

ESRC Workshop: October 22, 2014 4:30pm-6:30pm Dorchester

Well-being is not something that is new. It's important to us and our marketing. We don't go for mass tourism, we encourage individual, corporate, business, couples and families is our target. We have leisure clubs and of course the locality by the sailing academy, the coast, countryside, being by the beach, etc. We don't do enough as a business to promote that, we get too bogged down on our own facilities and services and marketing tends to go on the back burner.

Done a project with Dorset County Council because they've just done all the cycleways. Done some research at VisitEngland and people tend to hire cycles only when there are trails. We discovered there was a beautiful off-road, safe road 17 mile route. So with the council (helped with signage, trail and website) we came up with a brand "The Jurassic Cycle Trail" and the number of things you can do off it is really interesting. "Giving people a brand to get into instead of just come to Dorset to cycle". They haven't necessarily come to hire a bike, they've come to ride a trail, which is just a different emphasis and this has worked really well for us. When people turn up they're concerned because they haven't ridden a bike in years but once they come back they're absolutely beaming and they often say they're going to continue to cycle when they get home. Brand is so important and it has looked really well for us. There's a lot of things that need to put in place to say you're cycle friendly. We are trying to work with accommodation providers so we could offer a package deal to consumers. We need to make it easy to the consumer. It's hard to get people to buy into it though. Many business owners are just happy to stay as they are and aren't into changing.

Barrier:

- 1) Don't feel like there's a community that you can reach out to and work together on tourism and well-being initiatives. Should be working together to offer packages to consumers and they can choose what they want: activities, attractions, food, accommodation, etc. We need to join up networks different sides of the county: north, south, east, west. "Because a lot of activity providers and wellness providers are small businesses, generally in this area, it's again how do we join them up? Just talking to people and trying to get them motivated to work together.
- 2) Consumer perception – most stag/hen, more than spa/wellness – we have to get over this barrier. How do we change that perception of the area? We don't seem to be known for activity/wellness holidays.
- 3) Dorset is missing a brand – lots of great things right on our doorstep but no one knows about it. The message is not being presented well enough to consumers.
- 4) General Infrastructure in the rural parts of the county – bus services, cycleways
- 5) Research is saying how potential market is from London and they're a certain age group. How the hell do we get to them? To advertise in London costs a fortune. We need to not just focus on London but to advertise all over the UK and other European countries.

Feeling supported by council:

“The problem is (as an ex council tourism officer) they closed the tourism department last year and now there are only two dedicated tourism council departments in rural Dorset”. To be fair they don’t have any kind of financial support; however, in kind support. With the leaflet, we might be getting help with design, photographs, copyright, etc.

All stakeholders see a value in promoting well-being in business. “We are working at a very fast pace with work and family commitments, etc., it’s at such a rate, we essentially need down time but I don’t think we’ve caught on as to how much we need and how good that is for us. It’s not packaged at the moment where we are really buying into it. We do need within in our tourism offer more health/well-being packaging. It doesn’t have to be a spa or a massage, it can just be a walk, fresh air, good food, bit of activity and have it packaged”. Tourism, at the moment, isn’t responding as well as it could be to pace of life acceleration and there are opportunities that we aren’t really taking. “Investing in yourself and quality time out has an incredibly high return for productivity in business and the well-being of families”. This is why branding is so important, it encourages people to go. Brands so people can buy into it.

Talked about this whole idea of a “tech-free” environment. Storytelling festival It was wonderful seeing the children engaging is something and actively participating without technology in sight. People are recognizing that need to almost go back a generation in some respects just to escape it. A lot of B and B’s in the rural area actually sell themselves on not having a mobile phone signal. The behavior is so entrenched so the option will have to be there; however, it could also be an opportunity for tourism practitioners to promote this. Advertising that it’s a no ipad, no mobile, tech-free restaurant could create a sense of well-being and draw a new market.

Significant business growth opportunity:

“To me, it’s so inherent in all tourism and I feel that a lot might come down and do some cycling while they’re here, but it’s not ALL what they’re come down for, they’ll do some shopping and some sightseeing. It’s trying to make sure that whole package balances”. Husband might want to do one thing and the wife might want to do something else. Going on a holiday with family or your partner, wellness means something different for everyone. Man might want to go off cycling for two days and the woman might want to go to the spa for two days. The reason for going on holiday is to go together so this becomes difficult.

