar with the set-up and management of such strategies.

In the case of smaller initiatives, project leaders may need to be more creative. They might, for instance, work through the media and communication departments of their stakeholders – the regions, cities, federations, associations and international bodies that are supporters or members of the initiative, feeding them regular updates and potential news stories.

Another approach is to focus on the special interest communities that they represent. Most transnational themed products have specific or niche appeal, and can identify the markets and *communities* most interested in their offering. They will therefore also be able to identify the media best suited to reach these markets, which may be quite specific.

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Example 9.2          **Bird watching media**

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The bird watching community could be an important market for natural sites in remoter areas, many of which cross frontiers, for example along the Duero (or Douro) river between Spain and Portugal. Keen bird watchers may visit outside of the main tourist season, and are likely to stay several days or longer. In addition, they are likely to recommend visits to many others on their return. They have therefore been identified by the Duero-Douro tourism authorities as a highly attractive market.

The dominant media for bird watchers is easy to find. In the United Kingdom, for example, the two principal publications are Birdwatch (www.birdwatch.co.uk) and BirdWatching (www.birdwatching.co.uk). Each has a detailed and informative website, and highly active Facebook pages.

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The more specific the subject matter, the more likely that news and communication is influenced by a small number of talented and highly dedicated people – journalists or bloggers, now called *influencers.* The project leaders can establish privileged, long-term relationships with these people.[1]

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1     An emerging model is one of payment to influential bloggers for inclusion of an offer or news item, where the customer is charged in relation to the blogger's number of followers – on condition, evidently, that the blogger finds the item to be of interest.

| Example 9.3 | **Marketing the city of Parma** |
|---|---|

The city of Parma, Italy, promotes itself as a world-class food capital. Its greatest marketing tool is the range of food products, in particular the cheeses and hams that are exported, and on show in supermarkets around the world. The city is now keen to spread the message that Parma is also a food destination.

Several apartments owned by the municipality, with high speed WiFi, are put at the disposition of influential food bloggers, to stay in the city without charge and without constraints, for several weeks at a time. These bloggers will, of course, visit the producers, retailers and chefs, and write about their experiences on their web pages or using social media.

This targeted media rarely sees itself as tourism-related. It is the theme or subject matter that attracts and unifies the readership.

## 9.3    Working with tour operators

Working with tour operators is just as important as working with the media. Larger, more mature routes and networks will attract established operators. Many operators offer tours to or around Santiago de Compostela. Silk Road tour packages are offered by dozens, if not hundreds of private operators, many of them based in China, offering trips or circuits within China or Central Asia.

In the field of cultural heritage, there are well-established operators, including Martin Randall (United Kingdom), Intermèdes (France) and other, smaller outfits, serving specific destinations or niche interests. The range of themes is infinite. Malikow Tours in West Africa facilitates visits to mask festivals or to remote inland villages, Undiscovered Scotland can organize whisky tours to little known distilleries.

The project leaders should develop relationships with the operators most engaged in their theme or themes. They will:
–    Identify the operators: both those working from other countries and those providing inbound services;
–    Deliver information on an ongoing basis; for example, through a newsletter;
–    Provide familiarization (FAM) trips, and be supportive of their business initiatives;
–    Invite them to participate in trade and cultural events; and
–    Recruit them as ambassadors for the transnational project.

The more private operators are involved, the stronger the brand – on condition that the project leaders ensure that the right messages are communicated by their operator partners. There is, of course, a risk of confusion or lack of control, but that is better than a failure to engage with the market.

**Key point:**

While not infallible, tour operators generally have a good sense of the market. There is much to be gained from a collaborative relationship with the private sector.

### 9.3.1    Working with cruise operators

For coastal routes or networks, such as the Phoenicians' Route, relations with cruise companies may be as important as with tour operators.



Valletta harbour Malta – cruise ships operating in the Mediterranean convey thousands of visitors from country to country.
© Jackie Ellis.

The cruise market is dominated by the mega-ships that carry huge numbers of passengers. However, there is a parallel trend towards segmentation. There are many smaller, theme-oriented cruise lines. Swans Hellenic Cruises, "for those with a mind to travel", was founded in the 1950s to offer heritage cruises in the Mediterranean; now matched by a competitor called Voyages to Antiquity. And even aboard the larger boats, passengers are identified and guided according to their interests.

Crystal Cruises promotes themed cruises focussed on cookery, food and wine. Hurtigruten offers a discovery of marine bird life. Other cruises include walking opportunities.

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**Example 9.4**     **River cruises**

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Viking River Cruises offer excursions during stops by local guides, with opportunities to taste local foods. All cruises include a *Viking Culture Curriculum* that gives information to visitors on history and culture through lectures, language classes, hands on cooking and local entertainment.

See: www.vikingcruises.com/about-us/history.html

Avalon Waterways offer Active Discovery Cruises where visitors can hike, bike, take sports lessons such as archery, visit farms, go mountain climbing, etc. The company offers river cruises in the Danube, Rhine, Main, Moselle, Seine, Rhone and Saone.

See: www.avalonwaterways.com

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The opportunities for partnership and cross-marketing between initiatives on similar themes are there to be discovered.

**Key point:**

For routes and networks than link coastal regions and cities, or that run along rivers, cruise operators can be ideal partners. The *story* of the route can be progressively told, from port to port, and cruise passengers have the time and leisure to learn about the history and background.

## 9.4 Choosing the right tools

This is not a handbook about tourism technology,[2] instead this practical guide considers the question through potential applications to transnational themed tourism. The use of new marketing technology is having a strong impact in four theme areas:

1. Transnational products and routes based on the discovery and exploration of strong, **living cultural themes,** such as gastronomy, science, contemporary architecture and the arts;

2. The discovery and exploration of **history and tradition** across borders, such as the heritage of the Phoenicians, of the Hanseatic League in the Baltic, or of early Chinese dynasties;

3. Linear **routes or circuits on cultural, religious or historical themes,** such as Qhapaq Nan or the Buddhist Circuits, including the discovery of natural and heritage landscapes; and

4. Tourism in **natural areas** where the discovery of the ecology and the wildlife may require time and patience.

Each requires a different approach and a different mix of tools, as outlined in the following pages.

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**Key point:**

There is no *right* marketing solution for all transnational tourism initiatives, and there is no technology that *must* always be used. Each project should adopt the most appropriate tools.

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### 9.4.1 Tools for living cultural themes

A clear trend of the 21st century is the growth of special interest tourism. Previously seen as niche, and of limited interest to destinations and marketers; it has become an essential part of the tourism landscape. Examples include gastro-tourism – from sophisticated gastronomy to local fare, wine tourism, hiking and walking, motor biking, music festivals and bird-watching, among others.

There is a reason for the increasing interest of marketers in these communities. Once scattered and difficult to quantify or evaluate, they can now be identified, tracked and engaged with in communication. Tools that may be used include:

– Advertising or provision of content to reference websites;
– Creation of reference websites, as ETC has done with *Tasting Europe;*[3]
– Providing high-value information;
– Working with bloggers and influencers; and
– Working with tour operators who are familiar with these niches.

All of these tools are illustrated in the later examples of this chapter.

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2 For specific information on *tourism technology* please consult:

World Tourism Organization and European Travel Comission (2014), *Handbook on E-marketing for Tourism Destinations – fully Revised and extended version 3.0,* UNWTO, Madrid.

3 Visit Europe (n.d.), *The food travel portal of Europe* (online), available at: www.tastingeurope.com/ (13-07-2016).

### 9.4.2    Interpreting history and tradition

In some cases, history is evident and visible to the tourist, but traces of the past have often been damaged or erased. In some cases radically; for example, early structures may have been of mud or wood, and have long since disappeared.

The traditional way to fill this gap at heritage tourism sites is through information panels and signage, which can be distracting, may provide too much or too little information, and which are difficult to maintain over the long term.

Heritage sites are now tending to phase out such signs and panels. If the Internet network is of good quality, information can be provided through web downloads or dedicated apps. With augmented reality, a single *picture* can replace a thousand words, to explain how the structure looked or functioned in earlier times.

For transnational tourism, these processes and technologies are important. Costs of development can be high, but affordable when shared over a number of sites. The managers of the Phoenicians' Route, for example, are looking for funding for a multi-country application that would provide the traveller with historical background on the Phoenicians, as well as keys for the discovery of sites, from the eastern Mediterranean to West Africa and Ireland.

Such tools are immersive, meaning that the visitor is drawn into a different vision. The following example is not transnational, but could well be applied successfully to linked heritage sites along transnational routes.

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Example 9.5        **Hadrian's Wall**



This free app for the 118 km trail along the Wall illustrates the role of the creative sector and new technologies in storytelling' and in enhancing the visitor experience. The app enables visitors to explore major conservation projects along the Wall through the eyes of different characters – as shown aside.

The characters take visitors through time to show different perspectives of the history and significance of Hadrian's Wall past and present, through text and audio.

If the global positioning system (GPS) is enabled, the app can identify the closest points of interest to any specific location. It is available on both iOS and Android platforms and is integrated with Twitter and Facebook.

Hadrian's Wall trails app. © Newcastle University.

### 9.4.3    Supporting linear routes or circuits

The handbook's case studies include Qhapaq Ñan and the Buddhist Circuits.

Because of the scale of such initiatives, the project leaders will work with organizations and bodies that have responsibilities along the routes, including local authorities, national parks and cultural or religious bodies. The challenge will be to develop a single, structured information platform.

Where the interest is landscape, as in road or rail trips across countries and continents, distances between major attractions may be considerable.

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Example 9.6    **The Cape-Namibia Road**

The Cape-Namibia Road is a transnational highway between South Africa and Namibia, well known to drivers for the beautiful landscapes it passes through. So far only a small section has been interpreted and signed, in the Western Cape. However, the website (www.capetonamibia.co.za) serves as a travel guide for the route, with links and information to accommodation, restaurants and attractions, under the themes of wine, sports, leisure and culture. The guide gives detailed information of the landscapes and parks that surround the route, since its main purpose to help travellers decide what to visit and highlight interesting place to stop on their road trip.

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Rich online information can fundamentally change such an experience. Websites, newsletters, blogs, can place the traveller in context and provide a sense of continuity during the journey.

**Content** is key. Some can come from the route managers, some from associated cultural groups or tour operators. But the bulk must be user-generated and come from the travellers themselves. Project leaders should encourage and help publish journals and blogs, be active on social media and encourage postings of photos and commentary.

**Geo-location and mapping** technologies are particularly valuable when the tourist is following a trail or circuit over a broad geographical area.

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Example 9.7    **EuroVelo – Support for cyclists**

EuroVelo.com provides detailed and interactive maps of all EuroVelo cycling routes, showing distances, features, towns and tourist attractions along the routes. With links to the National EuroVelo Coordination Centres, other regional cycle partners and other sources of detailed information (e.g., public transport providers, tour operators and accommodation among others), it allows cyclists to plan their journey ahead of time. Individual trails and authorities have developed their own apps for cyclists, and these are promoted by EuroVelo.com. For example, *Bas-Rhin à Vélo* gives details on local accommodation and tourism services in the immediate area, interesting information about the region/route via QR codes, and geo-sensitive maps for cyclists to use along the route.

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**Key point:**

Where there is a route or circuit, there will already be guidance and maps, now increasingly offered to consumers online or through mobile apps. These online tools are an opportunity for route and network managers to engage with their users.

## 9.4.4    Tools for tourism in natural areas

In natural areas, the rhythm of discovery is different. The visitor's primary goal is direct experience of the natural environment. Technology therefore has a support role only.

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Example 9.8          **The Turtle Islands**

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The Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area (TIHPA) safeguards the remaining green sea and hawksbill turtle populations. Covering three islands in Malaysia and six in the Philippines, the ecotourism plan includes building the right infrastructure, such as wooden boardwalks and turtle watching lounges for tourists to watch turtles lay their eggs. The infrastructure is complemented by the websites of tourism authorities and national parks like Sabah, where visitors can access detailed information about the turtles, their conservation, hatchling release programmes and other marine life.

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## 9.5    Social networks

Marketing has long recognized the concept of *segmentation,* meaning that a product is of interest to some parts of the population and not to others. It is a small step to speak about *communities of interest.* These are particularly important in the context of theme-based tourism.

To take an example, environmentally active ecotourists may represent many different nationalities, classes, income levels, professionals, but they also operate as a community, sharing interests and beliefs. Within their community, there will be opinion leaders and influencers, known to many.

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Example 9.9          **The Great Himalayan Trails**

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The Great Himalayan Trails project (GHT) is a network of trails that covers the entire Nepali Himalayas, with an ambition to extend to surrounding countries. GHT divides hundreds of centuries old trails into ten sections and promotes the Himalayan Trails of Nepal to the local and international trekking community. The project website focusses on presenting detailed information to hikers about the trails and destinations on the trail, accommodation and visa procedures, and local health and safety information.

The GHT operates a blog where trekkers write in and share their experiences. Called *The Trekker's Journal,* it is a collection of stories from the Great Himalaya Trails by trekkers for trekkers.[a] A monthly newsletter provides GHT subscribers with news and updates on events and other GHT matters.

Visitors can engage with the GHT on the main social sharing platforms. The Facebook page has surpassed 100,000 followers and visitors can easily communicate with the GHT and receive updates, promotions, important news and information on events. The GHT frequently posts articles and links to other sites of interest for the local and international trekking community.

On Instagram, the GHT uses the hashtag #myGHT, as a platform for the trekking community, travellers and other outdoor enthusiasts. They also created #myGHT Photo Competition to involve trekkers in promoting the GHT. Supplied photographs have the chance to be used in GHT advertising campaigns and the winning photograph is featured on posters, in national and international newspapers and magazines, as well as on all GHT social media.

a)   Great Himalaya Trails (n.d.), *The Trekker's Journal* (online), available at: www.greathimalayatrails.com/ (19-07-2016).

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**Key point:**

In the world of social media, information is immediate, reactive and generally unstructured. Good management of information and exchange requires attention, competence and dedication.

## 9.6    Marketing through events

For any destination, events are an essential marketing tool, creating interest and attracting new visitors. At a transnational level, they have an additional function: to reinforce links between the partners.

The Hansa is an association linking towns across the Baltic and northern Germany. Every year the Hansa holds an annual festival in a different town. Visitors come from all member towns, and the festivals provide a sense of community. Such events are easier to organize and attract a broader audience thanks to web and social media marketing.

In West Africa, festivals are at the heart of transnational tourism; for example, the Festival of Masks, a reflection of the culture of the Dogon tribes that are spread across several West African countries.[4] There are several versions. The best known perhaps being the FESTIMA Mask Festival held in Burkina Faso every March, others are held in Mali in April or May and on the Isle of Man in Côte d'Ivoire. Thanks to online media, awareness of the festivals has grown and they attract visitors from all over the world.

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Example 9.10        **Food festivals**

The Welsh town of Abergavenny hosts an annual food festival, which is attended by tens of thousands of gastro-tourists, including a significant proportion of international visitors. The festival's organizers' state: "Our event could not grow and diversify without the use of social media."

Recognizing that food lovers share values beyond frontiers, and are increasingly willing to travel, the food festival organizers have made contact with organizers of festivals elsewhere in Europe, with the aim of building transnational partnerships, for the exchange of expertise and cross-marketing.

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4    Pilot Guides (n.d.), Festivals in West Africa: Fetes des Masques (online), available at:
      www.pilotguides.com/articles/festivals-in-west-africa-fetes-des-masques/ (16-07-2016).

**Key point:**

Festivals such as the mask festivals or Abergavenny strengthen and reinforce the communities they serve. At a transnational level, that effect can be multiplied, thanks to online promotion, the work of specialist bloggers and the effects of social media.

## 9.7 Capacity building

The greatest challenge will always be to create an ongoing dynamic, driven by competent people on the ground, with durable resources. In an effort to raise capacities along the historic routes, the UNWTO Silk Road Programme has been implementing specialised Silk Road training and workshops aimed at numerous stakeholders such as country officials, tourist guides and tour operators.

At the 2016 meeting of the Silk Road Task Force, attended by representatives of 14 countries, a proposal was put forward to create a Silk Road Heritage Guide Training Centre, to improve and unify standards of guiding. This will empower and give confidence to local guides, and serve as a valuable tool for capacity building at the local community level.

Another example for capacity building is the St. Olav Ways.

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Example 9.11 **St. Olav Ways – a model for capacity building**



Along Saint Olav Ways, local communities maintain information boards that provide accommodation options, maps and other practical advice. © stolavways.com.

