Part II: AUDIT OF THE CULTURAL PRODUCT AND EXISTING METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Turner Contemporary, Margate. Image courtesy of Visit Kent

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CULTURE KENT RESEARCH PROGRAMME
REPORT 1: AUDIT OF THE CULTURAL TOURISM LANDSCAPE
Part II- AUDIT OF THE CULTURAL PRODUCT AND EXISITING METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

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2 CONTEXT

Reinforcing the learnings highlighted in Report 1 - Part I, the main objective of the Audit of the Cultural Landscape was to provide the framework for the project and to create a critical background for the subsequent outputs. Whilst the rapid evidence review contributed to establishing the wider context within which to position Culture Kent, the Audit of the Kent Cultural product looked at identifying the cultural landscape of the county by creating an audit database. Understanding the regional picture of cultural tourism in Kent played a vital role, as it led to a better understanding of potential future opportunities.

The audit of the Kent cultural product was completed through desk research and stakeholder engagement. At the start of the study no database existed to identify the cultural/arts/tourism organisations in Kent. An audit database was developed, to offer a more comprehensive picture of cultural tourism in the county and to act as a tool for future communication, beyond the life of the Culture Kent Project.

Following this, an audit of the existing data collection methods and techniques utilized by a sample of 30 organisations within Kent was conducted, via a SNAP survey to cover current practices, aspirations, barriers and potential for future data sharing. The 30 organisations were selected from current Audience Finder users, potential Audience Finder users as well as key tourism organisations across the county. The objective of the survey was to gather as much information as possible about how, and if, organisations collect data and the level of relevance that data plays in the development of their organisation.

3 AUDIT OF THE KENT CULTURAL PRODUCT

3.1 AUDIT OF THE KENT CULTURAL PRODUCT - DATABASE

Based mainly on details from the Visit Kent and Culture Kent business contacts, an audit database of cultural tourism organisations has been put together. With almost 400 organisations listed, this is a very useful tool, that has been used in subsequent data collection, but more importantly, a tool towards which future culture related communications can be directed.

The database also gave us the opportunity to classify these organisations in terms of the activities they deliver, allowing for a better understanding of geographical strengths and opportunities. Other information captured included full postal address, contact details, web address, social media channels, notes on main activities, primary and secondary classifications (if needed), as well as geographical coordinates.

3.1.1 Challenges

The reason why we resorted to adding the multiple provision option was because some organisations fitted in more than one category. The initial categories used were: Art Galleries, Creative Activities, Event Organisers, Festivals, Heritage, Museums, Music Venues, Public Sector, Theatres and Cinemas.

It must be noted that the database had some gaps in terms of contact person or full address, but this was only because some of the organisations listed had a digital presence only.

Kent’s DNA as the county with the largest number of castles in England contributed massively to the need of adding an extra category, for heritage venues. It was impossible to try and find other classifications for venues which clearly
fell under heritage and despite the initial aim of focussing on more contemporary forms of cultural tourism, the reality of the existing venues determined us to not necessarily try and divide heritage and the arts. Yet, rather than a limitation, we argue this was an opportunity to further explore the identity of Kent and to try and find common grounds between tourism and culture, without excluding heritage.

Also, another challenge was that, in our attempt to categorise the venues, we might have classified them differently than how they would classify themselves. For instance, Canterbury Tales in Canterbury - we classified them as heritage, but they refer to themselves as being a visitor attraction. – they do much more.

Another important note that needs to be considered is that this database is not a finished product, but mostly a working document, which needs regular maintenance and updating. It is a useful document, which can be used in multiple ways and the added coordinates offer the option for future mapping, should this be found useful.

4  SNAP SURVEY- AUDIT OF THE EXISTING DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The second part of the audit was carried out through stakeholder engagement. Via an online survey sent to a set sample of organisations (involved in Audience Finder* (*AF), interested in Audience Finder, and key tourism attractions), we aimed to see if businesses collected data, how important was this for their business, what aspirations and barriers they faced and if they would be susceptible to data sharing as a means to becoming more competitive.