“I’m involved with a storytelling festival which is now the biggest in the south of England. What is storytelling? It’s all about connecting people to histories and

folklore and to me that is also part of well-being. It's about feeling part of the place and the landscape and also just going to a comedy show and laughing and feeling good, that is all wellness".

"One thing I don't think we tap into is the learning and development pillar of wellness. And I mean that could be as broad as you'd like it -anything to do with education and learning. It could be down to learning to cycle and developing your cycling skills to crafts and cookery". It could be going on but maybe it's not marketed and therefore people aren't aware.

Again, there needs to be a central activity centre where people can go to see what activities are available to engage in. Linking all of the small business together. There was a website that attempted to do this but the marketing of it is poor. There are all of these initiatives that are started but then there is no marketing of it.

It seems that many are currently using well-being to promote their products but (similar to first workshop) aren't necessarily using the actual terms well-being and wellness. A slight tweak to the marketing could drive a whole new market.

Since it's small businesses not many have the funds to spend a ton of money on marketing so the marketing comes more from pockets of networks and such like. This is again where council could come businesses promote the well-being of their products.

Limitations of these focus groups: These are the proactive businesses who want to encourage change and promote well-being in their products. There are many businesses who don't want to change and hence would not even attend a workshop on this. These businesses signed up because they're interested.

Are tourists generally more aware of their own well-being in their behavior while on holiday?

"As far of people being aware, a lot of people actually coming to me because they are after this well-being thing. They want to be outside, do activities and embrace that aspect. They're already coming with a certain request, need or hope and the demand for it is growing". I think the media are also doing this, when you look at the number of healthy food programs on TV for instance. You can't turn the TV on without a show about how to cook good, fresh food in minutes - again it's all about time. I think as well, again, through the various media channels, we are much more aware of the effects of unhealthy lifestyles (obesity, diabetes, etc.). "There's a huge amount of information out there being brought to us and saying we need to be healthier, we need to be more active. We are constantly being fed all this information and I don't think we've quite gone from that to ok when we go on holiday let's go to something that will enhance our well-being, let's go for the break, a break from our routine. There needs to be joining up from destinations, websites, business to go ok we know it's good for you so let's bring it all together. Need to make alliances with other

businesses to join up in a network. It could be joining activities, accommodations, etc. together. Selling just rooms in your hotel can be quite difficult, but if you're selling a reason to stay in your hotel is easier. It's about added value, there's then a reason to go. Networking is very important. If businesses don't necessarily have a well-being product or service to offer, they could think about making alliances with businesses who do have these products or services to enhance their overall product offering and added value.

"As consumers, they don't know the area and what it has to offer, as businesses we've got the knowledge so then we package it and make it easy for the consumer so they can choose what want".

Marketing is a big barrier because Dorset doesn't have a brand, it is not strong enough in terms of well-being/wellness. Small businesses may not have the funds to focus on marketing so using these networks and alliances to help each other out. Hosting big festivals focused on health/well-being activities, or host triathlons to bring a new market in that wouldn't normally come to Dorset but are coming here to engage in those activities.

Dorset feels like all the money goes to Bournemouth and Poole. Rural areas seem to feel like all the money goes there.

People's economic situation is a factor. Some people simply can't afford a "wellness holiday", is it potentially an elite market?

We shouldn't forget the people that can't afford the 5 star hotel but we can still provide individuals with a lot of other things that contribute to their well-being such as outdoor coast steering, rafting, cycling. I provide my consumers with a product or service that they can't get or do elsewhere. Wellness to my clients is trying something different. Wellness is different for different people. It might be something as simple as being introduced to where they're food comes from and how it's made. In this case, a focus on personal development is wellness to them.

Barriers:

Access to public transport

Finances – finding money to put in place the things you want to do

Family preferences – it's rare that everyone wants to do the same activity so that's a barrier for people who want to get engage in activities, but the whole point of a holiday is to go as a family so don't want to break up the family and do different activities.