St. Olav Ways are historic pilgrimage routes coming from Denmark, Sweden and further afield that terminate at Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim. The Ways were re-energised in the 1990s, with the support of the Norwegian government.

A small, not-for-profit organization is responsible for management and logistics, but almost everything is outsourced to local partners. For example, at the point where pilgrims arrive each parish maintains an information board with updated accommodation options, events schedules, and so on. With the agreement of the association, local inhabitants may lodge pilgrims. If so they are briefed and given essential tools, including the means to refresh trail markers in the vicinity after the harsh winters.

Information technology is an essential component. All those involved, from managers of pilgrim hostels down to local guides, are in regular contact with the association providing feedback from the front lines.

In this case, the technology does not need to be cutting edge, just sufficient to maintain constant contact and ensure the rigorous attention to detail that is the watchword of the St. Olav Ways Association. It is not unusual for hostel managers to walk out along the path in bad weather to ensure that arriving pilgrims find their way. Because of this attention, the reputation of Saint Olav Ways has grown, at an international level, and numbers of walkers along the trail increase every year by at least 30% over the previous year.

**Key point:**

Using information technology to ensure attention to detail creates a sense of common purpose and high motivation, at all levels, to maintain quality standards. However, the information tools can be simple. The important thing is that they serve the customers and effectively deliver the information.

## 9.8      Case study 8: Global challenges – the Greater Mekong

**What this case illustrates:**

This case demonstrates the strategic interest of large-scale tourism development, involving the tourism authorities of several countries. It provides a model for development and management of such a project, and highlights the challenges.

### 9.8.1      Origin and purpose

Funded by the Asian Development Bank, the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) project was launched in 1992 to foster economic growth and reduce poverty in six member countries: Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.

In 2004 and 2005, a GMS Tourism Sector Strategy was prepared, with the aim of promoting the region as a single destination, and with a focus on sustainable development and protection of the unique natural and cultural heritage.

### 9.8.2      The theme



Greater Mekong area explored on a traditional Sampan.
© Dreamstime image library

The region has a long-shared cultural heritage, based on thousands of years of history. It is also particularly important for its distinct biodiversity and natural landscapes
(see: www.mekongtourism.org).

The six countries have devised an *Experience Mekong Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan 2015–2020* to prepare activities to develop their thematic multi-country tours and promote secondary destinations in the region. The themes are mainly focussed on ecotourism, local cuisine and culture.

### 9.8.3    Marketing work

In the *Experience Mekong Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan 2015–2020* the Tourism Working Group defined their strategic objectives:
–    Create packages and promote thematic multi-country tour products and events in secondary destinations;
–    Position the GMS as a *must visit* destination in Asia; and
–    Strengthen institutional arrangement for joint tourism marketing and promotion among public and private stakeholders.

These objectives have subsections with action plans such as:
–    Producing promotional content;
–    Training for e-marketing;
–    Developing the brand and logo;
–    Building industry awareness;
–    Launching a mobile optimised content rich website; and
–    Developing a social media strategy.

Mekong Tourism is present on the main social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Google Plus and LinkedIn. There is an e-magazine and a page on the official website to showcase visitors' photographs from their travels in the region.

### 9.8.4    Future ambitions and issues

Challenges and strategies for the Mekong River Cruising tour product were outlined at a recent UNWTO River and Ocean Cruise Tourism workshop, held at the Mekong Tourism Forum. A main challenge remains policies for easier multi-country visa access.

The UNWTO report on *Mekong River-based Tourism Product Development* identifies that some places lack operations and maintenance standards. Parts of the region have limited access to modern navigational systems for the cruises, and levels of hygiene and medical facilities in some sections are of poor quality. There is a requirement for internationally recognized safety standards to be implemented throughout the GMC region. The report also mentions insufficient public-private partnerships, for instance cooperation between river commissions and inland waterway departments, which are essential for the environment, as well as a lack of interest from private stakeholders.[5]

A mid-term review identified two major weaknesses hampering successful promotion of the transnational tourism products. Firstly, lack of reliable information about visa requirements and hard immigration procedures and policies is hindering the movement of tourists and operators between countries. Secondly, ineffective marketing and branding to attract international tourists (with the exception of Thailand) is due to insufficient financial resources and lack of capacity to

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5    World Tourism Organization (2016a), *Mekong River-Based Tourism Product Development,* UNWTO, Madrid.

design and implement destination marketing campaigns, particularly in the use of online tools like social media.[6]

### 9.8.5　Conclusions and learning points

The goal is to diversify the tourism product, encouraging cruise operators also to look at other rivers, and tour operators to seek to develop more authentic experiences, using the cultural and natural resources of secondary and tertiary destinations in their product offer.

The Greater Mekong Sub-Region has a high potential to become a world-known tourism destination. However, for this to be achieved, stronger cooperation among countries in the region is needed, with an emphasis in easing visa requirements and procedures, as well as the creation of a brand image and marketing actions.

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6　Ibid.

# Chapter 10

## Further case studies

Throughout this handbook, examples and cases illustrate the different approaches taken by managers of transnational tourism themes and products.

In particular, the reader will have seen the following topics addressed:

| Topic | Case study | Location |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Marketing a cultural theme | European Historic Thermal Towns Association (chapter 1.6) | Europe |
| Building experiences and stories | Via Francigena (chapter 2.7) | Canterbury (England) to Rome (Italy) |
| Cross border tourism road | Alaska Highway (chapter 3.6) | Canada and the United States of America |
| Grass-roots memory trail | Trail of Tears (chapter 4.8) | United States of America, trans-state |
| Transnational ecological area | The Wadden Sea (chapter 6.6) | Netherlands, Germany and Denmark |
| Planning of thematic tourism and routes | The Kii Mountain Range (chapter 7.5) | Japan |
| Managing multiple stakeholders | Danube Competence Centre (chapter 8.7) | Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine |
| Large scale transnational tourism strategy | The Greater Mekong (chapter 9.8) | Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam |

This section provides eight further cases, including some of the most iconic:

| Topic | Case | Location |
| --- | --- | --- |
| The marketing of cities | Federation of Napoleonic Cities | Portugal to the Russian Federation |
| High-influence transnational tourism | The Silk Road | China to the Mediterranean |
| Slow tourism and travel | Iron Curtain Trail | Central and eastern Europe |
| Overcoming conflict | Masar Ibrahim | Palestine and Israel |
| Heritage and landscape trails | Qhapaq Ñan | South America |
| The heritage of peoples | Slave Routes | Africa and The Americas |
| Spiritual routes | *Camino Francés (Camino de Santiago)* | France and Spain |
| | Buddhist Circuits | Nepal and India |

## 10.1    The choice and writing of the cases

The cases of this handbook cover different aspects of tourism development and marketing,[1] and provide a geographic spread, from all continents. They include well-developed, well-funded initiatives, and others that are at earlier stages. They include examples where the impetus is from the public sector, and others where the drive comes mainly from the private sector.

These can serve as reference examples for NTOs, DMOs or other bodies interested in marketing tourism routes, networks or cross-border environmental areas. Each should select the cases of greatest relevance to their goals.

They focus on marketing and tourism, each one including the following sections:
– **Origin and purpose:** in particular, *how* the initiative was launched and by *whom;*
– The **theme** that underpins the tourism development and marketing;
– **Marketing work,** including specific strategies and actions undertaken by the project leaders or the group of members; and
– **Future ambitions and issues,** primarily relating to marketing and tourism.

## 10.2    Target and results

In interviews and research, supporting data and statistics such as visitor numbers or economic indicators, to demonstrate planning targets and measure results was requested[2] however data was rarely available. Investment numbers could be obtained, but returns on investment were expressed only in general terms.

Exceptions included the Visegrad 4 and the Danube Competence Centre, but even in these cases it was hard to distinguish the data relating to tourism and tourism marketing from other possible development factors. With regard to future objectives, exceptions included the Wadden Sea, the Iron Curtain Trail and the Silk Road.

It highlights the reality of transnational tourism routes and networks: that they are still a recent and largely unstructured phenomenon. It also reflects the fact that most initiatives are publicly funded and that the requirement to justify funding in specific economic terms is therefore weaker.

## 10.3    Transnational themes in the marketing of towns and cities

Many cases in this handbook cover the implementation of themed tourism in remote areas, often with the aim of generating economic activity in rural or mountain regions. There are fewer examples of urban areas that use transnational themes to develop tourism.

As a general rule, cities and towns promote themselves independently, their marketing goal being to increase the strength of their own brand, to raise awareness of their tourism assets, to develop

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1    See tourism theme groupings in chapter 1.4 of this Handbook, and types of transnational initiative in chapter 6.

2    See survey questions, in annex 2.6.

partnerships with tourism professionals and to attract visitors. The annual marketing budgets of cities such as Tokyo, San Francisco or Singapore are in the tens of millions of dollars. VisitBerlin's annual budget is of EUR 20 million. The city's aim is "to develop a brand on the level of New York or Paris".[3]

Smaller towns cannot compete on this level. Some may have durable brand recognition, for their history, for their spectacular beauty or for classic festivals that they host. Examples include Cannes, Dubrovnik, Marrakesh, Isfahan and Simla. Others do not have such evident assets.

The main example presented in this section is the European Federation of Napoleonic Cities. The Hanseatic Towns of the Baltic is also briefly covered.[4]

## 10.3.1    Case study 9: The European Federation of Napoleonic Cities

### Origin and purpose

In May 2004, representatives from the towns of Ajaccio (France), Balestrino (Italy), Dinard (France), Jena (Germany), Île d'Aix (France), La Roche-sur-Yon (France), Pultusk (Poland) and Waterloo (Belgium) met in La Roche-sur-Yon. They signed a draft agreement creating a Federation of Cities and Sites of Napoleonic History, to promote cultural exchanges and developments based on Napoleonic heritage and life.[5]

The federation's goals are:
– To promote cultural exchanges in association with universities, cultural institutions and history organizations;
– To support and promote actions to preserve and restore Napoleonic heritage (objects, works of art, furniture, monuments, sites, etc.); and
– To encourage greater understanding of the period for tourists, school and university exchanges, through activities, exhibitions, arts events and discovery tours.

This is a good example of a clear and structured mission statement.

Today, 50 towns and cities are members, many in France, Italy, Belgium and Spain, but also in the Czech Republic, Poland, Lithuania, the Russian Federation and Egypt. In May 2015, *Destination Napoleon* was certified as a European Cultural Route.

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3    VisitBerlin CEO Burjkard Kieker (2015), Interview: Visit Berlin CEO on Capitalizing on the City's Zeitgeist (online), available at: https://skift.com/2015/05/07/interview-visit-berlin-ceo-on-capitalizing-on-the-citys-zeitgeist/ (12-07-2016).

4    It should be noted that many towns have twinning arrangements with towns in other countries. However, while there may be cultural or educational exchanges, these are rarely well exploited for tourism purposes.

5    European Federation of Napoleonic Cities (n.d.), *Napoleonic Citie*s (online), available at: www.napoleoncities.eu/index.php?article_id=1&clang=1 (02-09-2016).

## The theme

The chosen reference is a transition period in French history: starting in 1769, the year of Napoleon Bonaparte's birth and ending in 1870, with the defeat of Napoleon III at Sedan.

The organizational structure is worth noting:

–    Destination Napoleon is managed by a **Board of Directors,** composed of active members;

–    A much smaller **Executive Committee** is in charge of current affairs. A **Local Steering Committee** is in charge of driving initiatives at the national and territorial level;

–    The Local Committees include representatives of the public cultural and educational sector (museums, universities, research centres, among others), the private sector (associations, tourism or culture professionals), and regional and local authorities; and

–    The Executive and Local Committees determine the cultural and tourism strategies, and determine the approaches and tools to implement.

## Marketing



Use of costumed interpreters for a Destination Napoleon walk at Ile d'Aix, France. © Christine Lacaud.

Some members of the federation have the means to undertake marketing on a major scale. Waterloo (Belgium), for example, is a major attraction. The town is investing EUR 50 million in upgrading visitor facilities, to meet the requirements of 300,000 visitors a year. However, this is an exception. Most member towns are small, in many cases with populations of 20,000 or less, without sufficient means to invest in their own tourism, let alone in transnational tourism projects.

On accession to the status of Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, the Federation therefore drafted a *vademecum* (guidelines), covering issues of marketing and focussing on collaboration between members. Where marketing activities are managed by the local municipalities of small towns, the challenge is how to raise skill levels, as well as how to raise the visibility of members as tourism destinations.

Skills development includes how to put on events, create documents, manage online communication, and so on. The association provides consulting to the towns and cities, based on SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analyses, to assist them in launching development projects, based on tourism, or working with local operators.

As a transnational organization, the Federation can also provide support at a global level. It can seek European funding to develop tourism infrastructures and skills; or to develop events, on a collaborative basis. It can be present at major tourism events,[6] to attract the interest of international tour operators.

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6    The federation was, for example, present at ITB in 2015.

| Example 10.1 | **Marketing of a partner association: The group "1814 quatre victoires" (1814v4)** |
|---|---|

The group 1814v4 celebrates the memory of France's First Empire by hosting events and activities dedicated to this era of Napoleon's reign. They have created two short driving circuits in the commune of Brie Champenoise and promote hiking and cycling events. The main hiking trail is the National Route Marne 14 *A Route of Memory,* which commemorates the battles of 1814 and also the Battle of the Marne in 1914.

## Future ambitions and issues

With ambitions to develop a Europe-wide transnational marketing strategy involving all of the partners, the federation will:
– Progressively develop promotional marketing tools for use both at a local and a global level;
– Continue to attend major tourism events on behalf of members; and develop stronger relationships with industry professionals Europe-wide, in particular with the major tour operators; and
– Encourage opportunities for member collaboration, both on a case-by-case basis (bottom up) and Europe-wide (top down).

One project currently under discussion is a touring exhibition that would visit all of the European towns and cities involved. The project would be funded by sponsors, both locally (for installation of the exhibition) and at a European level.

Like the EHTTA, the federation is also working to develop a *themed pass.* Initially this would operate locally to provide residents and visitors with access to Napoleonic sites, exhibitions and resources. However, it has the potential to develop Europe-wide. The federation is actively investigating information platforms that could run the scheme, as well as the online marketing of Napoleonic cities throughout Europe.

As in all marketing, budget is the key. The association's own budget is too small to undertake effective central marketing – currently at around EUR 100,000 per year, with members paying according to their population number.[7] However, the federation has the means and skills to look for other funding, primarily from the EU, to support transnational initiatives.

## Conclusions and learning points

The Federation of Napoleonic Cities is a good example of *storytelling.* From country to country, the story of Napoleon is interpreted in many different ways, but it is always rich and dramatic. The retelling of episodes of that story lie at the heart of the project: either through reconstitutions organized by local volunteers or through sophisticated interpretation, such as at the Waterloo visitor centre.

The Federation also provides an excellent model of strategic development. NTOs and DMOs will be well advised to take note of their organizational structure and of the skills development programme, described in the case study.

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7  For example, a town the size of Ajaccio (population 50,000) would pay around EUR 2,500 a year.

Many transnational networks share a problem that faces the Federation: that of funding major marketing initiatives, when the membership is comprised mostly of smaller towns and cities. The members do not have the means or resources, individually, to undertake marketing actions of any importance; nor can they contribute significantly to a central *pot,* towards international marketing initiatives.

They have consequently adopted a three-pronged approach:
1.    To train local marketing teams to work more effectively – organizing events and making maximum use of the *Napoleon* brand;
2.    To encourage collaboration on a case-by-case basis, between two or several members, to begin to acquire these skills; and
3.    To use the power of the Napoleon brand to raise funding for the overall project and to raise awareness among tourism professionals and the public.

It is too early to know if this strategy will be successful. However, initial results are promising, and motivation is high among members throughout Europe.

## 10.4    High-influence transnational tourism

Transnational tourism has always played a strategic and political role. In the aftermath of wars and conflict, one of the first actions is to open the borders for travel, and lighten border controls, as well as using tourism as a means for economic recovery. Tourism is a symbol of peaceful exchange and mutual understanding. It is no accident that the Council of Europe promotes the *route concept* to highlight common or complementary cultural identities across borders, thereby building closer links between Europeans. This aspiration is echoed worldwide, whether in Latin America (as between MERCOSUR partners), Africa (ECOWAS or COMESA), South-East Asia (ASEAN) or elsewhere.

Some initiatives fundamentally reshape perceptions. This is the case of the three examples chosen: the Silk Road – certainly the world's most famous large-scale transnational tourism initiative.

