



Compiègne guideline > internal document

Presentation

This document is a supplement to the 3 deliverables:

- Workshop training materials
- Benchmark
- Experiments to be implemented in Compiègne and its Region

These deliverables are very operational and summarised and can be used in training courses or workshops.

This document is aimed more at the Compiègne Agglomeration Tourism Office, internally, to:

- Better understand the difficulties encountered by professionals in implementing experiences
- Set limits but also guidelines on the support of professionals
- Reiterate the recommendations for the marketing and distribution of products
- Prepare a customer questionnaire

With all the documents provided, the ARC Tourism Office can develop expertise on the customer experience and, within a limit to be defined, support the professionals wishing to develop and enrich their offers.

Customer experience is like cooking - you may have the recipe, but what counts is the right touch, the right ingredients... and the right audience

Part 1: Context and focus

The objective of the operation

Identify the territory: marketing positioning. Work carried out by the marketing agency

The destination has the ambition to become a territory offering visitors a range of offers of experiences.

There are already operators who have begun an experience-based approach on the territory. However, it would be counterproductive to rely solely on these operators

Encourage "consumption" in the broadest sense, through an experience-based product offer: a walk in the forest, a meal in a restaurant, a unique night... Sleep / Eat / Discover

Promote the territory through positioning

At this stage, 3 keywords

Nature, style, well-being

Nature refers to the national forest

Style in reference to the French art of living and tradition, with the Château in the background

Style also refers to the heritage dimension and a quality accommodation offer. Wellness is a short stay market and is connected with nature and style.

Soft mobility with a focus on identity and potentially immersion: horse riding (Compiègne equestrian tradition), forest trips, micro-adventure...

For individuals: an offer connected with the forest such as: mushroom picking workshops, chestnut picking... for collective events

The focus of the approach

Focus on the customer and what they might want to experience when choosing Compiègne as a destination, beyond what can be expressed.

Travel is the ultimate, most emotional tourist experience. The willingness to respond to a traveller's desires opens up a wider range of experiences to be enjoyed.

Travelling is a break from everyday life, and this is what weekend and short-stay customers are looking for

Travelling is also about getting out of your comfort zone

This focus makes it possible to create a list of ingredients that will help build experiences during the workshop

The difference between a tourist and a traveller

A tourist takes pictures of themselves, a traveller takes pictures of their surroundings

A tourist visits the most famous places, a traveller goes to discover the most beautiful hidden corners

A tourist goes to McDonald's, a traveller wants to try everything. A tourist

chats with his friends, a traveller makes new friends

The ingredients for disconnection

- An evening in inspiring, heritage-rich and unique accommodation,
- Eating like a local
- **Meeting the locals:** markets, farm visits, restaurant or farm inn
- **Discovering the history of the territory** through its heritage
- Immersion in **landscapes (sounds, smells, colours...)**: in this case, the forest
- **A moment of idleness:** nap, picnic...
- **Thrills, little surprises:** splashing about in a river or pond, meeting deer, listening to nature, walking barefoot, hugging a tree...
- **A slow mode of transport** to have time to contemplate, admire and immerse yourself in the environment

Difference between micro-travel and the traditional tourism offer

Agglomeration of different moments that are **as immersive as possible**

Focus on things to experience and see **off the beaten track**

We **stimulate sight, hearing, meetings...** We **HELP** to achieve a deeper discovery

A customer experience is: helping the “tourist” to become a “traveller”.

This means

Creating encounters.

Helping them to surpass themselves.

Making them test a new sensation, reactivating the senses. Plunging them into a bubble of well-being

...

The objective of the experience for the territory: to serve up a story for the media

Customer experience as a creator of memories

What do we remember?

- Dreamlike landscape
- Going the extra mile
- Moments of sharing in the family, happiness of one's children
- Return to childhood
- Living a story with others
- Hedonistic pleasure
- Meeting iconic characters
- Amazement, a "WOAH!" surprise
- Cultural break

Part 2: Recommendations for internal use

Feedback from Compiègne. The obstacles to the implementation of the experience for professionals

The initial hypothesis was to increase the number of overnight stays in the area during the off-season in order to develop the tourist economy, the marketing focus being to promote experiences linked to the forest, a strong characteristic of the Compiègne area.

Through a conference, a workshop or live meetings, we were able to communicate and work with a number of professionals.

While at first glance the exercise may have seemed easy, the reality check showed many difficulties in completing this somewhat ambitious project.

The difficulty of implementation is not specific to the Compiègne destination; it is found almost everywhere. Explanations are given in the section to follow.

