

Destination Leaders Programme Case Studies



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Celebrating Differences to Drive Collaborative Working between Edinburgh and Glasgow

DLP Case Study: Celebrating Differences to Drive Collaborative Working between Edinburgh and Glasgow

DLP Case Study: Celebrating Differences to Drive Collaborative Working between Edinburgh and Glasgow: Gordon Hodge, Head of Conferencing & Events, University of Strathclyde, Brendan Miles, Digital Business Editor, The List Ltd

Introduction and Background

This case study highlights a successful example of group project work from Destination Leaders Cohort 3, whose academic year 2015-2016 brought together tourism and hospitality industry professionals from Edinburgh and Glasgow. The case study examines the motivations, processes, outcomes and impact of the group project research. The participants were Nesta Gilliland, Head of Sales and Marketing, Scotrail; Gordon Hodge, Head of Conferencing and Events, University of Strathclyde; Brendan Miles of the List Ltd, and Laura Vass, formerly Marketing Manager of Rabbie's Travel. The group chose to research '*Maximising the domestic tourism market between Glasgow and Edinburgh [the Central Belt]*'. The project objective was to '*deliver some simple, effective and practical ideas that can be taken out in to the real world*'.

Perceptions and Findings: Glasgow & Edinburgh: "The Odd Couple"

The group project explores the perception that Edinburgh and Glasgow remain separate entities in terms of tourism and cultural activity, despite their proximity. The starting point was to create a survey asking residents and tourism operators about their behaviours and perceptions, in a bid to understand whether there was substantial regular movement between the cities in terms of leisure activity, and any appetite to encourage more of the same. Separate surveys were commissioned to determine industry and resident perspectives, with excellent responses from both businesses (105 businesses responded, 56% Edinburgh, 44% Glasgow) and city residents (307 residents responded -46% Edinburgh, 54% Glasgow).

Survey responses suggest that people *do* travel between the cities in their leisure time. Edinburgh residents travel to Glasgow for events - specifically concerts, in particular at the SSE Hydro - cultural attractions and shopping. Glasgow residents travel to Edinburgh for events – principally the festivals and Christmas markets – and visitor attractions, in particular Edinburgh Castle. Responses also suggest that, while public transport between the cities is perceived as reliable and of good quality, there is a need for more competitive fares and flexible scheduling, specifically later trains to make it easier to attend evening events. Businesses consider residents of the other city to be a legitimate market, and would be willing to collaborate with other businesses to target that market. Businesses and residents believe that both cities have a unique character which should be celebrated, and they value the differing but complementary experiences in both cities.

The Destination Leaders Programme Group Project

The DLP group project is the assessed component of the programme, designed to give participants the opportunity to demonstrate and apply the insights and learnings gained from the speakers, workshops, research and the other DLP participants over the course of the programme. It also provides participants with a valuable and realistic real-time experience of the challenges in developing destination level projects, from considering the strategic business and market drivers which are affecting destinations globally in their approach to destination development to the practical issues of working collaboratively with a range of colleagues across different subsectors of the tourism industry. While not the key driver, there are already a number of examples of group projects translating into a tangible piece of product development, enhancement of the customer or visitor experience, or prompting further tourism industry research; these offer valuable additional benefits for destination development and DLP participants.

Margaret McNeil, Tourism Manager, Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG) says:
“This project was the catalyst to really focusing on the opportunity and identifying practical activities, supported by effective destination leadership and collaborative working.”

Celebrating differences to drive collaborative working between Edinburgh and Glasgow: Gordon Hodge, Brendan Miles, Nesta Gilliland

In this case study, Gordon Hodge and Brendan Miles talk on video, and together with Nesta Gilliland in the written case study, the three explain their motivations for the group’s choice of project study, insights into how they approached the project work and what their research involved. They discuss what impact they hope their project research can have for industry in terms of collaboration, their experience of DLP and what impact it had on them as individuals and professionals.

What was the focus of your group research project?

We looked at resident markets in Edinburgh and Glasgow because we had been speaking about the value of local residents. In order for success you have to have the buy-in of local residents behind you – people want to have authentic experiences. We used what we’d learned about the *Melbourne Lovability Index* as the basis of our research, which asked a lot of questions about the local, and what people liked about where they lived and why they visited places. We wanted to explore whether or not people did that in Edinburgh and Glasgow and if not, why not. From the List perspective this was interesting because covering both Edinburgh and Glasgow, there was a lot of visible movement between the cities but there didn’t appear to be that kind of joined up way of working between the cities. Our aim was to explore these perceptions and attitudes and determine if there had been any significant changes to them over time.