### 10.4.1    Case study 10: the Silk Road

#### Origin and purpose

The Silk Road crosses three continents, from China and South-East Asia, through Central and South Asia, the Caucasus and the Middle East to North Africa and Europe. It celebrates trade routes from the second century B.C.E. to the modern era.

Although ground-breaking work to develop the Silk Road as a tourism concept dates back to the 1990s, it was not until 2010, with the establishment of a specialised Silk Road Programme within UNWTO that the project gained in speed and depth. Nowadays, 33 Silk Road Member States from Europe, the Middle East and Asia collaborate to foster sustainable, responsible and internationally competitive tourism and encourage cooperation and mutual learning between the destinations.[8]

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8    World Tourism Organization (2016c), *UNWTO Silk Road Action Plan 2016/2017,* UNWTO, Madrid.

**The theme**



Visitors crossing the Mingsha sand dunes in China, part of the ancient Silk Road. © dreamtimes image library.

Historically, it was not just silk that was traded, but also spices, Chinese porcelain, jewellery, silverware, livestock and even slaves. The Silk Road became a bridge for political, economic, religious and cultural exchange, and for the transfer of technology and science between Asia and Europe. It contributed to the development of the great civilizations of China, India, Egypt and Persia, laying the foundations for the modern world.[9] The Silk Road offers tourists the opportunity to experience the rich history and culture that evolved in Xi'an and passed through Central Asia to the west, creating what has been described as the greatest overland route in the history of humanity.[10]

**Marketing work**

The UNWTO Silk Road Programme has successfully built a world-renowned brand. A TripAdvisor report, in cooperation with UNWTO, shows that eight in ten travellers have heard of it.[11]

With the aim of maximizing consumer awareness, UNWTO works with major production companies to produce relevant Silk Road documentaries. This includes television documentary series such as "Silk Road Journey" with Holly Morris and Megan McCormick on Globe Trekker in 2012; "David Baddiel on the Silk Road" with Pioneer Productions, aired on Discovery Channel Networks International (2016); and three episodes of a documentary series with BBC4 ("The Silk Road") presented by the historian, writer and broadcaster Sam Willis.

The Programme participates actively in major international travel fairs in Berlin, London, Madrid and Moscow, to name a few; also in leading multi-sectorial and technical cooperation projects with other institutions such as UNESCO, World Bank, UNCTAD, ASEAN, ICOMOS, PATA and the Council of Europe.

Specifically, at the World Travel Market of London, the Silk Road Programme organizes a seminar focussed on the significance of employing contemporary marketing tools and in establishing a strategic social media presence of the Silk Road brand.[12]

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9   World Tourism Organization, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2005), *Tourism Pearls of the Silk Road* (online), available at: http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/tourism_pearls.pdf (12-04-2016).

10   Ibid.

11   World Tourism Organization (2016b), *TripAdvisor 2016 Travel Trends for the Silk Road,* UNWTO, Madrid.

12   Information on #Social Silk Road Seminar 2015: The rise of experiential travel and the booking revolution (2015) available at: http://silkroad.unwto.org/event/social-silk-road-seminar-2015-rise-experiential-travel-and-booking-revolution (02-09-2016).

There is no doubt that the tourism potential of countries along the Silk Road, in particular lesser known destinations such as those of Central Asia, has been boosted in the eyes of tourism professionals and of the general public. Nowadays, tour operators use this brand as a lure to travellers, to express romance, exoticism and adventure. The audience is Western, but increasingly includes the travellers of China and other maturing markets.

A survey in Uzbekistan showed that 81% of tourists had been attracted to the country due to its historical connection to the Silk Road.

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Box 10.1          **Silk Road: trip of a lifetime**

The term *Silk Road,* though coined in the 19th century by a German explorer, evokes a romantic era when caravans of camels, horses and mules transported everything from jade and gunpowder to rhubarb and, of course, silk between China and the Levant. Associated with Marco Polo, Coleridge (Kubla Khan and Xanadu), Western notions of the Orient, and legendary trading hubs such as Kashgar and Samarkand, it represents for modern travellers a myth-laden highroad through a wild and exotic landscape.

Source: The Telegraph (2014), *Silk Road: Trip of a Lifetime* (online), available at: www.telegraph.co.uk (12-04-2016).

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## Future ambitions and issues

Developing such a complex initiative poses many challenges, both at the network level and at the national or country level as these are at different tourism development stages. There has been some progress in air connectivity and travel facilitation among countries, as well as in the creation of public-private partnerships, but it is a long-term effort.

The TripAdvisor survey found that 41% of travellers would be more likely to travel to the Silk Road if they could obtain a single Silk Road visa.[13] Requirements for less restrictive travel are detailed in the Tourism Visa Openness Report for the Silk Road Countries, which also outlines the economic benefits of increased openness.[14]

In order to strengthen the tourism capacities of local Silk Road destinations, UNWTO, together with UNESCO and the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA), has launched a strategy aimed at training and certifying Silk Road heritage guides.

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13   World Tourism Organization (2016b).

14   World Tourism Organization (2014d), *Tourism Visa Openness Report for the Silk Road Countries,* UNWTO, Madrid.

| Box 10.2 | **Capacity Building and Destination Management** |
|---|---|

In 2013, UNWTO and UNESCO launched a ground-breaking initiative aimed at achieving closer collaboration between heritage management and tourism stakeholders. The joint initiative assesses two Silk Road heritage corridors crossing five countries: the Chang'an–Tianshan heritage corridor connecting China with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and the Amu–Darya heritage corridor connecting Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. As outlined in the *Roadmap for Development*[a], the initiative pursues to manage and conserve the two Silk Road Heritage Corridors while working towards multiple goals in the areas of sustainable growth, tourism planning and community development.

A milestone was achieved with the inscription of the Chang'an–Tianshan heritage corridor on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014. The corridor, crossing Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China, was of enormous importance to the history of Central Asia, as it decisively helped to shape the cultures, cities and customs of the region.

a) World Tourism Organization (2014e), *Roadmap for Development – Heritage Conservation & Tourism: Promoting sustainable growth along the Silk Roads Heritage Corridors,* UNWTO, Madrid.

Recently launched, the Western Silk Road Tourism Development Initiative is a project run jointly with UNWTO and the EU, aimed at identifying and developing Silk Road heritage located along the Western link of the Silk Road, an area comprising the entire Mediterranean basin.

The UNWTO Silk Road Programme, together with its Member States represented by the Silk Road Task Force, are working on multiple strategies aimed at raising awareness for the Silk Road on the international stage. This includes raising the presence of the Silk Road on social media and traditional outlets, but also in agreeing upon common standards for branding.

Last but not least, even this high profile initiative has difficulties of funding, due to the wide range of projects it runs, and must work to ensure private sector's and Member States' support to continue implementing the Silk Road Action Plan.

## Conclusions and learning points

This case study is of interest to countries and regions that have the opportunity to participate in major initiatives such as this one, under the aegis of the UNWTO, UNESCO or other powerful international bodies. The case study is important for understanding the constraints, as well as the opportunities, these projects may have.

Building partnerships takes time and can be hindered sometimes by changes in government personnel or changes in local tourism strategies. It is the role of the Silk Road Task Force to manage these issues, and bring stability to the implementation of the Silk Road Action Plan. Demonstrating the results and benefits of joint collaboration in activities, for example in marketing, is crucial to ensure support and value from governments and the private sector.

Ongoing issues, which are inevitable for such an ambitious project include:
1.  **Top to bottom coherence:** the term *Silk Road* is used at both an international and very local level, covering many different things and different levels of quality; and
2.  **Tourism services:** on the ground, in certain countries or regions, there are weaknesses in accommodation, local tours and other services, that risk damaging the brand.

Ultimately, the Silk Road will survive as a result of the political, commercial and institutional interests at stake. In China, for example, the Silk Road has been taken to a level of national policy in all spheres, with the One Belt, One Road initiative to foster connectivity and economic cooperation primarily in Eurasia.

## 10.5    Slow tourism and travel

Slow travel is a form of tourism in which the travellers' intention is to enjoy the journey as much as the arrival, often stopping off on the way, and generally choosing slower forms of transport, that are less environmentally damaging. It is characterised by having a strong interest in the communities, the culture, the landscape and natural environment that the traveller passes through.

This case study features two examples: the *Iron Curtain Trail,* a long-distance cycling route that reflects a growing interest in long-distance, healthy, low impact travel; and *Masar Ibrahim*, a community-based walking trail, mainly developed in the Palestine, but with an ambition to include the whole of Abraham's Path, through Egypt, Israel, Turkey Syria and Iraq.

The principal requirement of slow travel is the existence of an infrastructure that allows travellers to use sustainable, flexible and reliable forms of transport – networks of tracks, routes, waterways and rails that are accessible, well signed and well supported by tourism services. These include cycle routes, walking trails, waterways and rail networks.

**Cycle routes** are in high demand. There is investment throughout Europe in cycle lanes and dedicated trails, at a local, national and transnational level. The European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) states that there are growing numbers of people cycling. It is estimated that there are 2.3 billion cycle tourism trips per year in Europe of which 20.4 million include overnight stays, with a total value in excess of EUR 44 billion per year.[15]

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15   Weston R. et al. (2012), The European Cycle Route Network EuroVelo: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Tourism, Update of the 2009 study, Brussels, Belgium: European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, Transport and Tourism.

Example 10.2          **EuroVelo**



Cycle route in Wallonia, Belgium. © Jackie Ellis.

Managed by the European Cyclists' Federation, the EuroVelo project involves 42 partner countries and consists of 15 cycle routes through Europe. Cyclists have the opportunity to ride through several countries on any one trail, while visiting World Heritage sites and immersing themselves in the natural and cultural heritage of the particular country at that part of the route. The official website is available in three languages and recommends tips and tours on each route. For example, items of interest (maritime heritage, art cities, diet) encountered on the EuroVelo route, and a short description of each country visited. Besides using a slow method of travel and partaking of physical activity, the routes present opportunities to delve into the local community and understand countries' history and culture.

Source: EuroVelo (n.d.), *Discover Europe by bike!* (online), available at: www.eurovelo.com/en (12-07-2016).

**Hiking and walking trails** are also being developed in Europe on a large scale. All countries offer a network of national trails, the major walking routes that are generally designed to take travellers through natural areas and iconic landscapes. The maintenance of these trails is often funded nationally, by government or by hikers' federations. Many smaller trails connect to this larger framework, supported by local authorities that recognize their importance for tourism.

Example 10.3          **European walking trails**

The first long-distance hiking trail was the National Blue Trail in Hungary, established in 1938. The biggest network is that of the French *Grande Randonnée,* linking to the Spanish Gran Recorrido, the Portuguese Grande Rota and the Grote Toutepaden in the Netherlands, via Belgium, representing 60,000 km in total. All trails are denoted by the characteristic red and white trail marker.

National trails connect to walking routes called *E-Paths,* designated by the European Ramblers Association. These link European countries from north to south and east to west, and are numbered E1 to E12.

In some parts of Europe, **waterways** are becoming a major vehicle for tourism travel. Along with cruises on the major rivers, travel along Europe's canals and smaller rivers is increasingly popular in northern Europe. The densest networks are in northern Europe, including in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany, where canals were originally built for industrial purposes, linking up to the river systems and crossing national borders. Canal barge cruising has become an attractive slow-travel holiday option, where families or groups of friends can spend quality time in contact with nature, rural life and smaller towns and communities along the way.

Canal tourism is primarily offered by small operators, including individual owners of the barges, based in one country but operating across frontiers and across the network.

Last but not least, the **rail networks** of Europe were once under threat, but have proved remarkably resilient in the face of competition from road and air transport. For slow travellers, there are two major categories of transnational products: the InterRail Passes, only for sale to

European residents, offering travel in 30 countries; and the Eurail Passes, also available to non-Europeans, with access to 21 countries. Despite low-cost airfares, these passes offer an excellent and efficient way to use public transport to discover Europe.

### 10.5.1    Case study 11: The Iron Curtain Trail

#### Origin and purpose

In 2005, on the initiative of Green Party member Michael Cramer, the European Parliament recognized the Trail as a model project for sustainable tourism. Member States have progressively come on board, to support the project and help develop the necessary infrastructure.

#### The theme

For close to 50 years, after World War II, Europe was divided by the *Iron Curtain,* a de-facto border dividing the Soviet Union and its satellite states from the western non-Soviet States, stretching from the extreme north of Finland to the Black Sea. The Iron Curtain Trail is a cycle track, which runs along the length of this former border, inviting riders to discover European history and culture along the way, in an experience that is rich and sustainable.[16]

Large portions of the route pass through natural spaces. The landscapes running along the former frontier zones were left undeveloped and untouched, for many decades, and have become valuable ecological areas. As a result, the trail has also been named the Green Belt, comprising 150 natural parks, 150 flora and fauna areas, three biosphere reservations and the Harz Mountains National Park.

After dividing Eastern and Western Europe for half a century, the trail seeks to bring cultural understanding and economic benefit to 20 countries on the roughly 9000 km from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. The trail passes through diverse landscapes with deep historic meaning.

#### Marketing work

The principal challenge for a route of this kind is to raise the profile for the long-distance cycling community and provide them with key information. This has been done effectively both by the Iron Curtain Trail managers and by EuroVelo. Brochures and maps are available online, well supported with information.

The main tourism website www.eurovelo13.com serves clear mapping and documented points of interest all along the route, suggests stages and offers contact information of the associations in each country that have taken over the management.

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16   Iron Curtain Trail (n.d.), *'The Iron Curtain Trail – experiencing the history of Europe's division'* (online), available at: www.ironcurtaintrail.eu (12-07-2016).

Tourists can also attend events happening along the route and can download guidebooks, in addition to viewing linked, bookable offers, such as wine routes through Austria, Slovakia and Czech Republic.

## Future ambitions and issues

Issues have arisen due to uneven tourism development in the different countries along the route – and therefore uneven demand. For instance, the trails through Poland and Germany generate 75% of all tourists. Development is highly dependent on engaging the commitment of local governments and associations, when funding, from national or European sources, is ever harder to come by.

For the Iron Curtain Trail to become a major tourism route, managers need to address the challenges relating to lack of infrastructure. The untouched natural environment has a downside: that accommodation, food and other services may be difficult to come by. In addition, access to the trail can be difficult. Europe's train operators are, in general, unwilling to accept bicycles on board and other forms of public transport may be impossible.

These gaps could be filled, to some extent, by local, national or international tour operators, or by cycling federations providing transport services. This will happen naturally as the route develops.

## Conclusions and learning points

Despite these issues, it is clear that the Iron Curtain Trail has captured the imagination of the cycling community, with strong support from the specialist press, and regular magazine articles by journalists who have cycled the Trail.

This case illustrates several important principles in the development of trail-based tourism:
1.   Firstly, the value of a strong, clear concept such as that of the Iron Curtain Trail;
2.   Secondly, that take-up of such a trail will be limited until significant stretches are open and well-developed;
3.   Thirdly, that the power of top-level institutions (at a government or European level) is limited if the authorities, federations, associations and businesses on the ground do not take up the challenge; and
4.   A fourth important condition is the support of a transnational body. The involvement and engagement of EuroVelo has been critical, giving the route marketing power and credibility.

If these conditions are met, the chances for sustainable growth are high, as the market for leisure cycling is growing fast.

The Iron Curtain Trail offers a powerful experience for long-distance cyclists, as well as accessible stretches for more casual vacationists. It meets the three conditions above, although the third will always be a long, hard battle.

## 10.5.2    Case study 12: Masar Ibrahim Al Khalil – Abaham's Path

### Origin and purpose

Created in 2007 by the international non-governmental organization Masar Ibrahim Initiative, in collaboration with Harvard University, *Masar Ibrahim* is a cultural walking route that retraces the journeys of Abraham, an important figure in all the three major monotheistic religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam (see: http://masaribrahim.ps/en/).

Masar Ibrahim represents over 2000 km of marked trails. Developed trails run through Egypt, Jordan, Israel and the Palestine, but the greatest investment has been between Hebron and Jenin. The whole path would represent 120 days of walking.

However, Syria is inaccessible today. And although the path in eastern Turkey follows previously established walking trails, it is not branded on the ground as Masar Ibrahim. While the philosophy of Masar Ibrahim is very much transnational, in practice the *branded and promoted path* runs almost entirely through the Palestine.

### The theme

Masar Ibrahim is a community-based tourism initiative; the trails pass through more than 100 villages and hamlets, with food and accommodation provided by local people. It engages communities through activities and events, ranging from cleaning and maintaining the trail by local groups of scouts, to artistic initiatives where the rich landscapes and history serve as an inspiration for artists.