The complexity of French regulations

If we take the example of a tourist complex, the operator falls under a multitude of administrations and therefore regulations:

- Ministry of Tourism
- Ministry of Labour
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of the Environment

In addition, it can be in contact with the services of the region (development aid), the departmental council and the intermunicipal body.

It must therefore manage multiple regulations, which can sometimes be contradictory. Moreover, the French administration very rarely advises on what to do, but only says whether the law or regulation is respected or not. It is up to the operator to find a way forward. Sometimes, even the opinion of a consultancy firm is required, before the administration itself gives it as a last resort. A big waste of time and therefore money.

This regulatory environment is therefore not conducive to taking initiatives and is not a safe ground for an entrepreneur wishing to innovate in customer experience.

Finding the right path through the regulatory maze requires expertise and energy and wastes time and money.

4 examples to illustrate the difficulties encountered

Example 1: Bicycle rental with a guide to discover the forest:

For this seemingly simple proposal, it is necessary to have:

1 professional renting out the bikes

1 youth and sports certified guide for the supervision of the activity

A bicycle rental company cannot create a permanent job for a guide. It must therefore find a certified person with self-employed status with the risk of being accused of concealed work by the labour inspectorate.

If, by chance, a guide is found, the customer will have to pay both the bike rental company and the guide separately. This route lacks fluidity for the customer.

In this example, it is not so much the difficulty of distributing the product - there are channels - but the regulations are what makes the creation of the product very complex.

Example 2: Holiday cottages / Bed & Breakfasts coupled with activities.

The economic value of overnight stays in tourist accommodation was made through the offer of uniqueness and the "Love Room". It is a well-known format and the Hauts-de-France Tourism Platform has been able to promote the destination via these quality accommodation offers.

To go further in the experience-based offer, and to increase the number of tourist accommodations that can offer an experience-based product, it is pragmatic to join forces with an activity provider, for example activities related to horses, or with a tourist accommodation wishing to offer a package.

However, it is forbidden in France to market a packaged product if the professional is not registered as a travel and holiday operator. It is therefore necessary for the customer to purchase the accommodation and the activity separately, contacting two different people.

The tourist experience, in this case for a weekend, is an impulse purchase, and impulse means easy ordering. The e-commerce players know the equation perfectly well. In this case, French regulations are inadequate for this type of tourist offer.

Example 3: Villa du Châtelet. Creation of a new unique accommodation from scratch

2023 observation:

The owner, Alix de Lauzanne, is tired of the business, which is considered to be intrusive as regards her family, which does not make it easy to plan a new project.

She agreed to mobilise funding to take the project forward, even as motivation is waning. But, she wishes to keep moving forward.

The workshop, and then our visit to the site, triggered reflection, and our advice enabled decisions to be made.

What was put in place is perhaps less experience-based than what was once envisaged (unique 'glass house' accommodation in the forest above the house), but the couple did not feel like going any further.

However, while many questions were raised, projects were set up with:

- Addition of a bathroom to a third bedroom to increase capacity
- Conversion of a lean-to into a cottage for an independent offer
- Customer development seminar with cooking workshops

This is the principle of the funnel, where you don't stop thinking and little by little you focus your thinking after having gone through the multitude of different constraints to be taken into account:

- Motivation
- The financial aspect
- Know-how

In the end, Alix developed what she already knew how to do, not being able to project herself into the scenario presented, which was nevertheless obvious when one knows the expectations for the "unique" market and when one masters the needs and thinking of visitors.

Example 4: Wellness course

Véronique Jagla has all the skills to organise wellness courses in her house. And her house lends itself to this, especially as it is situated close to the forest. In addition, she is willing to do work on it to adapt it to the standards of this type of customers.

When we worked with Veronique on a standard product, we agreed on the need to offer meals to the trainees, so that the offered retreat would be a complete product.

Except: by law, Véronique is not allowed to serve food. It was therefore necessary to change her status in order to be able to do so, which complicates the implementation of the project and takes time.

Supporting professionals in customer experience: the limits of the exercise for a community.

As we have seen, creating an experience with high added value and economic development for the territory is complex.

The difficulty of the professional to enter into a customer experience marketing approach, and to project the financial impacts thereof in a business model, is perhaps the main obstacle to the development of experience-based offers.