What was your motivation for choosing your research topic?

We were looking to explore the perception that Edinburgh and Glasgow remain separate entities in terms of tourism and cultural activity, despite their proximity. We hoped to achieve a clear understanding as to whether this perceived east/west rivalry still existed or indeed had the world moved on- in terms of appetite, opportunity and appeal of each city to the other. We're aware that Scotland faces competition in tourism on a world stage. There are great examples of Manchester really getting together, and actually the level of competition for the tourism industry in Scotland is rapidly increasing, so it's important to try and pull cities together and get them to work together, because collectively, Scotland's offering as a whole becomes much greater, and collaboration between the two cities could make a strategic and economic and financial impact at a Scotland level as well as at a city level.

Working together as a group – what was your leadership approach?

Our approach was very collaborative, with initial sessions based on discussions as to how best to approach research and surveys across industry and resident sectors. We considered core strengths of each of the team, both in terms of skill sets (Brendan was an obvious lead for setting up on line surveys, given his digital skill set) as well as network strengths: how do we reach and persuade as many people as possible to participate? As the project progressed, our working style evolved, with team members leading on specific activities, allowing us to spread the load, given the demands of each of our respective day jobs. We made a real effort to meet face to face and switch between Glasgow and Edinburgh, we all hosted meetings, we spoke on the phone two or three times but because we met face to face most of the time, we felt stronger relationships, we understood what people's strengths were and where they were coming from and what their opinions were, it really helped us gel as a group. It helped us produce a report and present that report as cohesive and natural because we had all been together, we had all had input and we all agreed what should be in that report.

What did your group project research consist of?

Separate surveys were commissioned to determine industry and resident perspectives.

- 105 businesses responded (56% Edinburgh, 44% Glasgow)
- 307 residents responded (46% Edinburgh, 54% Glasgow) both surveys contained general demographic questions to better understand each audience.

Quantitative questions allowed participants to respond on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and included questions on transport, motivation, perception and sources of information. Qualitative questions offered the opportunity for more

subjective, emotional responses. The survey data was analysed and the results presented using graphs and word clouds to aid quick comprehension.

The industry survey was sent direct to a range of tourism businesses in Edinburgh and Glasgow; shared via industry networks by colleagues at Scottish Enterprise, VisitScotland and Glasgow City Marketing Bureau; and promoted through social media channels such as LinkedIn. The public survey was shared via personal networks and social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), and also hosted through entertainment publication The List (www.list.co.uk).

It's clear that the DLP project group achieved significant buy-in from both local residents and from industry, including peers, colleagues and businesses for this research, as well as agency support. The quality of the research and the high response rate to the surveys could potentially relate to the group's own business leadership roles and the roles they hold as influencers in their own respective sectors, linking back to what Gordon Hodge of the University of Strathclyde identifies as: "a coalition of the willing." The ability to influence others within a leadership context is an important factor which other DLP participants have referred to as something that they feel they have gained or enhanced from taking part in the programme.

What have you learned from your research findings?

We undertook quite a lot of survey research and we believe that the response from industry was absolutely fantastic:

- 125 people responded from industry – across business levels up to CEO/director
- Several industry figures have shown interest and requested to see the research
- The research brought clarity to the perception that Edinburgh and Glasgow remain separate entities in terms of tourism and cultural activity, despite their proximity
- We now know that reasonable numbers of residents travel between the two cities on a regular basis for differing retail experiences, to visit specific destinations and to take part in specific cultural events.
- We can validate the importance of the VFR (visiting friends and relatives) sector to each local economy
- We can fully understand the attitude of businesses within the tourism sector, to attracting business from 'the other end of the track'.

What have been the most valuable outcomes of the DLP 3 Edinburgh-Glasgow collaboration?

