

Targeting the 'Hideaways'

- Brecon is suffering from a bad case of *affluenza*. The profile of the visitors is that they tend to be a slightly older and richer crowd of people who visit alone or in couples, generally without their children in tow. Many come from Wales but most come from far into the SE and SW of England and overseas. They want to get away from it all to enjoy the scenery and peace and quiet. They might do some walking or a bit of cycling but nothing overly active. Recharging the batteries is the name of the game.
- The good news is that when they get here they really like the region. They recommend the area to family and friends and very likely to return. However, when they are visiting they are not spending as much time or money as they could be. They are thrifty and transient. They will not waste time or money but will part with cash and sacrifice a week from their schedule for something special.
- Food is so important for galvanising a regional identity. Many in Wales do not understand that quality does not mean 'continental'. A visitor is not expecting a cappuccino and panini in a rural café in Wales. Have the confidence to think local and use local ingredients. Use the Elizabeth David principle: "Use the freshest local ingredients in the simplest ways possible." Welsh is a sign of quality. Wales has a very good food reputation. Creating a regional identity comes from the simple things: the cheese that you use, the bread on the table, the water and beer that you pour. Visitors expect a regional menu with signature dishes. Above all they are willing to pay a premium for something a bit different and indigenous.
- Understand the market. The past decade has seen a dramatic change in the tourism market. Working professionals still demand their 2 weeks in the sun but with cheap flights in such a competitive market, we see the emergence of the 'hideaway' consumer. This is a consumer who apart from their main big holiday might embark on 2 or 3 breakaway long weekends to: Paris, Prague, Barcelona or Dublin in a year. But the burning of the candle at both ends necessitates a hideaway break for rest and relaxation. St Ives, Padstow, the Cotswolds and the Lake District are firm favourites; however, I am not convinced that Brecon is 'top of mind'. This perception needs to shift. The mountains and the surrounding area are both beautiful and distinctive. These assets can easily compete with other destinations for the hideaway holiday.
- There is a massive market of untapped potential. In order to ensure long-term economic sustainability the next step is to instil a 'commercial confidence' among local businesses. The focus should be to create a distinctive regional 'experience' and encourage the development and promotion of high end goods and services. In 5 years time I would like to see the region littered with quality restaurants and gastro-pubs with distinctive and thoroughly local menus; boutique hotels and guest houses, spas and retreats and cultural stimulation in the form of innovative art and craft. There is no need to go overboard on this front but the commercial opportunities are obvious.

- The formula for success is straightforward: keep it simple. Wales suffers from too much micro marketing with too many websites and brochures saying the same thing. A collective effort is needed to streamline the approach. A few simple messages need to be disseminated. Tell them clearly how to get here, where to stay, where to eat, what to do if feeling active and what to do when feeling cultural. The countryside will do the rest.
- With such high levels of advocacy visitors do your marketing for you. Large scale advertising campaigns are not required as attracting interest is not a problem. However, the reputation of the region could be enhanced. Consider inviting travel journalists to review the region in depth? They are always hoping to rediscover overlooked destinations. Travel features always stimulate word-of-mouth. Make Brecon the destination of choice for the hideaway.

Matt Swales
Research Director
matt.swales@rmltd.net

Research and Marketing Ltd
Trefor House, Galdames Place, Ocean Park, Cardiff, CF24 5RE.

T: 029 2043 5800 **F:** 029 2048 3540 **M:** 07962 497000 **W:** www.rmltd.net