4.1  CONTEXT

The purpose of this audit was to firstly identify organisations’ current research practices, looking at what data the respondent businesses collected and identifying the methods and approaches used. The survey aimed to establish the regularity of data collection, and over what time periods this was conducted. Alongside this, the audit also aimed to identify organisations’ aspirations, looking at what data organisations were looking to gather and in what way they wished to utilise the findings.

The audit also looked to distinguish any barriers or potential constraints, with regards to specific data that organisations must collect in order to meet objectives (i.e. funding obligations and stakeholder requirements). Finally, the audit looked to determine those respondents interested in developing more consistent frameworks and practices through future involvement and collaboration with Culture Kent.

This audit of existing data collection practices utilised by key organisations, generated outcomes that informed the overarching aim of Culture Kent to bridge the gap between cultural and tourism organisations. In addition, it also offered an opportunity to gather examples of best practice, further informing the wider context within which to positon Culture Kent.

4.2  KEY RESULTS

4.2.1  Current practices
Initially, the survey looked to identify current research practices, focusing on what data was collected at the time, in addition to the regularity and methods used.
When asked, 97% of organisations stated they were conducting audience/visitor research, while 3% of organisations were not. However, due to the size of the sample used this accounted for one tourism organisation asked. The reasons cited for this included the fact that they had not identified the need to carry out research, the lack of budget and necessary staff and that their organisation was too small.

Organisations that stated they were conducting research were largely focusing on aspects such as: visitor profiling and experience, audience profiling, market research, visitor numbers and economic impact assessments. In addition, 69% of organisations stated that they were looking at existing research when planning their own activity. This was found to be most frequently used by existing organisations that already used Audience Finder, as illustrated in figure 1.

When looking at the approaches chosen, the most commonly used methods included face-to-face questionnaires/interviews (76%), followed by paper questionnaires (66%), as seen in figure 2.

While a significant number of all types of organisations stated they commonly used face-to-face questionnaires/interviews, paper questionnaires were only frequently used by existing AF and potential AF organisations, with only 25% of tourism organisations stating they used this method, as illustrated in figure 3.
With regards to other methods, online questionnaires were also commonly used, by both tourism organisations (63%) and potential AF organisations (55%) and those currently using Audience Finder (60%). However, email questionnaires were found to be less used, selected by 39% of tourism organisations. However, focus groups were used by 63% of tourism organisations and 50% of existing AF organisations, while only 9% of potential AF organisations stated using this method. The approaches used less by organisations included; use of competitions and syndicated market research reports, with only 9% of potential AF organisations using the latter.

Figure 3: Graph to show the % of organisations by type use of different data collection methods
When looking at the number of research studies conducted per year, the majority of respondents stated they conducted between 1 and 3 (69%). Looking at the comparison between types of organisation, a significant number of potential AF organisations (91%) conducted between 1 and 3 studies per year, while 25% of tourism organisations and 20% of existing AF organisations stated they carried out over 10 research studies per year, as illustrated in the pie charts below.

Figure 4: Pie chart showing the number of research studies conducted per year by organisations

Figure 5: Pie chart showing the number of research studies conducted per year by tourism organisations

Figure 6: Pie chart showing the number of research studies conducted per year by potential AF organisations

Figure 7: Pie chart showing the number of research studies conducted per year by existing AF organisations
For 83% of respondents the most popular time of year to conduct studies was between July and September, followed by between April and June, selected by with 72% (figure 8). These results indicate that potential AF organisations conducted research studies less frequently, compared to tourism organisations and those currently using Audience Finder, as seen in figure 9.

![Time of year that research studies are conducted (% of all organisations)](image)

*Figure 8: Graph showing the time of year that research studies are conducted*

![Time of year that research studies are conducted (% of organisation by type)](image)

*Figure 9: Graph showing the time of year that research studies are conducted by type of organisation*

When respondents were asked about the resources allocated to research, the most significant resource was staff (45%). Out of the 24% of respondents that selected ‘other’ the most significant resource for them was either a mix of staff and budget, time or volunteers, with the reliance on volunteers expressed by potential AF organisations. Both existing AF and potential AF organisations most commonly stated that they allocate staff as their main resource to research.