If we think about the support of local communities in relation to the previous examples, let's recall the list of the main obstacles that a project leader is confronted with:

Marketing

As seen, this is a major obstacle. Customer experience means being able to stage a tourism product with the aim of marketing it and distributing it via the right networks... which have a cost. To create value. Professionals are often at a loss on this point, because they are used to thinking in terms of quality rather than the emotional experience of the customer.

Urban planning

Classification of land where a tourist project is envisaged: construction, establishment of light leisure accommodation or unique accommodation... French regulations are complex.

Financial engineering

Being able to make a good business plan (starting from marketing) and knowing how to sell your project to banks.

Remember: the grant is only a facilitator, and does not make the project. This is only one parameter of the business plan, especially as it impacts the depreciable investment line, thus with little effect on the operating result.

Regulatory

For catering, setting up a package, diploma holder to supervise an experience...

Political

If the project depends on a political decision = area of uncertainty

Helping to remove these barriers requires significant expertise. The community must therefore consider whether it is capable of deploying this support expertise, bearing in mind that it is ultimately the operator who bears the financial risk. Because creating a value-added experience that increases the number of overnight stays in the area requires a significant investment.

Reflection on the support of professionals by the community which can be done on two points:

>>>> **verifying regulatory obstacles:** town planning, environmental regulations, professional diplomas or certificates, etc.

There is indeed regulatory expertise in communities. It can therefore be a good support to clear these aspects and to obtain a first analysis on the possibility to set up the project

Reminder: real expertise is not just knowing the regulations, but being able to design the project so that it can be consistent with these regulations.

To make it fit into the boxes, without making it lose its richness.

>>>> **Marketing support**

In several cases, *La Fabrique à Souvenir* has been able to prove that the customer experience is a formidable marketing lever. While unique accommodation is the order of the day, other initiatives are possible.

For example, at Whaka Lodge, we have set up a "baby cool" experience: a room with teddy bears, a baby bed, accommodation with enclosed gardens and a fun cabin... as a result press articles followed, including a quarter page in Figaro magazine at the beginning of September. Non-negotiated value equivalent to advertising space of 25,000 euros

On marketing, there is a possible field of support for awareness raising and a first stage of reflection. This is what Hauts-de-France Tourism is doing, in a product segment that is still fairly simple to set up, notably unique accommodation, which is now well mastered in terms of expertise.

The various information provided, such as the benchmark and the marketing brief, should enable the community to develop this expertise.

To change is to take the risk of making mistakes, but also of gaining new customers. Not changing is to take the risk of weakening when the wind changes

Looking at the problem from the “other end”: the Forest Festival and the new website

As we can see, technical support is complex. Ultimately, the creation of an event related to the forest is an effective way to help the territory to acculturate to the customer experience and to promote the territory through its characteristics.

What remains to be done is to promote this great initiative among professionals.

This acculturation is also supported by the new destination website www.compiegne-pierrefonds.fr, in line with a new form of understanding of the territory by its customers.

Through these two examples, we can see that the local authority must be the bearer of a global dynamic for the destination by activating levers that it controls, the support of professionals having a limited impact due to the complexity of the approach.

Creating the movement, explaining and removing the first obstacles is an achievable objective of support. Beyond that...

Experience at the service of a territorial economic development strategy: the challenge of marketing

Without customers, there is no experience.

Without marketing, there are no customers.

An approach in which you first come up with an idea for an experience and then figure out how to distribute it is not the right one.

The right approach is to integrate right from the design stage:

- **The experience's appeal** and its response to new needs are defined through the "title-promise-photos" trio
- **The existence of distribution channels** that can commercialise the experience, as having multiple channels is a good way to increase effectiveness.
- **The anticipated interest in the experience offered by the reputation building channels** of traditional media and social networks

The customer experience is not a response to a need, but an impulse to buy that may even be irrational after being prompted initially by the visuals.

The price is not the main element in the buying process, it is the projection of the story and the moment you are going to experience that will be its trigger.

The two golden rules: "the product creates the need", and "we sell the difference".

In tourism, the extraordinary, of which Nathalie Beernaert, along with the Roulottes de Campagne, has been one of the pioneers in France, is a perfect example.

So where is the line between a classic tourism product and a tourism experience?:

The product is transformed into an "experience" when the use (sleeping, eating, outdoor activities, etc.) is not an end in itself, but becomes a way to experience a special moment filled with emotion

Unique, an experience-based package with a proven commercial track record

Creating an experience from an accommodation is now part of the current trend. Starting with tree houses and country gypsy caravans, the unique offering has diversified and found its niche in the market. Besides Booking and Airbnb, specialised or institution-based platforms such as Hauts-de-France Tourism have emerged. The business, for those who do it well enough, is very profitable.