Tourism along the Masar Ibrahim is a source of income for local communities. Community members participate in exchanges of ideas to further develop the path. Others receive training in customer service, food safety and other hospitality skills.

### Marketing

Marketing and promotion is largely through the organization's presence at international tourism fairs and events, which has resulted in an increase in the number of tour operators including the path in their packages. The initiative has also received media attention with content being covered by publishers such as *The Guardian,* CNN, *National Geographic, The Huffington Post* and *Haaretz.*

An online guidebook has been developed about the path and is available online at www.abrahampath.org with all relative information on local guides, sites, day trips, and routes. A blog on the webpage (http://abrahampath.org/blog/) enables people to read about other travellers' experiences.

## Future ambitions and issues

The challenges are huge and safety is a main concern. Transnational development is currently impossible and certain stretches of the Path, even within Palestine, can occasionally be closed. In addition to political tensions in the region there are visa issues from one country to another, reducing movement and access, both for tourists and tour operators. Palestine also has low tourism infrastructure and tourism services. This is in large part due to the lack of a feasible national tourism strategy, lack of financial and human resources to help manage, develop and promote the destinations.

The Masar Ibrahim hopes, in time, to reinforce ties with Israel and extend the path to Egypt, Turkey and even Syria and Iraq, once circumstances permit. A parallel path runs through Jordan, which could potentially run as far as Saudi Arabia. For the moment, the Masar Ibrahim Initiative is concentrating on regions where it can work with operators and partners on the ground.

## Conclusions and learning points

The case study demonstrates how initiatives based on a strong theme can be successful in attracting funding, even in difficult circumstances, but that it is difficult to achieve financial sustainability in the longer term, to be less dependent on international support and donor agencies.

In the case of Masar Ibrahim, if it has succeeded so far, it is because of single-mindedness. The managers have ignored the politics and the instability and have focused on developing a viable path, linking rural communities, with the aim of creating economic opportunities also for women and young people.

Masar Ibrahim has also succeeded because tourism in the region is remarkably resilient. Despite almost daily reports of violence and turbulence in the international press, the Holy Land[17] is a massive draw, for both religious and cultural tourists, and tourist arrivals in the Palestine have actually increased in the last decade, but growth has not reached rural areas.[18]

The Masar Ibrahim Initiative aims to fill that gap. The challenge is to train and mobilize local communities, to create a trail that offers access to iconic landscapes, offer exchanges with representatives of the different religions and authentic contact with the communities concerned. If it can do so, it has a chance of success.

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17  Comprising sites in Jordan, Israel and Palestine.

18  Abukumail, A.H. (2013), 'Experiential Tourism in Palestinian Rural Communities: "Abraham's Path"', *MENA Knowledge and Learning: Quick Notes Series,* No 82, World Bank, Washington, D.C. (online), available at: www.worldbank.org (20-07-2016).

## 10.6    Heritage and landscape trails

These journeys stir the imagination of travellers. In many cases, these long-distance routes have a flavour of exoticism (e.g., crossing the Russian Federation on the Trans-Siberian railway), of romance (road trip on Route 66) or of adventure (the Sahara, guided by Touareg). They have a powerful role in shaping our perceptions of countries and regions, beyond the limitations of frontiers. These trails combine magnificent landscapes that have shaped the cultures and heritage of local communities in rural areas.

The indigenous peoples of these regions, living their everyday lives, provide a sense of identity, authenticity and uniqueness. UNESCO recognizes cultural landscapes as a category for World Heritage Sites that "embrace a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment"[19].

The following case examples, from the Americas and Asia, include Qhapaq Ñan, often referred to as the Inca Trail or the Andean Road System; and the Ancient Tea Horse Road of China.

### 10.6.1    Case study 13: Qhapaq Ñan

**Origin and purpose**

This ancient road system dates back hundreds of years before the European invasions of South America. Constructed by the Incas over several centuries, the network crosses one of the world's most extreme geographical terrains, linking the snow-capped peaks of the Andes (rising to more than 6,000 m) to coastal plains, running through rainforests, valleys and deserts. The route was at its maximum extension in the 15th century, when it was in use across the length and breadth of the Andes.

The road system was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2014. In the modern restoration project, Qhapaq Ñan represents 273 component sites, spread over more than 6,000 km. They were selected to highlight the social, political, architectural and engineering achievements of the network, along with its associated infrastructure for trade, accommodation and storage, as well as sites of religious significance.[20]

**The theme**

Known as the Inca Trail or Andean Road System, Qhapaq Ñan is an extensive Inca communication, trade and defence network of roads covering 39,000 km and six countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru.

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19   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (n.d.), *Cultural Landscapes* (online), available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/ (12-07-2016).

20   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (n.d.), *Qhapaq Ñan, Andean Road System* (online), available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1459 (01-09-2016).

## Marketing work

From a tourism perspective, Qhapaq Ñan represents a complex network of sites. Traditional tour packages, including Peru's famous Machu Picchu, provide opportunities to hike from Cusco as a 4-day/3-night trek, with extensions up to 7 days. Some international agencies have established community-based projects in the region in an effort to reduce extreme poverty and develop capacity building. For example, in Peru, traditional llamas were re-introduced for ancestral reasons, as well as to develop treks for tourism purposes.

Peru is developing other thematic routes linked to the Mochica culture in the north of the country (Moche Route), in order to diversify their tourism offer and remove pressure from the already highly visited Machu Picchu and Inca Trail.

In general, promotional effort remains at the national level, for instance the Quebrada de Humahuaca section of the Inca Trail in Argentina. There is potential to promote the Qhapaq Ñan as an integral product, encouraging travellers to visit its different sections at different times. Such a promotion would boost the overall value of the experience.

Limited presentation and interpretation facilities are at present available along the Qhapaq Ñan and local communities sharing their experiences and stories with visitors are a key basis of interpretation.[21]

## Future ambitions and issues

On a national level, management systems have been developed in cooperation with the local communities. These are based on processes regarding decision-making, which have been in existence for centuries, operating largely at the local community level. The task of integrating these processes into an overall transnational management system is massive.

## Conclusions and learning points

Qhapaq Nan illustrates the difficulties of developing tourism along major transnational themed routes, covering vast distances, especially where some parts are better known than others. Decision-making requires the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, each with their own priorities and agendas, which inevitably break down into multiple sub-projects that need to be pieced together and coordinated. Local community involvement is essential, but adds to the complication, and marketing can be disjointed.

An extensive tourism product such as Qhapaq Nan will necessarily grow organically, over many years, involving discussion and negotiation between its many stakeholders, from the national to the local level.

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21  United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (n.d.), *Qhapaq Ñan, Andean Road System* (online), available at: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1459 (01-09-2016).

## 10.6.2    Case study 14: The Ancient Tea Horse Road

### Origin and purpose

The Tea Horse Road now generally referred to as the Ancient Tea Horse Road or **Chama Gudao** was a network of caravan paths winding through the mountains of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou in south-west China. At one time, the route extended as far as Bengal. Traces of the route remain, and plans are in place to redevelop the road as a tourism asset.

Although parts of the original routes have been covered by modern transport infrastructure, wildlife, local minority ethnic groups, important monuments and religious shrines can still be found in the region.

### The theme

Caravans transported the tea across China and Asia as the citizens of Yunnan and Sichuan traded the produced tea for horses with the locals in Tibet. An important route for cultural exchange between south-west China and Tibet, the route also facilitated the trade of salt and medicinal products.

Two provinces in China are involved, and the trade route is divided into two major roads: the Sichuan-Tibet Tea Horse Road that developed in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), and the Yunnan-Tibet Tea Horse Road that formed in the late 6th century.

### Marketing work

The routes recently gained attention due to increasing numbers of tourists visiting the region, linked to the wealth of natural and cultural heritage assets.

An example is the Nagqu Horse Festival, which celebrates Tibet's equestrian heritage and the importance of the horse breeds that were traded for tea. The city of Nagqu is situated on the northern section of the Ancient Tea Horse Road but, as is the case, in some other parts of the road, traces of the trade route are now invisible. Elsewhere there are remnants of roads, bridges, inns, market towns, shrines, temples, mosques and churches. The town of Pu'er makes maximum use of the brand. In the town of Lijiang, it is possible to follow part of the ancient route on horseback.

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Example 10.4    **Using the Ancient Tea Horse Road brand**

The road begins in the town of Pu'er, an important producer of tea. The town used the route as a branding icon, and it is home to the China Pu'er Tea Exhibition Garden.

Tour operators propose visits to the cities of Lijiang, Shaxi, Dali and Pu'er in the Yunnan Province to explore highlights of the road and observe the way of life of the indigenous people.

Six luxury boutique hotels are being constructed along the Ancient Tea Horse Road, using the theme of the ancient trade route. Two have already opened: the LUX* Tea Horse Road Benzilan, and the Tea Horse Road Lijiang Resort, both in the Yunnan Province.

### Future ambitions and issues

The Ancient Tea Plantations of Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er, part of the Ancient Tea Horse Road in the Yunnan Province, have been submitted to the UNESCO Tentative List. Currently the Road seems to be developed in a piecemeal fashion and more ambitious global plans may be under discussion.[22]

### Conclusions and learning points

The Ancient Tea Horse Road has great significance for the communities that it traverses in south-west China. It is also a popular public and private sector promotional tool. It has clearly been identified as having huge potential by local governments and tourism developers.[23]

Protection of the heritage assets, in particular of the remaining stretches of the historic road, and involvement of the local communities, especially the minority ethnic groups, will be crucial to achieve long-term sustainable development.

## 10.7    The heritage of peoples

Themed initiatives also tell us the stories of survival, such as those of the Jews in Europe, the Native Americans or the slaves in Africa and the Americas. It is this endurance that has reached our present days, bringing their strong identity and culture.

Such routes provide an exceptional opportunity for **storytelling** and for rich engagement of visitor in the world's heritage.

The example given is that of the Slave Routes, but this case also refers to other *roots* initiatives in form of heritage festivals.

### 10.7.1    Case study 15: Slave Routes

#### Origin and purpose

UNESCO launched the Slave Route Programme in September 1994 in Ouidah, Benin, as a scientific project aiming to study the deep-rooted causes and methods of the slave trade, and shed light on its cultural consequences and the interactions it generated in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and Europe.[24] The 1995 Accra Declaration[25] between UNESCO and

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22   Unfortunately, at the time of publication of this handbook there were no concrete projects planned.

23   Sigley, G. (2010), 'Cultural heritage tourism and the Ancient Tea Horse Road of Southwest China', *International Journal of China Studies,* volume 1, No 2, pp. 531–544.

24   The focus has been primarily on the slave trade between West Africa and the Americas, due to the vast numbers that were transported, but also that this trade is better documented than slavery in the Indian Ocean and other parts of the world. This Handbook also focuses on 'Atlantic' slavery, where the potential for tourism development is the greatest.

25   World Tourism Organization (2015b), *Affiliate Members Report, Volume Twelve: Global Report on Cultural Routes and Itineraries,* UNWTO, Madrid.

UNWTO adopted a coordinated approach to the development of a cultural tourism programme in the memory of slavery and the diaspora. (www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/).

## The theme

The international seminar on "Heritage, Identity and Culture: management of sites and places of memory related to the slave trade and slavery" held 2012 in Brazil resulted in the creation of a detailed inventory of field experiences, shared best practices and identified constraints and challenges to tourism memory. The first international network of managers of sites and itineraries of memory related to the slave trade and slavery was created.

Up until now, the Slave Routes have not been developed as a unified transnational tourism initiative on the model of others seen in this handbook. They represent a broad collection of initiatives, under the coordinating banner of UNESCO, spread across the African continent and the Americas, underpinned by a rich store of cultural and academic work. Actions remain principally of a cultural artistic and educational nature.

## Marketing work

On the ground and on a country-by-country basis, there are numerous tourism initiatives. Examples include the Cape Coast of Ghana, where visitors can go to the remains of the biggest slave market in West Africa; the Cape Coast Castle, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Elmina Castle, only a few kilometres away.

Gorée Island off the coast of Senegal was the largest slave-trading centre on the African coast during 15th to 19th century. This World Heritage Site and pilgrimage destination for African diaspora attracts 200,000 tourists annually. The principle site on the island is the House of Slaves *(Maison des Esclaves)* museum of the Atlantic slave trade, remembering the final exit point of African slaves en route to the New World.

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Example 10.5          **The Assin Manso Slave Market, Ghana**

The Slave Market was important to the Ghana Slave trade. Slaves brought from inland Ghana would stop here to rest from their long journey, be sorted and be bathed in the Donkor Nsuo (the Slave River), before heading another 40 km to the coast where they would be sold or shipped out. Visits to Assin Manso are arranged through stops on day tours, as the site is not developed as a major tourist destination but rather as a modest memorial site.

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The Pan African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) has taken place in Ghana every two years since 1992, as a festival of African dance, music and other performing arts for Africans and those of African descent, bringing Africans of the continent and of the diaspora together, around issues raised by slavery. These festivals are complemented with city tours and day trips to heritage and slave-related sites.

| Example 10.6 | **The International Roots Festival, The Gambia** |
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The Roots Festival is in its 12th edition and is a historical, cultural and educational event that commemorates enslavement and transportation of Africans to the Americas and Caribbean Islands. It reaches out to people residing in EU countries, the Caribbean islands, the United States of America, Canada and Latin America who wish to return to their roots and experience the cultures of their people.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Salvador de Bahia in Brazil saw the creation of the New World's first slave market in 1558, becoming the country's main port thanks to slavery and sugar plantations. The city is now known as a "bright fusion of culture" thanks to the mix of African, European and Native cultures. Many sites and museums linked to the slave trade are open to the public, including the Solar do Unhão, a complex for sugar shipment that is said to be haunted by the spirits of slaves.

| Example 10.7 | **Whitney Plantation (Historical District), Louisiana, United States of America** |
|---|---|

This former plantation in Louisiana is now a Museum of Southern American Slavery. Through exhibits, former slave testimonials, memorial artwork and restored buildings, visitors gain a unique insight into the lives of Louisiana's slaves. This American National Historical Place is part of the Louisiana African American Heritage Trail. The Whitney Plantation promotes itself as being the first museum that focuses on the "non-sugar coated experience" of the slaves.

## Future ambitions and issues

There is no doubt of the transnational tourism potential of the Slave Routes, which is an exceptional example of successful storytelling. Individual intranational initiatives, such as those mentioned above, draw large numbers of visitors. For many people, in many countries, including African-Americans in the United States of Amercia, the Caribbean or South America, engagement with this period of history is a powerful reason to travel.

Exactly where their ancestors came from may be impossible to trace, but the certainty is that they were captured and then transported in slave ships to the New World. Tourism will continue to focus on the known sites: where slaves were assembled, embarked on vessels crossing the Ocean, disembarked and distributed on the plantations where they were put to work.

## Conclusions and learning points

Seen from a tourism perspective, there appears to be more than enough material for a major transnational tourism route of a scale equivalent to the Silk Road, including many sites and paths traversing the African continent and destination countries across the Atlantic. As interest grows, as scholarship deepens, as cultural events and festivals flourish, the pressure for such an initiative increases. In the meantime, the Stave Routes initiative is capturing the imagination of many. This is an example of experiential tourism at its deepest level.

Until now, the Slave Routes have been searching an optimum development model. A pilgrimage trail model (such as St. Olav or the Via Francigena) is inadequate, because of the massive scale and variety of the slave trade and of the emotional charge.

It would, in any case, be essential for such a highly charged initiative to be 'owned' by the stakeholders, including the visitors and the local managers in the host countries.

## 10.8    Spiritual routes

Although the concept of pilgrimage may appear to be something from the past, it is proving attractive to many, including travellers with non-religious motives, e.g., adventurous travellers who want to explore or undertake a physical challenge, or – as a form of slow tourism – for people interested in connecting with nature, rural lifestyles and contact with local communities.

This case study presents the *Camino de Santiago* or *Camino Francés* or Saint James' Way (Europe), and the Buddhist Circuits (Nepal and India).

### 10.8.1    Case study 16: *Camino de Santiago* (*Camino Francés* or Saint James' Way)

#### Origin and purpose

The *Camino de Santiago* is by far the best-known walking route in Europe. It was the first Cultural Route to receive certification from the Council of Europe, and the *Camino Francés* (the part of the Saint James' Way originating in central France) was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993. Numbers of pilgrims have steadily grown in the last decade, from 94,000 in 2005 to 263,000 in 2015.[26] The Saint James' Way has become a world renowned tourism experience, as well as a devotional pilgrimage route (see: http://santiago-compostela.net/ and www.caminosantiagodecompostela.com/).