The majority of tourism organisations stated that they most commonly allocated budget and ‘other’ resources, which included resources such as ‘time’.
When asked how they analyse research findings, 52% of organisations stated that they analyse findings in-house, while 14% of organisations stated using consultancy services or research agencies. With regards to the type of organisation, potential AF organisations predominately analysed findings in-house (82%), while existing AF organisations used both methods (60%). However, when looking at tourism organisations the use of all three approaches were evenly distributed, as illustrated in figure 11.

Figure 10: Graph showing the resources allocated to research by type of organisation

Figure 11: Graph showing the methods used to analyse research findings by type of organisation
Furthermore, when assessing the rationale behind organisations’ choice of research approach, the most common response amongst organisations was financial resources (45%) and ease of analysis (17%). This was particularly evident in the case of tourism organisations, with 63% stating financial resources as their primary rationale behind their choice of research approach.

It can also be observed from the findings illustrated in figure 12, that few respondents cited funding requirements or in-house expertise as a primary rationale behind their choice of research approach. 40% of existing AF organisations stated ‘other’ reasons, including choice of method was appropriate for the aims and objectives set and that they felt it was the most effective way to target their audience.

With the dominant theme of organisations’ financial resources emerging as a primary rationale, it could be suggested that those commonly cited research approaches such as online and face-to-face questionnaire/interview are seen as the most cost-effective methods. Other research methods such as paper questionnaires, incurred higher costs and email questionnaires relied on the creation and use of a robust, contactable database.

4.2.2 Current practices

The survey then looked at respondents’ aspirations and the nature of the information they were looking to gather and how they wanted to use it. When asked what was the main objective of the research they conducted, all respondents stated they wanted to understand who the visitors/audience was. This was closely followed by their wish to inform future marketing and to assess the impact of a certain event (both 86.2%).

Moreover, the least important respondents’ aspiration was industry monitoring, selected by 41% of organisations. When looking at the responses by type of organisation, it can be observed that a smaller percentage of potential AF organisations focused on objectives such as: competition and industry monitoring, as illustrated by figure 13.
The inclination for visitor research came across strongly also, when looking at organisations’ chosen targets. The most popular response selected among respondents was ‘existing customers’, with the second most popular being ‘potential customers’ selected by 72% of respondents. When looking at other target audiences, fewer organisations selected national/regional policy making bodies and industry stakeholders.

**Figure 13: Graph to show organisation’s research objectives by type of organisation**

**Figure 14: Graph to show organisation’s target audience of research studies conducted by type of organisation**
This was particularly evident in the case of tourism organisations, with only 13% selecting both industry stakeholders and national/regional policy making bodies.

When asked about the nature of the information collected on audience/visitors, most respondents stated that they gathered information based on visitor profile, with only a small percentage of potential AF organisations stating otherwise. With regards to specific information gathered based on visitor profiles, the most frequently gathered data included; Location (96%), Age (89%) and Gender (85.2%). Looking at type of organisation, all stated that they commonly gathered information on Gender, Location and Age, while other characteristics were most predominantly gathered by tourism and existing AF organisations, as seen in figure 15.

![Information on audience/visitor profile gathered (% of organisations by type)](image)

Organisations were then asked if they gathered information about their visitors’ behavioural patterns, with 62% of the total sample of organisations stating they did gather such information.

When looking at the type of organisations asked, it was predominantly the existing AF organisations that gathered visitor behavioural patterns (90%). This percentage was considerably lower amongst tourism organisations (50%) and potential AF organisations (46%).

Looking at the type of information gathered on behavioural patterns, all types of organisations stated they gather information on if visitors have been there before. Potential AF organisations were found to gather the least on criteria such as; transport, spending, and length of stay, as detailed in the graph in figure 16. It can also be observed that tourism organisations were most likely to gather information of behaviours including; length of stay and choice of transport.
In addition, organisations’ measurement of visitor motivations was also assessed, alongside measurement of visitor satisfaction. 69% of organisations stated that they gathered information on motivation, while 90% of organisations stated that they measured visitor satisfaction. 75% of tourism organisations stated that they gathered information on motivation, alongside 70% of existing AF organisations and 64% of potential AF organisations.