Our findings identified the following:

- Our research has significantly increased the level of conversation about Edinburgh and Glasgow.
- Organisations, which we know from our own research haven't been communicating since around 2006, specifically, our colleagues at Marketing Edinburgh, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, which are now actively engaged in conversation with each other.
- People outside Glasgow and Edinburgh too, are really beginning to take interest. It does feel that there is a movement, a swell towards Glasgow and Edinburgh which is moving in the right direction.
- We have identified a number of willing industry partners who are committed to working collaboratively to attract additional businesses through targeting residents from the neighbouring city and have dispelled the myth that 'never the twain shall meet.'

What destination leadership is required to build on more effective Glasgow-Edinburgh collaboration?

We are recommending that the research findings are shared with the industry, so they may then use the opportunity to plan activity which will attract residents, for example, incremental business. This process has already started, with a meeting between ScotRail, GCMB and Marketing Edinburgh, where initial discussions were based around a trial promotion which would appeal to residents of both cities, with a proposition to travel and experience great days out. In terms of leadership, our approach was – we are going to pilot this activity, please come and be part of it' rather than wait to determine suitable dates for getting all potential stakeholders together at one time. We expect this pilot to grow together with level of participation from a number of interested parties, leading by example as to what is possible.

Could DLP alumni influence in helping to progress project outcomes?

We have the ability to influence others outside our own organisations and what we would hope is that DLP has put together a coalition of the willing, whether it's just across the individual cities or across the two cities; of people who are interested and engaged in tourism generally, no matter where they fit into that picture, and willing to

have a poke at things, disrupt things a bit, pick up the phone and say, *“I’d quite like to work with you on this”*. It’s not necessarily a formal network like GLA (Glasgow’s Leading Attractions) or ETAG (Edinburgh Tourism Action Group) but an informal network of people who are engaged, interested and willing. We think the foundations have been set in terms of the organisations and there’s been huge interest from all the people we spoke to, it’s just a case of making sure those organisations don’t let the opportunity slip, it will come down to organisations such as Scottish Enterprise and VisitScotland and others which already exist to help corral support, but it will also come down to people with real energy – if those people can be identified and help lead and push this on, then there’s a very real chance of success.

Which part of the DLP has had the strongest impact on you personally, and professionally?

Gordon says, “The best part of it was the network of people, a really great group who got on, didn’t necessarily have the same opinions but had respectful debate. We heard from some brilliant speakers: Brian King from Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Amanda McMillan from Glasgow Airport, Jonas Wilstrup from Wonderful Copenhagen, for example. It built up a new network, a slightly different network - it allowed me to see how my part of the organisation can have an impact on the economic development of the city. It lifts you out of the day to day and lets you look at what you’re doing in a more holistic way which I think is very helpful”.

Brendan adds, “For me the biggest impact of the DLP has been the network of people that I’ve met and become genuine friends with throughout the course, it’s a great set of people and I’ve really enjoyed doing the course. It’s also made me think about other businesses in ways which I hadn’t perhaps originally anticipated. I came into the DLP wanting to grow my network personally, to find business opportunities and actually the DLP has delivered on that enormously”.

Nesta concludes, “There was significant benefit, in the DLP coursework and the presentations as well as networking benefits across the range businesses involved through DLP, both personally and professionally”.

Conclusion

When asked what advice they would give to anyone considering doing the programme, Brendan says, “The DLP is a great opportunity – if you have the chance to do it, I’d highly recommend that you do it. Working out how you can fit everything in can be certainly challenging, it will impact on your work. I’d say go into it with open eyes, to understand this level of work is there but you’ll absolutely get out of it what you put in”. Nesta adds, “The course content is very relevant to the industry with a great range of guest speakers, covering a broad yet relevant subject base. The weekend workshops, although demanding and most worthwhile and the project work will take much more time than you think. The course team, Kenneth Wardrop and Jane Ali- Knight were very supportive”. Gordon concludes, “Once I got into it I really enjoyed it, especially when you’re reading about best practice in other destinations; it helps you to understand how we can make that work. It’s a really great opportunity to lift yourself out of what you do every day and think about things in a more holistic way. I’d totally recommend it.”

Further Links:

Scottish Enterprise: www.scottish-enterprise.com

DLP Case Study Videos: <http://bit.ly/1okkX9Q>

Conferencing & Events Team University of Strathclyde:
www.strath.ac.uk/conferencingandevents/conferencingeventsteam

The List: www.list.co.uk

Abellio Scotrail: www.scotrail.co.uk