#### The theme

The *Camino de Santiago* was originally established as a pilgrimage route in the 9th century, after the discovery of Saint James (Santiago) the Apostle's tomb in the Iberian Peninsula. The Camino stretched from the Iberian Peninsula throughout Europe, with some pilgrims going as far as Egypt. The *Camino* was originally defined by a network of old Roman Roads that joined the neuralgic points of the Peninsula. The quick rise of pilgrims on the *Camino* lead to the appearance of new hospitals, churches, monasteries, abbeys and towns. However, after 500 years the trail began to decline, in part by wars, epidemics and natural catastrophes.

The *Camino Francés* is the best-known variant of the *Camino.* It stretches across northern Spain to Santiago de Compstela in Galicia and has become the most popular route for pilgrims. Almost two thirds of them walk the *Camino Francés,* as it is considered the part of the *Camino de Santiago* that gives you the "most of the pilgrimage experience".

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26    Oficina del Peregrino (2016), *Informe estadístico Año 2015* (online), available at: www.oficinadelperegrino.com (12-12-2016).

The *Camino* resurfaced at the end of the 1800s and travellers started to take up interest in the last quarter of the 20th century thanks to a new wave of interest in pilgrimage tourism. The *Camino* has become an important cultural phenomenon, inspiring countless books, documentaries and feature films.

## Marketing

The Pilgrim's Welcome Office publishes annual statistics that are analysed with interest by tourism professionals. They reveal that the Spanish still represent most pilgrims (47% in 2015), but that international markets are growing fast, including walkers from markets such as Germany, Italy and the United States of America (around 10% of pilgrims each).

The regional authority, the *Xunta de Galicia* (Government of Galicia), has understood the tourism potential and actively promotes the *Camino* as a tourist activity. The first major advertising campaign was run in the Holy Year of 1993, giving a significant boost to the number of pilgrims completing the route. Subsequent media exposure through books and documentaries periodically raise the profile, and numbers of international visitors attracted to walk all or part of the route.

The *Camino* is a grass-roots phenomenon and the marketing reflects that in a multiplicity of websites, blogs and social media pages. Numbers are driven by actions beyond the control of the *Xunta de Galicia.* For example, the release of the American film "The Way" in 2010, starring Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez, which boosted the number of pilgrims from the United States of America significantly and sustainably.

## Future ambitions and issues

Given this grass-roots energy, the ambitions of the *Xunta de Galicia* are clear: to continue maintaining and improving the routes that lead to Santiago de Compostela.

Despite improvements, many portions of the *Camino Francés* remain in poor condition, and accommodation can be of low quality and insufficient. For most pilgrims, these hardships are part of the experience, but for the *cultural* walkers – those that are more likely to stop and spend along the way – they are a limitation.

There are different ways to Santiago, but they are not always well linked. Better coordination is required between the regions of Spain, France and the other countries concerned. For example, initiatives are under way to improve the Portuguese Way, led by local authorities in Portugal. Therefore, a coordinated online mapping of all routes, accommodation and services for the *Camino* is still a long way off.

## Conclusions and learning points

The *Camino* has become a mythical journey and a reference for all other transnational themed routes. It has, in particular, a powerful influence over all other European pilgrim routes. Ex-pilgrims now form a large and active community, interested in new pilgrimage experiences. For example,

at least one hostel on the St. Olav Ways is run by volunteers who have completed the pilgrimage to Santiago.

The *Camino* is cited by many as an example to follow, but NTOs and DMOs should be cautious.

The *Camino* is unique: in its history, its form and its mode of operation, and not transposable. Project leaders can extract specific learnings from this case, but should not attempt to copy, rather focus their energies of developing routes on the basis of their own specific strengths and values.

## 10.8.2    Case study 17: The Buddhist Circuit

### Origin and purpose

This initiative enjoys international support, in particular from the World Bank, working in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism of the Government of India, the State Governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the private sector, Buddhist monasteries and sects. The resulting document was titled *Investing in the Buddhist Circuit: Enhancing the spiritual, environmental, social and economic value of the places visited by the Buddha in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, India 2014–2018.* In May 2016, the World Bank requested Expressions of Interest to design and support the implementation of a policy framework to foster the development of sustainable and inclusive tourism along the Buddhist Circuit in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

### The theme

India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Tibet have many different sacred sites, some of them around 2500 years old. The Buddhist Circuit has primarily been led by the private sector, offering package tours to places of pilgrimage associated with the life and teachings of the Lord Buddha, and where visitors can also learn from history, culture or religion.

The Buddhist Circuit invites pilgrims and tourists to reflect on Buddha's long journey. Visiting the many shrines, monasteries and other religious sites created from the spread of Buddhism, they will experience Buddha's great meditations, spiritual struggle, moment of enlightenment and his teachings of peace and non-violence.

### Marketing

The Buddhist Circuit promotes itself in three distinct ways: (1) as a Buddhist pilgrimage route, (2) as an ancient heritage route, and (3) as a mind, body, and spirit route focusing on Buddhist traditions of meditation, yoga and self-refection.

Knowledge of the route for domestic tourists is largely through word of mouth, travel literature and newspapers. Inbound marketing is largely handled through Buddhist organizations' websites, through travel literature and through tour operators as part of a package tour.

The Indian Ministry of Tourism website promotes the route under the banner of "Incredible India", and through information materials such as a foldout map and information about key Buddhist sites in India, or *Walking with the Buddha,* a handbook on the origins, development, practices and sites of Buddhism in India.

The Buddhist Circuit has no formal brand identity; it is usually portrayed as part of a package tour or as a separate tourism entity. Despite continuous and proactive marketing efforts, the route is mainly promoted by individuals and religious bodies,

## Future ambitions and issues

The Buddhist Circuit currently has limited market reach and awareness within the Buddhist community; even less with non-Buddhist travellers. Brand awareness of the route is not as strong as it could be and online marketing is limited. The website also lacks involvement from the Buddhist community to help increase awareness.

With the route mainly catering to Buddhist devotees, tourist interpretation and information centres are sparse and often of low quality. Consequently, the current tourism products and services, for example multi-lingual guides, entertainment, quality tourist brand accommodation and aesthetic appeal, are low standard.

Sites and destinations are ill-prepared to deal with large visitor flows and they suffer from poor or lack of infrastructure and management. Railway and transportation services are limited to the areas passed by the Buddhist Circuit, and road infrastructure needs to be improved. There is an increasing threat to the sites becoming damaged from pollution and from general lack of local understanding of the value they can bring, leading to overall decline.

The Buddhist Circuit aims to establish and promote their own spiritual tourism brand and to promote sites and smaller routes through exhibitions, marketing and partnerships with tourism bodies. They plan to further distribute information at appropriate locations and channels, and to coordinate events and festivals, especially within Buddhist source markets.

The Buddhist Circuit strategy is to attract higher-spending tourists and link them to local goods and service providers. It fosters cooperation between public and private sector investors to greatly improve tourist services, infrastructure and brand awareness. The circuit managers aim to establish joint marketing programmes with local and international airlines to grow air traffic to the main airports near the route and to extend and lengthen the tourist season. They also plan to work with local transport providers to improve rail and road links.

## Conclusions and learning points

The case demonstrates that themes of high spiritual importance will naturally attract an audience of cultural travellers. That, in turn, will engage local tour operators to provide the services needed. Secondly it shows that – to give coherence to the whole – it is important to provide an overall structure, which the tour operators cannot provide.

Many pilgrimages in Asia are direct expressions of spiritual fervour, with only an indirect relation to tourism. The Buddhist Circuit's initiative, on the other hand, has taken a spiritual theme and has developed it in an inclusive manner, respecting the spiritual routes, but opening it to tourism from many different sources.

# Chapter 11

# Conclusions to the handbook

This chapter pulls together the essential outcomes from this handbook:

1. It highlights the **essential principles** for the partners to respect, if developing and marketing a transnational route or thematic network;

2. It highlights the main **benefits, challenges and opportunities** that the stakeholders can expect from such an initiative, but also the challenges they will face; and

3. Last but not least, it provides a **view to the future** – an indication of *how* and at *what speed* this sector will be developing.

## 11.1 Principles for development and marketing

### 11.1.1 The characteristics of successful routes and themes

Successful routes and thematic networks are the result of determined **planning and preparation,** in line with the four stages presented in chapters 5 to 8.

They involve both the **public *and* private sectors,** encouraging initiatives from local authorities, local businesses and all other groups that can contribute to bringing the route or network to life.

Successful thematic routes and networks are **aspirational.** They appeal to the emotions and the intellect, make visitors curious, and make them dream. The distance of travel and the crossing of frontiers is an integral part of that dream.

They engage the visitor, awakening the mind and the senses. Successful transnational initiatives tell a **shared story** that links assets and experiences across borders.

They provide **experiences** that people can relate to: visits that are attractive, and that correspond to consumers' lifestyles and travel ambitions.

### 11.1.2 Specific success factors

The marketing of a transnational initiative cannot succeed without the following elements in place:

– An overall management structure for marketing with clear internal rules and processes;
– Input from local stakeholders – at every stage of the marketing process – to ensure their continued and long-term engagement;
– Clear agreement on the profile of customers and the markets to be targeted;
– Good use made of private sector stakeholders to help drive the marketing: transport companies, accommodation providers, food and drink producers and providers, guides, tour operators, and others;

–    All partners operating under a common brand with coherent and shared messages when communicating and marketing;

–    Successful integration of new communication and information channels, and active and effective use of social media; and

–    Clarity of how the initiative can be funded and resourced long-term.

Finally, there must be a good understanding and empathy between the partners, over the project goals. More than anything else, transnational collaboration is about people and goodwill.

## 11.2    Benefits

Transnational routes and themes will bring together many different players from the tourism industry, at the national, regional and local level, and from the local communities involved, around an inspiring project. There can be dozens, if not hundreds of stakeholders. They can therefore redefine the focus, the style and the nature of tourism in the destinations concerned, providing a platform for the creation of new and exciting products and services, along the routes and across the networks.

Taking such an initiative to market will therefore bring the partners benefits of many different kinds:

**In terms of innovation:**

–    It will provide an opportunity to develop new and innovative visitor experiences in line with emerging market trends; and

–    It is likely to attract new market segments, and generate repeat visits.

**In terms of the economy:**

–    It can spread demand: with a themed approach, a destination can generate interest in more peripheral regions or at specific times of year to avoid strong seasonality at the destination in order to reduce pressure on key attractions;

–    It will tend to lengthen visit stay, and encourage additional stay. In some cases, it can attract a higher-yield visitor;

–    As a result, it can help revitalise declining areas and/or open up new destinations, thereby creating new employment opportunities and stimulating entrepreneurship; and

–    It can create the conditions for attracting funding or private sector investment.

**In terms of relations between the partners:**

–    It creates multiple opportunities for transboundary cooperation and collaborative destination marketing;

–    It will develop cultural understanding and strengthening of social cohesion and the cultural links between people at the local, regional, national and/or international levels; and

–    It will have the effect of motivating and engaging local stakeholders who will – in general – be delighted to be involved in such a project.

**In terms of sustainability:**

–    It can be used as a tool to protect and promote the natural and cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible. It can help provide economic viability to activities, which might

otherwise be 'lost', particularly those related to more traditional sectors such as agriculture or handicraft; and

–  It can give travellers with an interest in extensive natural systems – ecological, topographical or geological – a richer experience and understanding.

Looking at transnational tourism development opportunities from a visitor-centric perspective, there is strong motivating factors for pursuing collaborative initiatives:

–  A transnational route or network is highly attractive to travellers who are seeking multi-cultural aspirational experiences. Many tourists relish covering extensive territories and enjoy the changing scenery and lifestyles, whatever the mode of travel;

–  The benefits of developing structured transnational routes and themed products are seen most evidently in regions such as Europe, where smaller countries are motivated to collaborate, for the sake of critical mass, and where shared infrastructures, such as the common use of the Euro, can facilitate cross-border collaboration; and

–  For larger nations, the interest may be primarily in developing and marketing their frontier regions, in collaboration with their neighbours.

Figure 11.1     **Benefits and opportunities of transnational partnering**
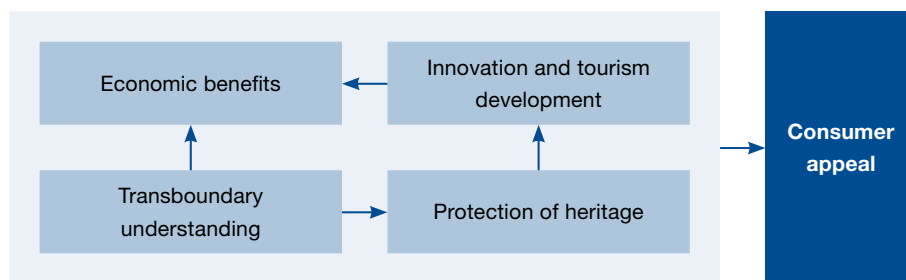


**Key point:**

A successful transnational tourism initiative is a source of inspiration for tourism professionals and local communities in all the countries concerned. NTOs and DMOs can use the initiative as a catalyst, to redesign their tourism offer in key regions, develop new products and attract new market segments.

## 11.3    Challenges

At the same time, one cannot disguise the fact that transnational projects are demanding, not easy to set up and manage.

The source of difficulties may sometimes lie at a higher level, for example:

– The reluctance of DMOs to pursue cross-border opportunities, given their **mandate** to develop tourism within their own boundaries, to differentiate their destination, to brand and promote it;

– Difficulties in **coordinating** tourism policies and strategic priorities, and setting up inclusive governance models; and

– Variations in **administrative structures,** modes of funding and decision-making.

At the ground level, the challenges are mostly of a practical nature. They may be due to language difficulties; the currency may not be the same in all countries; or the accounting practices may differ. There can also be cultural differences between territories, which affect working practices and expectations.

All this said, if there is the political will to make the project succeed, all such problems could be overcome.

> **Key point:**
>
> Any transnational project is likely to be complex, due to the need to coordinated policies and strategies between the partners concerned. There may be blockages at both a practical and a political level. They will therefore need high-level support, as well as determination on the part of the project managers.

## 11.4    Opportunities

The opportunities for creating transnational routes and developing networks have never been greater.

### 11.4.1    Global reach

All tourism businesses are now on a worldwide stage. With a few exceptions, cross-border travel is becoming easier as border restrictions and requirements lessen. Technology can facilitate security clearance, allowing travellers to cross borders faster, an example being the introduction of identity chips in passports.

In football tournaments, fans follow their teams wherever they are playing. Bird-watchers will travel hundreds of kilometres to see a rare species. There is a community of art lovers that travel

to see every one of the favourite artist's installations, wherever they are in the world.[1] This means that *the theme has greater importance than the place* or, more exactly, *that the place becomes an expression of the overriding theme.*

> **Key point:**
>
> Although tourism tends to be structured on a country-by-country basis, the choice of one country over another is becoming less important in a leisure traveller's choice of holiday destination. A large proportion of travellers will choose their destination according to their passion or special interest, in other words according to a theme, whether that is sport, nature, heritage or something else. Thanks to low-cost travel, they can pursue their passion anywhere in the world.

## 11.4.2    A changing mind-set

These changes are being driven also by easier communication. In particular, communication costs have dropped dramatically and communication speeds have increased, alongside tools that enable immediate, no-cost contact with partners in other countries.

With this evolution has come a change of mind-set, particularly among younger generations: working with colleagues in another country, even another continent, is no longer unusual. Working and playing transnationally have become part of everyday life.

Technology trends of specific interest to transnational themed tourism include:
– **High-speed Internet** allowing travellers to access information quickly and easily, even while travelling across frontiers;
– **Wi-Fi coverage** is becoming generalised and roaming charges dropping, making regular content download ever easier, in all circumstances; and
– **New web design standards** deliver content in a user friendly way to smart phones and tablets.

> **Key point:**
>
> As technology advances, it tends to reduce the importance of frontiers. Travellers expect to find the same services in every country of the world, and that expectation tends to create common standards, wherever one travels. Paradoxically, this standardisation increases the traveller's desire to discover elements of specific cultural interest, from one country to the next.

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1    For instance, Christo's installations are on a massive scale and include the Valley Curtain (Colorado), the Surrounded Islands (Miami), the wrapping of the Pont Neuf bridge (Paris) or of the Reichstag (Berlin).

## 11.5     A view to the future

It is appropriate to reference the younger generation and the world they will inhabit. They will explore the networks and walk the routes with new eyes and, hopefully, with awe and excitement.