In 2018, La Fabrique à Souvenir created a concept of experiential holiday cottage for couples and families which is booked 300 days a year, with a rental income of €45K / year when the average amount for holiday cottage is €8K.

The challenge of this unique business to promote the Compiègne/Pierrefonds destination.

For a destination such as Compiègne / Pierrefonds, focusing on a single catalogue of unique or charming accommodations to create an experience is not enough, especially as the unique aspect is an individual approach that can lose touch with the location's identity.

Using the territory's features to promote the destination

The forest, as a feature of the territory, is quite obvious, and the state-owned Forest of Compiègne is almost a “brand” in itself.

Castles, beautiful homes and villages with forests are also potential features and locations for experiences, as is the case at the Pierrefonds château with the *bal de l'Impératrice* (the Empress' ballroom).

Without overlooking the “horse riding” activity which is embedded in the local culture, is found in the forest and reflects the local history.

In order to enhance the value of the Compiègne/Pierrefonds region as a destination, it is thus important to promote experiences that match these features, but without ignoring other initiatives that could further enrich the experience. For example:

- Activities in the forest
- Horse riding
- Cycling adventure in the forest
- Urban activities
- Cultural activity

However, for these experiences, which have a strong potential for building the reputation of the destination, and which could be treated as more comprehensive leisure activities, marketing is more complex and less structured than that for accommodation.

Usually, the promotion of an activity is carried out by combining it with an accommodation service, which reduces the marketability of the activity.

And no customer, no experience. And without customers, it is difficult to motivate those involved to create experience-based offers.

Marketing is therefore a major issue in the design of experience-based projects, but this marketing requires communication and dedicated distribution channels.

Creating experience-based projects with high media potential

An experience is a 'story' that is brought to life for the customer. Journalism is about telling stories. The story experienced must appeal to the journalist.

It is therefore necessary, in the first phase, to develop experience-based projects that are attractive to the media.

The media is the first target. If we make use of media, we will get customers. And to involve the media, the experience has to be successful.

For reaching the media, it is necessary to have:

- An original and innovative tourism package that “fits with current trends”...
A journalist can only talk about an "exceptional" product, the fact of talking about it is a value-added journalistic feature, because readers think that the journalist has discovered a gem.
- A title that implies a promise, the title of the story that will be experienced by the customer
- A narrative description of the product to facilitate the work, with a limit on copy and paste
- Beautiful photos
- A target customer
- A price list with practical information
- A contact: telephone, link, etc.

The press plays an important role in building reputation and creating an appealing effect. But it is necessary to have the online booking tool to turn this appeal into sales (Hauts-de-France Tourism). The press and booking system together can eliminate the need for commissions from platforms such as Airbnb.

A paradigm shift in the act of purchasing a destination?

While for a long stay, people generally choose a destination (more or less broad in scope), for a short stay, the experience to be enjoyed can be a deciding factor in the purchase, or at least help confirm the choice of a destination thanks to reassurance that there are "things to do".

Platforms or services selling "experiences", not associated with accommodation, are emerging; however, when we see the investment made by Tripadvisor, which created Viator, or Airbnb, which is pushing this service and highlighting experiences on the very first page, we can quite easily imagine that the marketing of experiences is going to expand.

This is a new paradigm in tourism, which could transform the choice of a destination, which until now has been very much linked to accommodations.

However, no data is available to assess its impact.

Experience distribution platforms

International platforms

Airbnb

Booking (in progress) Viator

They help to create strong brand awareness at the launch of a tourism product. But to avoid too high a commission percentage on sales, they must remain a supplement to the professional's own communication and marketing.

Specialised websites

Chilowé

Multiple sites dedicated to yoga and horse riding or

Cycling

<https://www.abicyclette-voyages.com/recits-velo-voyage/vivre-des-aventures-a-velo-en-famille/>

They are aimed at an affinity clientele and only relay professional and successful offers. An offer such as a one-hour horse ride for beginners has no place on these sites.

Upcoming websites

Alentour

A multitude of sites seem to be focusing on the marketing of customer experiences. It will be necessary to monitor their development closely and check their ability to survive over time.

Accommodation platforms

Hauts-de-France Tourism

Abracadaroom

Family trip

weekendesk

Introuvable

Vaover

Some of these platforms have focused on the development of uniqueness and the quest for products in close connection with nature. Being on multiple platforms increases commercial effectiveness.