With regards to visitor satisfaction, all potential AF organisations asked stated that they gathered this information, followed by existing AF organisations (90%) and tourism organisations (75%). When looking at the type of information gathered on visitor motivation, all types of organisations commonly gathered information on the visitor’s reason for visiting and the impact of a specific event or activity.
However, whilst all existing AF organisations and 50% of tourism organisations stated they gathered information based on the influence of marketing activities, none of the potential AF organisations assessed this aspect of motivation, as seen in figure 17.

**Figure 17: Graph to show the type of information gathered on visitor motivations by type of organisation**

**Figure 18: Graph to show the criteria used to measure visitor satisfaction by type of organisation**
The survey then looked to assess organisations’ involvement with completing various types of impact assessments including; social, environmental and economic studies. From figure 19, it can be observed that none of the organisations asked stated they conduct environmental impact assessments. Of the tourism organisations asked all stated they only conducted economic studies. Of the potential AF organisations asked, 18% stated they conducted both social and economic studies, while existing AF organisations stated they conducted both economic (70%) and social (40%) impact assessments.

Respondents were also asked if they felt their existing approach to research and data collection benefitted their organisation. The main benefits of research approaches identified included; the possibility to inform future developments and marketing more accurately, while understanding the impacts of their offers and visitor preferences. This is represented in figure 20.
When looking at the benefits expressed by type of organisation, tourism organisations predominantly mentioned aspects such as; understanding audiences and visitors, and being able to improve as a result of their existing approach to research and data collection, as seen in figure 21.

![Figure 21: Word cloud to how tourism organisations feel they benefit from their existing approach to research/data collection](image)

The existing approach to research benefitted both the organisations currently using Audience Finder and potential AF organisations, in terms of audience scoping, as seen in the figures below. However, existing AF organisations also cited organisation and planning with regards to benefits experienced, with potential AF organisations stating that research positively contributed towards their wider understanding and the ability to inform decision-making.

![Figure 22: Word cloud to how existing AF organisations feel they benefit from their existing approach to research/data collection](image)

![Figure 23: Word cloud to how potential AF organisations feel they benefit from their existing approach to research/data collection](image)
4.2.3 Potential barriers and constraints

Respondents were then asked if there were any barriers or challenges they faced when conducting research and if there were any gaps in the information they collected.

As figure 24 illustrates, the main challenges organisations face are largely related to resources such as, time, budget and staff. Several organisations flagged the lack of proper planning when carrying out research. For organisations conducting research digitally, the main issue highlighted was relying on one database for all surveys, making the data less accurate and diluted.

![Figure 24: Word cloud to show the barriers and challenges all organisations face in carrying out research/data collection](image)

It is evident from the word clouds created (figure 25, 26 and 27) that each type of organisation asked felt that resources were a major barrier with regards to their ability to carry out research and data collection. The budget available was commonly cited by both tourism and potential AF organisations. In addition, it is also apparent that staff resources were a major challenge faced by organisations. For potential AF organisations there was a concern expressed with regards to planning, as illustrated in figure 27.

![Figure 25: Word cloud to show the barriers and challenges faced by tourism organisations when carrying out research/data collection](image)
When asked if they felt there were any gaps in the information they collected, 83% of organisations felt that gaps were present. 30% of organisations mentioned they would like to know more about the non-engaged people and their reasons, to see if they could find ways of attracting them. Other areas organisations wanted to explore further included; visitor flow between attractions, visitor spend, in addition to more details about visitors’ leisure preferences.