### 11.5.1    Early days

The development of transnational tourism routes and networks by National Tourism Offices and DMOs is still exceptional, and the marketing of those routes and networks still tends to be in early stage of development.

This can be ascertained by consultation of any book on themed tourism, or any report from international organizations such as UNWTO, UNESCO or the European Travel Commission. There are many excellent local and national-level examples of routes and networks that have been developed for tourism, and of well-developed tourism itineraries and routes; but only a handful that operate effectively at a transnational level.

A reason for the low level of development is simply that the full set-up of a transnational route or network may be a project of five or ten years. Once established, it is a powerful tool for collaboration and marketing; but it requires patience and determination.

Successful initiatives generally have the overt support of transnational bodies such as UNWTO or more specialised organizations such as the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office or EuroVelo. Readers will find references to such bodies in chapter 3.5. Thirty three initiatives are certified as Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. This certification provides a greater likelihood that the network or route is implementing an ambitious marketing plan at an international level, but by no means a guarantee.

The case studies and examples given in this handbook or listed in the annexes represent the vast majority of viable transnational tourism projects developed on the basis of a theme. Even among these, the marketing and tourism development plans are often still "under development".

**Key point:**

Accelerating the development of transnational cooperation is in the hands of the NTOs and DMOs. Working with bodies such as UNWTO, UNESCO, ETC or the Council of Europe they can build bridges across frontiers, and break down habits of working solely within their own boundaries.

## 11.5.2  The trends

Although development has been slow until now, the phenomenon of transnational tourism is likely to evolve rapidly.

Tourists already think in transnational terms, and with transnational tours, cruises and other products tourism professionals are responding to this demand. Tour operators are opening up markets based on niche themes, in areas such as religious tourism, dark tourism, industrial tourism, and so on.

The demand is also coming from younger generations, for whom frontiers have less meaning, and who daily consult global sources of tourism information.

In summary three main trends will lead to the development of transnational themed tourism:

1. The inevitable development of **international exchange.** Crossing borders without difficulty is becoming an increasing expectation of modern tourists – with the exception, of course, of high-conflict zones, and in times of high insecurity. In Europe, the vast majority of consumers have travelled to foreign countries, many of them on multiple occasions, and are becoming increasingly accustomed to international travel;

2. The development of **technology** will continue to facilitate travel, by reducing costs, making booking easier, and by providing many other services. It also facilitates the creation of themed products across frontiers; and

3. The increasingly active support of **international bodies.** Transnational themed tourism is encouraged and supported by organizations such as UNESCO, UNWTO, the European Travel Commission (ETC), the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, Mercosur, ECOWAS, the World Bank, by major charities and by international development agencies.

**Key point:**

Transnational models of tourism will increasingly become the norm. It is a slow but inevitable process, driven by the market expectations, which are in turn driven by the expectations of new generations of travellers.

## 11.5.3  Looking forward

Pioneering projects such as UNWTO Silk Road will therefore be followed by many more. This handbook profiles many cases in early stages of development, which could become major tourism brands in the coming years.

Transnational themes can create a powerful dynamic; how it can engage local communities, tourism businesses, local authorities and the general public. It brings many other associated benefits:

– Giving a voice to local communities;
– Helping to rediscover local traditions and cultural assets;
– Encouraging walking, cycling and other forms of *slow* travel; and
– Raising public awareness as to the richness and variety of human experience.

For these reasons, whatever the hurdles, it is certain that today's transnational tourism routes and networks will continue to grow and mature, and that many others will be launched and flourish in the coming years, based on sustainable and fruitful partnerships between the public and private sectors.

# Annexes

# Annex 1

# Example and case study links

| Chapter | Case | Location | Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Chapter 1** | | | |
| Example 1.1 | Budapest, Hungary | Europe | www.lonelyplanet.com/travel-tips-and-articles/57567 |
| Example 1.2 | Chocolate Way | Caribbean, Europe, Latin America | www.thechocolateway.eu/ |
| Example 1.3 | Te Araora | New Zealand | www.teararoa.org.nz/ |
| Example 1.4 | The case of Aqui Terme | Europe | European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA) www.ehtta.eu |
| Case study 1 | Marketing a cultural theme: historic thermal towns | | |
| **Chapter 2** | | | |
| Example 2.1 | The culture of olive oil | France | www.buislesbaronnies.com/terroir/olive.php |
| Example 2.2 | Jamaica – "feel the vibe" | Jamaica | www.visitjamaica.com |
| Example 2.3 | Yamashiro – "the home to stories" | Japan | www.kyoto-kankou.or.jp/english/info_search/?menu=1&area=yamashiro |
| Example 2.4 | Themes and festivals | France, England | www.bdangouleme.com/medias/2015/documents/2015_PRESS_KIT_FIBD_ENGLISH-web.pdf |
| Example 2.5 | Talking statues | England | www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/projects/talking-statues |
| Example 2.6 | Literary themed destinations – "The Hobbiton Movie Set" | New Zealand | www.businessinsider.com/the-hobbiton-movie-set-is-a-top-tourist-attraction-in-new-zealand-2015-6 |
| Example 2.7 | Red tourism | China | www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2009/sep/28/china-china |
| Example 2.8 | Wild Atlantic Way | Ireland, North Ireland | www.wildatlanticway.com/home/ www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way.aspx |
| Example 2.9 | New wine tourism | Georgia | www.gwa.ge/ |

| Chapter | Case | Location | Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| Example 2.10 | **Commercial bundling of themes** | | |
| | Cultural cycling tours in Asia | Asia | www.spiceroads.com/ |
| | Wine cruises – "Romantic Danube" | Europe, Africa, South-East Asia | www.amawaterways.com/destination/europe-river-cruises/2017/the-romantic-danube-wine-cruise |
| | Coffee Tours | South America | www.viator.com/Central-and-South-America-tours/Coffee-and-Tea-Tours/d9-g6-c5325 |
| | Antarctica | Falkland Islands, South Georgia Island | www.intrepidtravel.com/us/antarctica |
| Example 2.11 | City trail – "The Freedom Trail" | America | www.thefreedomtrail.org/ |
| Case study 2 | Experience and storytelling – the Via Francigena | France, Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom | www.viefrancigene.org/en/ |
| **Chapter 3** | | | |
| Example 3.1 | Route 66 (Los Angeles to Chicago) | North America | www.historic66.com |
| Example 3.2 | Big Bend National Park and Maderas del Carmen | Mexico and United States of America | https://simec.conanp.gob.mx/ficha.php?anp=158&reg=11 |
| Example 3.3 | Eurocity Chaves-Verin | Portugal, Spain | http://en.eurocidadechavesverin.eu/project/presentation |
| Case study 3 | Making it transnational – The Alaska Highway | Canada, United States of America | http://ouralaskahighway.com www.hellobc.com/british-columbia/transportation-maps/driving-routes/27/alaska-highway.aspx |
| **Chapter 4** | | | |
| Example 4.1 | **Localized cross-border initiatives** | | |
| | Iguazú/Iguacu National Parks | Argentina, Brazil | http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/303 |
| | Euroregion Country of Lakes | Europe | www.ezeruzeme.lv/about-us/ |
| Example 4.2 | **Itineraries and travel initiatives** | | |
| | Colonial and Volcanoes Route | Latin America | www.arqueotur.org/rutas/centroamerica-ruta-colonial-y-de-los-volcanes.html |
| | Lewis and Clark Expedition Trail | American | http://lewisandclarktrail.com/ |
| | The Bibbulmun Track | Australia | www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au |

| Chapter | Case | Location | Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| Example 4.3 | **Developers of itineraries and travel corridors in Europe** | | |
| | Rail travel – "The Eurail Pass" | Europe | www.eurail.com/en/eurail-passes |
| | European Greenways | Europe | www.aevv-egwa.org <br> www.oevv-egwo.org |
| | EuroVelo | Europe | www.eurovelo.com/en |
| Example 4.4 | **The networking model** | | |
| | Jesuit Route | Latin America | http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=26422&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html |
| | The Silk Road on the Sea | China, Viet Nam | www.travelchinaguide.com/silk-road/maritime-silk-route.htm |
| Example 4.5 | **Sustainable environmental management initiatives** | | |
| | Altai Mountains | Russian Federation, Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan | www.britannica.com/place/Altai-Mountains |
| | Neusiedlersee-Seewinkl and Ferto-Hansag Transboundary National Park | Australia, Hungary | www.europarc.org/neusiedlersee-seewinkl-ferto-hansag/ |
| Example 4.6 | **Theme and experience initiatives** | | |
| | Wines of the Caucasus | Georgia | http://oldworldwinetours.com/en |
| | Secret Wine Tours | Europe | www.secretwinetours.com/ |
| | Tasting Europe | Europe | www.tastingeurope.com/ |
| | The Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle | Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand | http://imtgt.org/ |
| Example 4.7 | **Strategic regional cooperation initiatives** | | |
| | Great Tea Road | China, the Russian Federation, Mongolia | www.newtearoad.com/index.php |
| | Lake Constance | Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein | www.bodensee.eu/de |
| | Trail of Tears | America | www.nps.gov/trte/index.htm |
| Case Study 4 | Grass-roots cultural initiatives – The Trail of Tears | | |

| Chapter | Case | Location | Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Chapter 5** | | | |
| Example 5.1 | **Western and central Mediterranean initiatives** | | |
| | Iter Vitis Roue | Europe | www.tastingeurope.com/routes/iter-vitis-ways-vine-europe |
| | ODYSSEA Cultures Euro-Med-Cultural Route Ports and Cultures of the Mediterranean | Europe, Asia, Middle East | www.odyssea.eu/odyssea2010/index.php |
| | Routes of El Legado Andalusí | Spain, Portugal, North Africa, the Middle East | http://culture-routes.net/routes/the-routes-of-el-legado-of-andalusi |
| | MEET The Mediterranean Experience of Eco-tourism Network | Africa, Europe, Middle East | www.meetnetwork.org/ |
| | Prehistoric Rock Art Trails | Europe | www.prehistour.eu |
| Example 5.2 | **The Balkans and eastern Mediterranean initiatives** | | |
| | Taste the Mediterranean | Europe | www.tastethemediterranean.eu/en/ |
| | Sultan's Trail | Europe | www.sultanstrail.com/ |
| | Peaks of the Balkans | Europe | www.peaksofthebalkans.com |
| | Bulgaria (Montana) and Serbia (Nish) | Europe | http://tour-montana-nis.com/?cid=32 |
| Example 5.3 | **North-eastern Europe initiatives** | | |
| | Baltic Museums Network | Europe | http://balticmuseums.ning.com/ |
| | Maritime Atlas of the South Baltic | Germany, Lithuania, Sweden, Poland | www.maritimeatlas.eu/ |
| | Latgale and Aukstaitija Themed Villages | Latvia, Lithuania | www.latgale.lv/en/village_heritage/villages |
| | Bialowieza Transborder Trail | Poland, Belarus | http://powiat.hajnowka.pl/ctrpb/transborder_trail_eng |
| Example 5.4 | **Scandinavia and the Baltic initiatives** | | |
| | The Baltic Sea Culinary Route | Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland | www.balticseaculinary.com/ |
| | Viking Routes | Europe | www.destinationviking.com/ |
| | Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park | Russian Federation, Norway, Finland | www.pasvik-inari.net/ |
| | St. Olav Ways | North Europe | http://pilegrimsleden.no/en/ |

| Chapter | Case | Location | Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| Example 5.5 | **The North Sea, Channel and Atlantic fringe initiatives** | | |
| | The Great Lighthouses of Ireland | Island | www.greatlighthouses.com/ |
| | Liberation Route Europe | Europe | http://liberationroute.com/ |
| | Marble Arch Cave Global Geopark | Europe | www.marblearchcavesgeopark.com/ |
| | North Sea Cycle Route | Europe | www.northsea-cycle.com/ |
| Example 5.6 | **From the Rhine to the Vistula, the Elbe to the Danube initiatives** | | |
| | Neusiedlersee-Seewinkly (Austria) and Ferto-Hansag (Hungary) Transboundary National Park | Austria, Hungary | www.europarc.org/neusiedlersee-seewinkl-ferto-hansag/ |
| | Martin Luther Routes | France, Germany, Switzerland | www.luther2017.de/en/ <br><br> www.germany.travel/en/specials/luther/luther-routes/luther-routes.html |
| | Lake Constance (Bodensee) | Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria | www.bodensee.eu/en |
| | Krkonose/Karkonosze Mountains National Park | Czech Republic, Poland | www.krkonose.eu/en |
| | Oranje Route | German, Netherlands | www.germany.travel/nl/ms/oranjeroute/home-page.html |
| | European Route of Brick Gothic | Denmark, Poland, Germany | www.eurob.org/index.php/1/4 |
| | Via Sancti Martini | Europe | www.viasanctimartini.eu/en |
| **Chapter 6** | | | |
| Example 6.1 | The Slave Routes theme | Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America | www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/ |
| Example 6.2 | The Salt Road: clarifying the theme | Europe | www.beyond.fr/themes/routesel.html |
| Case study 5 | Step-by-step planning – the Wadden Sea | Denmark, Germany, Netherlands | www.waddensea-worldheritage.org/ |
| **Chapter 7** | | | |
| Example 7.1 | The Explorer Quotient® | Global | http://en.destinationcanada.com/resources-industry/explorer-quotient |
| Example 7.2 | Analysing cycle tourism | Europe | http://silvercyclists.eu/eurovelo-panel-discussion-cycling-all-itb-berlin-2016 |
| Example 7.3 | Australia's National Landscapes Program | Australia | www.ecotourism.org.au/assets/the-great-barrier-reef-a-guide-book-to-making-the-most-of-your-landscape-positioning-1.pdf |

| Chapter | Case | Location | Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| Example 7.4 | Stories along the road | Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg | www.vennbahn.eu/en |
| Example 7.5 | Stories of tragedy | United States of America | www.nationaltota.org |
| Case study 6 | Sacred sites in the Kii Mountain Range | Japan | www.kumano-travel.com/index/en/action_ModelCourseDetail_Detail/id58 |
| **Chapter 8** | | | |
| Example 8.1 | The Great Lighthouses of Ireland Example | Ireland | www.greatlighthouses.com/ |
| Example 8.2 | The Columban Way | North Island, Island | www.visitardsandnorthdown.com/pdf/Columban_Way_Newsletter_Issue_1_Jan_2016.pdf |
| Example 8.3 | The Chocolate Way | Caribbean, Europe, Latin America | www.thechocolateway.eu/ |
| Example 8.4 | Eastern Danube Tourism Cluster: the Romania – Bulgaria cross border area | Romania, Bulgaria | http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0715 |
| Example 8.5 | TATRA – Taste of the Trappists | Europe | www.tastesofabbeys.com/news/case-study-of-tatra-project |
| Example 8.6 | Vignobles et découvertes | France | http://culture-routes.net/fr/routes/the-iter-vitis-route |
| Example 8.7 | Via Dinarica | Europe | https://trail.viadinarica.com/en/ |
| Example 8.8 | Via Francigena (Cultural Route of the Council of Europe) | France, Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom | www.viefrancigene.org/it/ |
| Case study 7 | Building networks – The Danube Route | Europe | www.danubecc.org |
| **Chapter 9** | | | |
| Example 9.1 | Transnational themed tourism at international fairs | Several examples | |
| Example 9.2 | Bird watching media | United Kingdom | www.birdwatch.co.uk |
| Example 9.3 | Marketing the city of Parma | Italy | www.academiabarilla.com/the-italian-food-academy/parma-heart-food-valley/default.aspx |
| Example 9.4 | River cruises | Worldwide | www.vikingcruises.com/about-us/history. www.avalonwaterways.com |
| Example 9.5 | Hadrian's Wall | United Kingdom | Hadrian's wall, available in ITunes and Google Play Store |
| Example 9.6 | The Cape-Namibia Road | South Africa, Namibia | www.capetonamibia.co.za |
| Example 9.7 | EuroVelo – Support for cyclists | Europe | www.eurovelo.org/ |
| Example 9.8 | The Turtle Islands | Malaysia, Philippines | http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6008/ |

| Chapter | Case | Location | Link |
|---|---|---|---|
| Example 9.9 | The Great Himalayan Trails | Nepali, Himalayas | www.greathimalayatrails.com/trekkers-journal/ |
| Example 9.10 | Food festivals | Abergavenny | www.abergavennyfoodfestival.com/ |
| Example 9.11 | St. Olav Ways – a model for capacity building | Denmark, Sweden, Trondheim | http://pilegrimsleden.no/en/ |
| Case study 8 | Global challenges – the Greater Mekong | Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, Viet Nam | www.mekongtourism.org |
| **Chapter 10** | | | |
| Example 10.1 | Marketing of a partner association: The group "1814 quatre victoires" (1814v4) | Europe | http://1814v4.fr/ |
| Example 10.2 | EuroVelo | Europe | www.eurovelo.com |
| Example 10.3 | European walking trails | Europe | www.era-ewv-ferp.com/frontpage/ |
| Example 10.4 | Using the Ancient Tea Horse Road brand | China | |
| Example 10.5 | The Assin Manso Slave Market, Ghana | Ghana | |
| Example 10.6 | The International Roots Festival, The Gambia | Africa, America, Caribbean islands | www.rootsgambia.gm/ |
| Example 10.7 | Whitney Plantation (Historical District), Louisiana, United States of America | United States of America | http://whitneyplantation.com/ |
| Case study 9: | The European Federation of Napoleonic Cities | Europe | www.destination-napoleon.eu |
| Case study 10 | The Silk Road | Africa, Asia, Europe, Middle East | http://silkroad.unwto.org |
| Case study 11 | Iron Curtain Trail | Europe | www.eurovelo13.com |
| Case study 12 | Masar Ibrahim Al Khalil – Abaham's Path | Egypt, Jordan, Israel and the Palestine | http://abrahampath.org/ |
| Case study 13 | Qhapaq Ñan | Latin America | http://qhapaqnan.cultura.pe |
| Case study 14 | The Ancient Tea Horse Road | Asia | hwww.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/special-report/tea-horse-road/ |
| Case study 15 | Slave Routes | Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America | www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/ |
| Case study 16 | *Camino de Santiago (Camino Francés* or Saint James' Way) | Spain, France | http://santiago-compostela.net/ |
| Case study 17 | The Buddhist Circuit | Asia | www.buddhist-tourism.com |

# Annex 2

# Institutional background

## A2.1 Key institutional milestones in the development of transnational themed initiatives and cultural routes

Strategic policy driven initiatives have undoubtedly made the greatest impact to the growth of transnational theme-based tourism, and as such merit further attention.