To conclude

Beyond public events such as the “street food” market, Compiègne/Pierrefonds' tourism consumption will be based on a mix of marketing of accommodation/experience.

This mix will be more effective if cross-references are made between professionals, for instance through a “favourite” section.

The activities must give referrals to the accommodation, thus giving tips to their customers.

Accommodations have to give information about the activities, adding value to the customer's stay.

Therefore, there is a shared interest.

In addition, the press must develop the reputation of the region through the promotion of experiences it can offer, but this will only be effective if the web resources are in place to transform the acquired reputation into a buying decision.

Customer experience questionnaire

1) Presentation

Philosophy of the questionnaire

The aim here is not to conduct yet another customer satisfaction questionnaire based on a quality approach. The idea is to seek out the expression of the client's feelings, knowing that the expression of a feeling is purely subjective and that it is therefore necessary to take a step back from the analysis of the results.

A satisfaction questionnaire based on factual items allows an "objective and quantitative" measurement and is therefore a tool to improve one's activity in terms of quality.

The questionnaire presented here is a support for a qualitative analysis of how a customer might feel about the offered experience.

Having conducted qualitative interviews with customers, it is interesting to note that a customer's positive feelings about an experience are not always where you would expect them to be when designing the experience. The expression of feelings makes it possible to adjust the marketing, and to make the product evolve in its concept if necessary. A customer questionnaire based on quality does not allow this, because you are in a system of rating what is already existing.

Technical comment on the construction principle

A semi-open questionnaire was chosen. The aim is to stimulate the customer's memory and help them answer the questions, very simply.

Beyond a series of possible answers, it is necessary to leave an opening for a free expression, which is always more interesting.

Characteristic words for types of emotions, intensities of emotions

You don't put a negative, but you slip in a more all-purpose word, which, in reference to the others, becomes "no more" and marks a difference in emotional intensity. Using "Comfortable" to describe a place is an emotional low point.

The possibility is left open to express something else with a free formulation.

Two possibilities of use:

1) Leave the customer's entries to be free-form at the end of the experience

This is a minimum, but of more limited interest. Behind a word that can express a feeling, there are emotional projections that will not be expressed.

2) Use the questionnaire as an interview tool

In the case of the launch of an experience, the questionnaire becomes a guide for a face-to-face exchange with the customer, allowing for feedback on the questions asked. The questions are there to open up the discussion and the exchange, which is very rich in terms of feedback.

How the questionnaire is built

The questionnaire is built around three classic stages of the customer journey, with each stage having its own focus

Before: researching what may have triggered the purchase of the experience and when

During: characterising the experience emotionally

After: characterising the memory left behind, and... a general quantitative evaluation.

2) The customer experience questionnaire

Name of the experience

How did you face the experience? Solo

As a

couple, As

a family

How and why did you choose your experience

When did you **choose** to have this experience?

- Before the stay in the Compiègne region
- During the stay.

The **reasons** for the

choice

- A response to a desire, you wanted to do...
- Curiosity. Opportunity to experience something nice
- A gift to yourself
- Other

Did you come to Compiègne **specifically** for the experience, or does this experience **complement** your stay?

How did you **find out** about this experience?

- Written press: if yes, which media?
- Internet: if yes, which site?
- Social networks
- TV
- Radio
- Word of mouth

- Tourism Office

When you found out, what was the **key factor** that made you **choose** this particular experience

- The title of the experience
- The description of the experience
- One or more photos
- Seen on TV or in the press
- Other

The experience you had

What you liked most about the **hosts** or activity organisers

- Professionalism
- Sharing a story
- The ability to make people discover
- Meeting a passion
- Goodwill
- Politeness
- Discretion

How would you describe the **location** of the experience?

- Immersive
- Connected
- Successful
- “In the thick of it”
- Functional

The **services** (meals, spa, massage, other)

- In complete harmony with the rest
- delicious
- A nice surprise
- Quality equipment
- Meets expectations

Your **feelings**, how to describe the experience, the words to define it

Original,
Surprising
Emotionally intense, Fun
Enthusiastic,
Intimate,
Relaxing,
Disconnecting,
Comfortable,
Pleasant
Within the norms of this type of experience

Memories of your experience

At the end of the experience, you think (benefit of the experience)

- You were overwhelmed
- You found yourself
- You reconnected with your spouse or children
- You spent a moment in a bubble of happiness
- You were finally able to fulfil a desire, a dream
- Having learned, you are enriched intellectually and physically
- You had a good time

Would you recommend the experience?

How much, on a score of 1 to 10

A tip for improvement