As illustrated in figure 28, all existing AF organisations asked stated that there were gaps in the research they conducted, alongside 75% of tourism organisations and 73% of potential AF organisations.
4.2.4 Future involvement and consultation and potential data sharing

Respondents were then asked if they used Audience Finder, with 47% of organisations stating that they did, while 10% were not sure and 43% did not. The organisations that stated they did not use Audience Finder were given a link to more information, and asked if they would consider using it in the future. Following this, only one respondent said no, with the other organisations stating they would use it or were unsure. Interestingly, 38% of tourism organisations stated that they would consider using Audience Finder, with one tourism organisation already using it. In addition, 57% of potential AF organisations expressed an interest in using Audience Finder in the future. This interest and potential scope to introduce Audience Finder, proved that to an extent Audience Finder could be used on a larger scale.

![Figure 29: Graph to show the % of organisations by type who currently use Audience Finder](image)

![Figure 30: Graph to show the % of all organisations by type who would consider using Audience Finder](image)
When respondents were asked if they would be willing to share research findings with other stakeholders, 76% of organisations stated they would. In addition, 72% stated they would share the tools and methodologies, and a smaller percent would share the data (55%). There is a reluctance from tourism organisations to share aspects of research, with 38% saying that they would not be willing to share this type of information.

The willingness to share information was also reinforced by the fact that 87% of respondents were interested in collaborating with other stakeholders to develop benchmark data for the region, as seen in figure 32. The majority of organisations stated that they would be interested in future involvement with Culture Kent, as seen illustrated in figure 33, although 11% of tourism organisation answered ‘no’ and 33% of tourism organisations stated they were ‘not sure’.
4: KEY FINDINGS

- 69% of organisations stated that they look at existing research when planning their own activity. This was found to be most frequently used by organisations who currently use Audience Finder.
- Only 25% of tourism organisations stated they used paper questionnaires, alongside 39% stating they used email questionnaires.
- Whilst all existing AF organisations and 50% of tourism organisations stated they gather information base on the influence of marketing activities, none of the potential AF organisations assessed this aspect of a motivator.
- Potential AF organisations predominantly analysed findings in-house (82%), while existing AF organisations most commonly used both methods (60%).
- For those organisations conducting research digitally, a major challenge highlighted was the reliance on one database for all surveys, making the data less accurate and diluted.
- Budget and money were commonly cited by both tourism and potential AF organisations as major barriers to conducting research. Potential AF organisations also expressed concerns over planning.
- There was a reluctance from tourism organisations to share aspects of research, with 38% saying that they would not be willing to share this type of information.
- The majority of organisations stated that they would be interested in future involvement with Culture Kent, although 11% of tourism organisation answered ‘no’ and 33% of tourism organisations stated they were ‘not sure’.
- 38% of tourism organisations stated that they would consider using Audience Finder and 57% of potential AF organisations expressed an interest in using Audience Finder in the future. This interest and potential scope to introduce Audience Finder, highlighted that Audience Finder could be potentially used on a larger scale.
Further reports from the Culture Kent Research Programme:
Report 1: Audit of the Cultural Tourism Landscape – Part I
Report 2- Organisational Perspectives.
Report 3- Consumer Perspectives.

Supporting documents also produced by the Culture Kent Research Programme:
Culture Kent Pilot Project Case Studies 1-6
Best Practice for Building Cultural Destinations Legacy and Ways Forward for Cultural Tourism in Kent
Research Insights 1-3.

Tango on the Terrace, Turner Contemporary (photo Jess Limbrick), courtesy of Turner Contemporary
The Culture Kent Research Programme has been undertaken by the Tourism and Events Research Hub, Canterbury Christ Church University and Visit Kent.

**The Tourism and Events Research Hub** at Canterbury Christ Church University aims to provide a clearly defined research and knowledge exchange offer to the visitor economy. It brings together a team of researchers with areas of expertise ranging from tourism, culture and the arts, to stakeholder analysis and destination management and marketing, to collaborate on research and consultancy projects.

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**Visit Kent** is the official Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the county. Visit Kent provides a not-for-profit consultancy and delivery service, through Go to Places, that supports clients whose aims and objectives are deemed to lie within the core interests of Visit Kent and the wider visitor economy. Visit Kent has extensive experience in providing support to the Kent Visitor Economy, championing the county’s £3.6 billion tourism industry and supporting 72,000 jobs.

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