This annex presents a chronology of the major institutional milestones relating to transnational themed tourism, including the development of cultural and tourism routes. These milestones also demonstrate the growing appreciation of the value and significance of transnational tourism as a tool in fostering regional development and integration:

The **Council of Europe** launched the Cultural Routes programme in **1987.** Its objective was to demonstrate, by means of a journey through space and time, how the heritage of the different countries and cultures of Europe contributes to a shared cultural heritage. As of 1987, the Camino de Santiago was identified by this programme as a Cultural Route.

In **1988 UNESCO** launched a 10-year project to foster intercultural dialogue relating to the Silk Roads. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach and mobilising scientists, academics and the media worldwide, the project began the process of mapping the land and sea routes and exploring the flow of people, ideas and values over time with the goal of promoting the concept of multiple identities and a common heritage.[1]

In **1993 UNWTO** conceptualised the idea of a long-term tourism project that would promote the natural and cultural richness of the historic Silk Road and unite the participating countries through tourism exchange at the 10th session of the Organization's General Assembly (4–8 October 1993, Bali, Indonesia). The concept was formalized in 1994 under the Samarkand Declaration and adopted by nineteen participating countries. The Declaration marked the beginning of a new transcontinental tourism concept with its main objectives being: commitment to regional cooperation, thus contributing to regional stability and prosperity; establishment of a high quality tourism brand, uniting different stakeholders from all levels; and the firm decision to link culture with tourism.

**1993** was also the year when cultural routes were first added as a specific category to the **UNESCO World Heritage List** with the inscription of the French branch of the *Camino de Santiago (Camino*

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1    United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2008), The Silk Road Project "Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue 1988-1997", CLT/CPD/DIA/2008/PI/68.

*Francés,* Saint James' Way).[2] In 2003 the criteria for inclusion of properties on the World Heritage List was specifically amended to include *Cultural route* as a category.[3] The current inscription guidelines identify several types of cultural properties: namely cultural landscapes, towns, canals and routes.[4]

**1996** marked the **First Silk Road Travel Forum.** This Forum held in Xi'an brought over 110 tourism officials, scholars and journalists from 25 countries together, as well as representatives from UNESCO and UNDP. At the forum the participating Member States agreed upon a document that established a framework for future joint marketing and promotional strategies, and enabled Silk Road countries to establish new business links with tour operators active across the region. By **2010** the establishment of a specialised **Silk Road Programme within the UNWTO Secretariat** reinforced the organization's commitment to developing sustainable tourism along the route. This collaborative programme is now focused on marketing and promotion to stimulate cooperative campaigns and partnerships between public and private sectors; destination management and capacity building to promote quality experiences, and increase length of stay and yield; and, travel facilitation to promote easier border crossing and visa procedures.[5]

Also in **1996,** ICOMOS set up the **International Scientific Committee for Cultural Routes** (CIIC). This committee was responsible for establishing the scientific bases for the identification of cultural routes and a methodology of work in this specific field. The underlying conceptual and operational factors were subsequently embodied in the Charter of Cultural Routes.

In **1998** a technical body, the **European Institute of Cultural Routes** (EICR), was set up to regulate and implement the Cultural Routes Programme within Europe. Its role is to examine applications for new projects, monitor activities in the field, coordinate the work of partner organizations and disseminate and archive information documents.

By **2005,** there were **fifteen routes** certified as Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. Among other criteria, routes requesting certification should "focus on a theme representative of European values and common to several European countries."[6]

In **2008** the **Charter on Cultural Routes** was ratified by the General Assembly of ICOMOS. Multi-disciplinary and systematic research is positioned as a fundamental component of cultural routes within the Charter, and it defines guidelines, principles, and criteria for correct use of cultural routes as resources for sustainable social and economic development, while simultaneously respecting their authenticity and integrity, appropriate preservation and historical significance.

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2    World Tourism Organization (2015b).

3    International Council on Monuments and Sites (2003), Sixth Extraordinary Session, 17–22 March 2003, Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: Revision of the Operational Guidelines, ICOMOS (online), available at: www.icomos-ciic.org/ciic/NOTICIAS_reunionexpertos.htm (20-07-2016)

4    United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Heritage Centre (2012), Operational Guidelines on the Inscription of Specific Types of Properties on the World Heritage List, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris.

5    World Tourism Organization (2014c), Thematic Discussion: The Role of Tourism Routes in Fostering Regional Development and Integration, (Executive Council Ninety-eighth Session, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 4–6 June 2014. Provisional agenda item 5) CE/98/5, UNWTO, Madrid.

6    Council of Europe (2013), Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 revising the rules for the award of the Cultural Route of the Council of Europe certification, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

In December **2013** Resolution CM/Res(2013)66 of the Council of Europe confirmed the establishment of the **Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes** – initially drawn up in 2010. Under this programme 23 participating member states promote routes and products in their own countries. Memorandums of Understanding and collaboration agreements have been consolidated with UNWTO and the Tourism Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).[7]

At the same time Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 was passed outlining the current rules and criterion for certification. Today there are 33 certified routes.

Elsewhere other intergovernmental organizations are working to further develop themed tourism products within various regions. Examples include the work of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to advance the cultural integration of the region, including the endorsement of the Latin American Cultural Corridor of the Central American initiative as outlined in the **2014 Declaration of Havana.**

## A2.2    Transnational theme-based tourism and official designation

Transnational theme-based tourism benefits from official designation through international programmes where tourism coexists with other key objectives, but where it is not the primary objective.

Where the theme-based tourism product was developed based on a specific programme, with distinct and internationally recognized criteria that define the core objectives of the organization, there are official labels that indicate to the public and the scientific community that the product has successfully met the requirements of the programme. The objectives of each type of programme will vary and official recognition or certification is not necessarily indicative of the consistency of the visitor experience or even the marketability of the product. Delivering a high quality visitor experience and ensuring that the product has high visibility and strong appeal in the marketplace therefore may vary depending on the management structure and practices of the individual sites or products.

This handbook presents three major examples of these international programmes.

### A2.2.1    The UNESCO World Heritage Convention

The overarching goal of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention is the protection of cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value (OUV). When the Convention was first adopted by UNESCO in 1972, tourism was not a factor of consideration. In 2012, however, there was a fundamental shift in emphasis and the development of greater synergy between World Heritage and tourism with the establishment of the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme. The shift has resulted in a strengthening of support for the development of sustainable tourism,

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7    World Tourism Organization and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015) World Conference on Tourism and Culture: Building A New Partnership (Siem Reap, Cambodia, 4–6 February 2015), UNWTO, Madrid, pp. 62 and 75.

with "a focus on developing, promoting and providing quality products and services for visitors". Attention is now on adopting a destination approach – the entire geographical space that includes both the World Heritage property and the surrounding area, and on creating good quality visitor experiences. The development of the online UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit[8] highlights the fundamental shift in the philosophical approach to seeing heritage as a potential tourism asset, and the commitment to disseminate best practice. With this new paradigm in place and a move toward promoting sustainable tourism as a factor of consideration before inscription, the importance of establishing appropriate marketing and visitor experience development practices will become more apparent. Annex 3.3 lists the UNESCO World Heritage Sites that cross borders.

## A2.2.2    Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe were established first and foremost as tools to promote and preserve Europeans' shared and diverse cultural identities. The routes are expected to serve as channels for intercultural dialogue, and provide a better understanding of the history of Europe through cross-border exchanges of people, ideas and cultures. "They are a model for grassroots cultural cooperation, providing important lessons about identity and citizenship through a participative experience of culture."[9] As the concept evolved, its potential to contribute to the growth and development of tourism became increasingly apparent. The Council of Europe 2010 Resolution establishing an Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes[10] recognized the role of Cultural Routes in fostering "awareness-raising about heritage, education, networking, quality and sustainable cross-border tourism and other related activities. A Cultural Route is now defined as a cultural, educational heritage and tourism co-operation project". Resolution CM/Res(2013)67 in Part 1, established the List of Eligibility Criteria. It states that a cultural theme for a route "must permit the development of initiatives and exemplary and innovative projects in the field of cultural tourism and sustainable cultural development; and, that the theme must lend itself to the development of tourist products in partnership with tourist agencies and operators aimed at different publics". The importance of marketing is highlighted in the criteria, as a project must "actively involve print and broadcast media and make full use of the potential of electronic media in order to raise awareness of the cultural objectives of the projects". Moreover, it must "seek partnerships with public and private organizations active in the field of tourism in order to develop tourist products and tools targeting all potential publics". This philosophical shift to embrace tourism in a more definitive manner is leading to changes in underlying objectives in more recently developed Cultural Routes, and is raising the tourism significance of these Cultural Routes. The Danube Route illustrates this enhanced potential to contribute to tourism – (see case study 7, chapter 8.7).

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8    http://whc.unesco.org/sustainabletourismtoolkit/ (20-07-2016).

9    Council of Europe (2015), Cultural Routes Management: from Theory to Practice, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

10   Council of Europe (2010), Resolution CM/Res(2010)53 establishing an Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

### A2.2.3    The UNESCO Global Geoparks

The UNESCO Global Geoparks are areas of geological heritage of international significance where this heritage value provides a framework for regional sustainable economic development and a rationale for safeguarding the environment. The Global Geopark Network (GGN) has been responsible for the accreditation of the members since the organization came together at a global level in 2004. In November 2015 Member States of UNESCO ratified the creation of a new label, the UNESCO Global Geoparks and UNESCO now supports Member States' efforts to establish UNESCO Global Geoparks in close collaboration with the GGN.

While the significance of the geology is key to an area's designation, the purpose of the Geopark extends well beyond its geology to include all aspects of an area's natural, cultural and intangible heritage and their interrelationship with the geological heritage. The concept is based on a three-pronged approach that combines conservation, education and geotourism. With this approach, there is an emphasis on identifying and developing sustainable geotourism experiences from the outset – indeed, these experiences have to be in place before an aspiring Geopark can seek designation. The application dossier needs to demonstrate that the nature of the visitor experiences and the business plan component is expected to include an analysis of geotourism potential and related policies.[11] This ensures that tourism is an integrated element of the designation process from the outset and the success of the Geopark will be reflected in how the geological heritage is presented to the visitor. The development process has to be community driven which further ensures that local businesses and existing tourism operators play a key role in establishing the Geopark and understand its potential to strengthen the tourism economy.

## A2.3    UNESCO Transboundary World Heritage

Some of these sites have been included in the handbook. Many other have not, as the level of tourism is very modest – despite their heritage importance. This is the case of the remoter and least accessible sites. In the following list, the world's massive future potential for responsible tourism that contributes to the protection of this heritage is shown.

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11    UNESCO / GGN, January 2014, Guidelines and Criteria for National Geoparks seeking UNESCO's assistance to join the Global Geoparks Network.

| Name of the sight | Countries | Short description |
|---|---|---|
| Jesuit Missions of the Guaranis: San Ignacio Mini, Santa Ana, Nuestra Senora de Loreto and Santa Maria Mayor, Ruins of Sao Miguel das Missoes | Argentina and Brazil | Remains of five Jesuit missions that were built in the 17th and 18th centuries in a tropical forest in South America. |
| Qhapaq Nan | Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru | See case study in chapter 10.6. |
| The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier | Argentina, Belgium, France, Germany, India, Japan and Switzerland | The Corbusier Cultural Route aims to promote the architectural and intellectual heritage of the architect. |
| Ferto Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape | Austria and Hungary | The Fertö/Neusiedler Lake area is a valuable biosphere reserve and home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna. It has been shaped by different human groups and ethnically diverse populations. |
| Prehistoric Pile Dwellings Around the Alps | Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland | Prehistoric stilt house settlements built from around 5000 to 500 B.C.E. on edges of lakes, rivers or wetlands. |
| Bialowieza Forest | Belarus and Poland | The Bialowieza Forest is an immense range of primary forest and home to the largest population of the property's iconic species, the European bison. |
| Struve Geodetic Arc | Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Sweden and Ukraine | Triangulation chain measured during 1816–1855 to measure figure, size and shape of the Earth, with 265 main station points, stretching over 2,820 km. |
| Belfries of Belgium and France | Belgium and France | 56 historical buildings: city halls, churches, houses, belfries which majority were built between the 11th and 17th centuries. |
| Stecci Medieval Tombstones Graveyards | Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia | 28 cemetery sites dating from 12th to 16th centuries. |
| Sangha Trinational | Cameroon, Central African Republic and Congo | The site encompasses three contiguous national parks and much of the site is unaffected by human activity and features a rich flora and fauna. |
| Kluane Wrangell-St Elias Glacier Bay Tatshenshini-Alsek | Canada and the United States of America | Four national parks comprised of glaciers and ice field landscapes. |
| Waterton Glacier International Peace Park | Canada and the United States of America | The Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park is the union of the Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada and the Glacier National Park in the United States of America. |

| Name of the sight | Countries | Short description |
|---|---|---|
| Silk Road: The Routes Network of the Chang'an – Tianshan Corridor | China and Kazakhstan | See Further case studies. |
| Talamanca Range-La Amistad Reserves / La Amistad National Park | Costa Rica, Panama | Transboundary protected area. Largest nature reserve in Central America. |
| Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve | Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea | Highest peak in West Africa, with dramatic landscapes and rich wildlife. |
| Wadden Sea | Denmark, Germany, Netherlands | See case study in chapter 6.6 |
| High Coast Kvarken Archipelago | Finland and Sweden | Tourists can stay in hotels, cabins, hostels and camping grounds. There are hiking and biking trails and tourists can also go climbing, canoeing and fishing. |
| Pyrenees – Mont Perdu | France and Spain | A mountain chain with two bordering national parks. Tourists can hike and go camping. |
| Stone Circles of Senegambia | Gambia and Senegal | Stone circles in a 100 km wide area along River Gambia. The sites mainly represent burial mounds between the 3rd century B.C.E. and 16th AD. |
| Frontiers of the Roman Empire | Germany and the United Kingdom | The 'Roman Limes' represents the borderline of the Roman Empire at its greatest extent in the 2nd century AD. |
| Muskauer Park Park Muzakowski | Germany and Poland | One third of the park is situated in Germany and the majority is in Poland. Tourists can visit a castle, cavalier house, the orangery and English bridge. |
| Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany | Germany, Slovakia and Ukraine | Transnational natural site with national parks and a biosphere reserve. Tourists can take walks and discover different forest formations. |
| Historic Centre of Rome, the Properties of the Holy See in that City Enjoying Extraterritorial Rights and San Paolo Fuori Le Mura | Holy See and Italy | Historical monuments in Rome and in the Vatican, including the Pantheon, Trajan's Column, Column of Marcus Aurelius and the Basilica of St Paul. |
| Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst | Hungary and Slovakia | 712 caves along the border. Caves in the Hungarian border can be visited with guided tours. Classical concerts are also held in Baradla Cave. |
| Monte San Giorgio | Italy and Switzerland | Important site for fossil scientists. Museum in the town of Meride featuring fossilized animals and plants. |
| Rhaetian Railway in the Albula Bernina Landscapes | Italy and Switzerland | 122 km stretch of historic railway lines that cross the Swiss Alps, from the beginning of the 20th century, with 196 bridges and 55 tunnels. |
| Western Tien-Shan | Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan | Listed in 2016. Opportunities for ecological tourism. Activities include trekking, mountain climbing and rafting. |

| Name of the sight | Countries | Short description |
|---|---|---|
| Maloti-Drakensberg Park | Lesotho and South Africa | Between Lesotho and South Africa. Natural landscapes, threatened species and ancient rock paintings made by the San people. Includes the Maloti-Drakensberg Route driving route. |
| Curonian Spit | Lithuania and the Russian Federation | 98 km long sand dune spit separating the Curonian Lagoon from Baltic Sea coast. The largest town of Nida in Lithuania is a popular holiday resort. |
| Uvs Nuur Basin | Mongolia and Russian Federation | 12 protected areas, from cold desert to steppe, forests to wetlands, freshwater and saltwater systems, sand dunes, tundra, glacial lakes. High concentration of burial mounds, carved drawings and stone sculptures. |
| Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region | Poland and Ukraine | 16 *tserkvas* (churches) from 16th to 19th centuries. Important elements are wooden bell towers, churchyards, gatehouses and graveyards. |
| Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in the Côa Valley and Siega Verde | Portugal and Spain | The Prehistoric Rock-Art Site of the Côa Valley is an open-air Palaeolithic archaeological site located in a region of north-eastern Portugal, along the Portuguese–Spanish border. |
| Heritage of Mercury | Slovenia and Spain | Two mercury mining sites: one in Idrija, Slovenia, and one in Almaden, Spain – the two largest mercury mines in the world. Many buildings of its rich heritage can be visited. |
| Victoria Falls | Zambia and Zimbabwe | Mosi-oa-Tunya is a National Park in Zambia and Victoria Falls is a National Park in Zimbabwe. Victoria Falls is one the major attractions. |

## A2.4    The role of the European Commission in European transnational tourism policy

Tourism is regarded as one of the economic activities with significant potential to generate future growth and employment within the European Union. Recognizing this potential and understanding that the future of the industry and its competitiveness in the global economy relies on a strong commitment to developing sustainable tourism and delivering a quality tourist experience, the European Commission adopted a renewed Tourism Policy in 2006. The subsequent framework for action was built on the principles of sustainability and key principles were established to ensure this sustainability:[12]

– Adopting a holistic and integrated approach;
– Planning for the long term;
– Achieving an appropriate pace and rhythm of development;
– Involving all stakeholders;

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12  Commission of the European Communities, October 2007, The Framework / Policy Context Communication from the Commission: Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism, Brussels, 19.10.2007, COM(2007).

–    Using best available knowledge;
–    Minimising and managing risk;
–    Reflecting impacts in costs;
–    Understanding the concept of carrying capacity and respecting limits of growth; and
–    Undertaking continuous monitoring.

The Agenda provided a platform for the new political framework for tourism that was to follow in 2010, and highlighted the importance of reports such as this handbook through identifying the need to promote and exchange best practices as a means to achieving sustainable destination management.

In June 2010, the European Commission adopted the Communication "Europe, the world's No. 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe".[13] This communication built on the philosophical commitment established in 2006 and set out a new strategy and action plan for EU tourism. The underlying premise to the 2010 Communication is based on Article 195 of the TFEU which indicates that the EU can:

–    Promote the competitiveness of undertakings in this sector and create an environment conducive to their development;
–    Encourage cooperation between the Member States, particularly through the exchange of good practice; and
–    Develop an integrated approach to tourism, ensuring that the sector is taken into account in its other policies.

The 2010 Framework has four main priorities:
1.    Stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector – through:
      –    Promoting diversification of the supply of tourist services;
      –    Developing innovation in the tourism industry;
      –    Improving professional skills – particularly with regard to facilitating their adaption of new technologies and new market expectations;
      –    Encouraging an extension of the tourist season; and
      –    Consolidating the socioeconomic knowledge base for tourism – including an increased focus on coordinated research.
2.    Promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism;
3.    Consolidate the image and profile of Europe as a collection of sustainable and high-quality tourist destinations; and
4.    Maximize the potential of EU financial policies and instruments for developing tourism.

The Implementation Rolling Plan for the 2010 Tourism Action Framework set the stage for the recent growth of transnational themed tourism product and cultural routes. Under the priority: "stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector" implementation must focus on "identifying, incentivising and promoting transnational thematic tourism products and encouraging networking with a view to facilitating the diversification of tourism products and services".[14]

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13  Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, June 2010, Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe, Brussels, 30.6.2010 COM(2010) 352 final.

14  Commission of the European Communities (2013), Implementation Rolling Plan of Tourism Action Framework (Com(2010) 352) / Update: 6 May 2013.

This strategic direction resulted in a series of initiatives on transnational thematic sustainable tourism products, with specific calls in the years following for proposals on cross-border and transnational cycling routes and networks, and proposals on the promotion of transnational thematic tourism products. A range of further initiatives to implement other elements of the 2010 Tourism Action Framework included strengthening the Europe brand including a specific focus on the development and promotion of pan-European cultural routes/thematic itineraries and tourism products.

With this Implementation Plan in place, the framework for building transnational themed tourism product was significantly strengthened and considerable action in developing new routes and visitor experiences has followed in response to the various calls for proposals. This has included:[15]
– Research on the impact of Cultural Routes on small and medium sized enterprises;
– Training initiatives to improve the skills of associations managing Cultural Routes;
– Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the UNWTO in 2012 to structure and consolidate cooperation on several axes including the development of cultural tourism and thematic tourism routes and itineraries; and
– Signing of a joint declaration between the European Commission and the European Travel Commission in 2011 to enhance cooperation in a range of promotion-related areas including the development and promotion of pan-European cultural routes/thematic itineraries and tourism products.

In addition to these policies and related projects, there has been a focus on training. An agreement signed in 2013 between UNWTO and the European Institute of Cultural Routes resulted in the development of a UNWTO Regional Course in Europe on Cultural Routes Tourism Development Strategy for the Council of Europe Cultural Routes and their partners.[16]

More recently, in October 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution (P8_TA(2015)0391) on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe.[17] The resolution calls on the Commission to replace or update the 2010 framework for tourism and highlights a series of measures designed to strengthen Pan-European and transnational tourism products through targeted product development and the implementation of strategic and innovative marketing initiatives, including an emphasis on digitisation of all aspects of tourism. With the overall emphasis on marketing, promotion and quality of the experience, moving forward with the initiatives identified in this Resolution could have significant impact on the success of transnational themed tourism products within the Pan-European region.

15  Council of Europe (2011), Impact of European Cultural Routes on SME's Innovation and Competitiveness. provisional edition, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.

16  http://europe.unwto.org/event/unwto-regional-course-europe-cultural-routes-tourism-development-strategy-cultural-routes-an-0 (20-07-2016).

17  European Parliament (2015), New challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe: European Parliament resolution of 29 October 2015 on new challenges and concepts for the promotion of tourism in Europe, (2014/2241(INI)), P8_TA(2015)0391.

## A2.5    European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs)

The EGTC is a European legal instrument designed to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. The EGTC enables public authorities of various Member States to team up and deliver joint services, without requiring a prior international agreement to be signed and ratified by national parliaments. The law applicable for the interpretation and application of the convention is that of the Member State in which the official EGTC headquarters are located.

The status of European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) was established by the European Parliament and the Council of Europe on the basis of Regulation (EC) 1082/2006 on 5 July 2006. As of April 2016, there were 62 EGTCs. They can seek funding, if needed, from all instruments of the EU, or can apply to more specific instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) or the Cohesion Fund.[18]

EGTC must comprise members from at least two member states of the EU. They are managed by an elected director and an assembly with representatives from these members. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR), which is EU's assembly of regional and local representatives, has a consultative role and can provide support.

The website is a platform to promote EGTCs and their projects. It gives information on all the EGTCs and offers links to their own websites where users can find more detailed information (see: https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/Pages/welcome.aspx).

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18  http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/egtc/ (02-09-2016).

# Annex 3

## Methodology

This annex includes:

–   A step-by-step description of the methodology (annex 3.1);
–   The list of Expert Panel Members, with their qualifications (annex 3.2);
–   Recommendations made by the Expert Panel for case studies to include in the handbook (annex 3.3); and
–   An extract from the Transnational Theme-Based Tourism Database, showing the full list of initiatives (annex 3.4).

## A3.1   Step-by-step methodology

This table summarises the methodology followed:

| Item | Description | Output |
|------|-------------|--------|
| Recruitment of the Expert Panel | 12 senior professionals, with expertise covering marketing and transnational tourism, representing all world regions. | |
| Setting criteria for the case selection | Criteria agreement by the Expert Panel (see below). | |
| First draft of database | Assembly of existing transnational theme-based tourism initiatives. (Research team of 10. Input from Expert Panel). | **Transnational Theme-Based Tourism Database.** See annex 1.4. |
| Selection of a number ofinitiatives best meeting the criteria | Out of an original total of 221 initiatives. | **Illustrative mini-cases** used in the handbook. See annex 1.6. |
| Selection of initiatives for interview, for use as Case Studies | Based on Expert Panel input and agreed criteria. | |
| In-depth interviews of managers (qualitative) | Questionnaire, followed by 29 interviews (skype or phone). See annexes 2.5 and 2.7. | 23 cases, of which 19 are selected for the handbook. See annex 1. |
| Consultation of Expert Panel | Individual discussions (skype and phone) between February and June 2016. | Commentary and suggestions integrated into the text of the handbook. |

**Criteria for selection**

The criteria for selection of cases and items for the database, validated by the Expert Panel, was that the transnational initiatives should show clear evidence of recent activity, through their own or third party web presence. In particular, evidence of:

– An effective transnational partnership, for the purpose of tourism development and marketing; and
– A significant tourism activity, or at least a structured plan for its development.

# A3.2    The Expert Panel

The **Expert Panel** was composed of twelve senior professionals, based in different regions of the world, with expertise covering marketing and transnational tourism.

The role of the Panel has been to:

– Validate the criteria for inclusion of material in the Database, and the content of the Database as it has evolved;
– Critique and provide input on sections of the handbook, as they have been produced; and
– Respond to specific questions within their area of expertise.

| Name | Organization | Geographical expertise | Skills/experience |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Mike Fabricius | *The Journey Tourism* | Africa and South Asia | Experienced practitioner (DMO management), high expertise in tourism strategy and policy analysis. |
| Martin Gomez Ulllate | University of Extremadura | Spain, Portugal and Latin America | Applied research in cultural heritage and local development, including hospitality solutions. |
| Alastair Morrison | Belle Tourism International Consulting | China, Indonesia and Far East | Researcher and analyst, tourism development consultant. |
| Hans Dominicus | CELTH | Europe and worldwide | Marketing and development at a strategic level. |
| German Porras | UNWTO consultant | Europe and worldwide | Marketing strategies, communication management. |
| Sandra Willett | Independent consultant | Caucasus, Turkey, Middle East, Australasia, Asia-Pacific and South-East Asia | Local economic development, creation of routes and trails. |
| Antonio Barone | Rotta dei Fenici | Mediterranean Basin | Manager of a European Cultural Route that includes North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. |
| Jacques Mattei | Destination Napoleon | Central and eastern Europe | Manager of a European Cultural Route that includes central and north-eastern Europe. |

| Name | Organization | Geographical expertise | Skills/experience |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Nick Greenfield | ETOA, Head of Tour Operator Relations | Europe and worldwide | Tour operator issues. |
| Frédéric Thomas | Independent consultant | Cambodia, Thailand, French-speaking Africa and Middle East | World Bank, Asian Bank of Development, UNCTAD, TAIEX, etc. |
| Alla Peressolova | UNWTO | 33 countries committed to the Silk Road Programme | Head of the UNWTO Silk Road Programme. |
| Jordi Tresserras | IBERTUR, University of Barcelona | Latin America, Spain and Portugal | Sustainable development, themed cultural tourism. |

# List of acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AD | Anno Domini |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| B.C.E. | before the common era |
| BMZ | Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany) |
| CE | Common era |
| CELAC | Community of Latin American and Caribbean States |
| CELTH | Centre of Expertise for Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality |
| CERTESS | European Cultural Routes – Transfer Experiences, Share Solutions |
| CIIC | China International Intellectech Corporation |
| CM | Committee of Ministers |
| CMT | Caravaning, Motoring, Tourism (International Exhibition) |
| CNN | Cable News Network |
| COMESA | Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa |
| DCC | Danube Competence Center |
| DMO | destination marketing organization |
| EC | European Commission |
| ECF | European Cyclists' Federation |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EGTC | European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation |
| EGWA | European Greenways Association |
| EHTTA | European Historic Thermal Towns Association |
| EICR | European Institute of Cultural Routes |
| EPA | Enlarged Partial Agreement |
| EQ | explorer quotient |
| ERDF | European Regional Development Fund |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| ETC | European Travel Commission |
| ETOA | European Tourism Association (previously Tour Operators Association) |
| EU | European Union |
| EUROPARC | Federation of European protected areas |
| EUSDR | EU Strategy for the Danube Region |
| FAM trip | familiarization trip |
| FESTIMA | West African Festival of Masks |
| GDMBR | Great Divide Mountain Bike Route |

| GDP | gross domestic product |
|---|---|
| GGN | Global Geoparks Network |
| GHT | Great Himalayan Trails project |
| GIZ | Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (German development agency, specialised in International Cooperation) |
| GMC | General Medical Council |
| GMS | Greater Mekong subregion |
| GGN | Global Geopark Network |
| GPS | global positioning system |
| GT | Growth Triangle, see IMT-GT below |
| GWA | Georgian Wine Association |
| IBK | International Bodensee Conference |
| ICOMOS | International Council on Monuments and Sites |
| IMT-GT | Indonesia – Malaysia – Thailand Growth Triangle |
| INTERREG | European programme for inter-regional territorial cooperation |
| ITB | Internationale Tourismusbörse (Berlin trade show) |
| IUCN | International Union for the Conservation of Nature |
| MERCOSUR | South American trade bloc |
| NECC | National EuroVelo Coordination Centres and Coordinators |
| NFC | near field communication |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| NTO | national tourism organization |
| ODYSSEA | Development programme for the Mediterranean Sea |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OUV | outstanding universal value |
| PANAFEST | Pan African Historical Theatre Festival |
| PATA | Pacific Asia Travel Association |
| PEI | Prince Edward Island |
| PROWAD | Protect and Prosper Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea |
| QR code | Quick Response Code |
| R&D | research and development |
| SKIFT | A a daily homepage of the travel industry |
| STB | Scandinavian Tourist Board |
| SWOT | strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats |
| TAIEX | Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (Instrument of the European Commission |
| TATRA | Tastes of Trappists cultural route |
| TAPAS | Tourism and Protected Areas Specialist |
| TFEU | Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union |
| TIHPA | Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |

| UNWTO | United Nations World Tourism Organization |
|-------|-------------------------------------------|
| URL | uniform resource locator |
| VINEST | The Network for Small European Wine Areas |
| WCPA | World Commission on Protected Areas |
| WFTGA | World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations |
| WHC | World Heritage Convention |
| WTC | World Travel Council |
| WTM | World Travel Market (London) |
| WWF | World Wildlife Fund |
| YHA | Youth Hostel Association |

# List of boxes, examples, figures and tables

### List of figures

### List of tables

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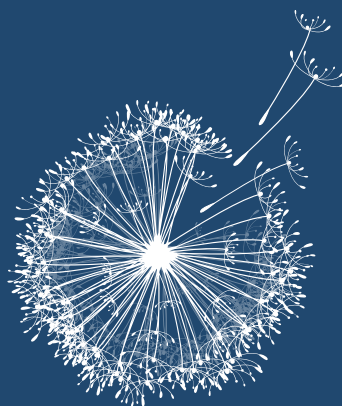**World Tourism Organization and World Travel & Tourism Council** (2012), *The Impact of Visa Facilitation on Job Creation in the G20 Economies,* UNWTO and WTTC, Madrid and London.

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**2017**
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