



Tourism, Leisure & Hospitality Business Survey 2019

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Welcome.

According to Mae West “Too much of a good thing is wonderful”, but in 2018 there was a little too much of some things – and this was not good for a number of the businesses operating within the visitor economy.

The idea and potential romance of a light dusting of snow drawing people to indoor attractions or to a destination pub or hotel with a roaring fire appeals, but the Beast from the East (24 February to 4 March) literally brought things to a standstill.

An early Easter can be unpredictable (30 March to 2 April), and while we all know our gardens and the farms need a bit of spring rain, the Easter weekend was remembered for its torrential downpours and plethora of flood alerts across the region.

Many businesses say the weather is a leading concern and, in response, we have seen substantial investment in weather-proofing attractions, combined with marketing of the great outdoors and educating visitors that there is no such thing as bad weather – just bad clothing. Ultimately, in this battle we are slowly winning, as the visitor economy in our region continues to grow as a year-round destination.

So after a challenging start we needed a bit of sunshine to brighten spirits – but as the adage goes, you need to be careful what you wish for. Once the sun came out and the heat turned up, it seems someone forgot to turn it down again, and while the perception was that the sunshine and heat was good for business, the reality for some was yet a further blow.

Enjoying the outside became the destination of choice, and while accommodation providers benefited, the idea of low cost barbecues, “free” days at the beach or park, with an odd ice cream thrown in, became the norm.

Few wanted to fill up on three-course meals, and while glasses of soft drinks, beer and wine were the order of the day, they didn’t compensate. Towards the end of the summer, visitors started to get acclimatised to the weather and some trends started to return to normal. Some businesses who may have felt the squeeze in the heat of summer, benefited by the then consistent weather as late summer and autumn drew in.

But the weather is only one factor that put pressure on businesses in 2018. Rents, regulated staffing costs, including auto-enrolment, business rates, and product costs, all continued their steady rise, leading to many big name casualties – a trend that continues in 2019. We have all heard of insolvency and bankruptcy, but the populist term we are now hearing more about is the Creditors Voluntary Arrangement (CVA).

“there is a belief that tourism just happens

It’s not all down beat, however, as businesses in this sector are used to taking the rough with the smooth. There’s still optimism and a desire and need to invest – a recipe that’s the basis for continued growth. Great efforts by the regional brands, and the more local DMOs, to put their areas on the map helps keep the visitor economy flowing.

I still fear there is a belief that tourism just happens. It doesn’t, and no single business, organisation or region can go it alone to grow tourism. We need to work together, business with business, organisation with organisation, for the greater good. We should not compete with each other, but remind ourselves we are competing with other tourism regions, both in the UK and abroad.

Within this publication we have tried to look at trends for both today and the future (now, for tomorrow), and have brought you the collective key data provided independently by some 250 businesses, as well as ideas and tips that can help businesses in these challenging times. I hope you enjoy it!

Chris Scargill, tourism, leisure and hospitality partner with MHA Larking Gowen ●

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The annual Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Business Survey is the largest independent survey of its kind in East Anglia.

The data, which is collected from businesses in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, helps to provide representative and accurate information about the sector; its views, trends and results across a range of issues, creating a useful benchmark and yardstick.

The survey is compiled by the tourism, hospitality and leisure team at MHA Larking Gowen.

For more information visit
www.tourismsurveys.co.uk
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 **mha**
LARKING GOWEN

Survey overview.

So what have we seen?

Chris Scargill provides his overview of the results.

Can upward growth continue forever? For the previous five years an average of 63% of businesses surveyed reported increased turnover, so should we blame the weather in 2018 for being the reason behind arguably the worst results for six years, which went against the general perception that the fantastic weather must be good for business? As shown opposite, turnover was challenged but, none-the-less, the results were still better than 2012.

There were mixed results on profits too. Some 31% of businesses reported falling profits, while 40% said profits had increased. The future was not looking bright either with nearly a third predicting profits to fall in 2019. Of those who saw decreased profits in 2018, some 49% anticipated a decline in profits in 2019. This clearly could be a path of no return. For now, though, investment is still strong (page 19) with 16% planning an expansion of their premises while six in ten plan site improvement.

I fear there is a belief that the sector is an easy and forgiving route to raising tax revenues. The spectre of a bed tax (pages 18-19) looms, with some areas looking to introduce it. Yes, they have such schemes abroad, but they have lower VAT rates, so it is not surprising that there was limited support. However, 26% felt it could be supported if the revenue generated helped marketing initiatives to bring more business to the area.

In an age of austerity and with so many government budgetary cuts, it is potentially unreasonable to expect to see a fall in VAT here in the UK, but financial computations show it would be a jobs and revenue generator, as well as providing lower cost restaurant and accommodation costs for us all. The point really is that it does not even appear to be on any political bodies long-term agenda either. Which potentially correlates to the fact that most businesses feel that government, locally and nationally, do not do enough for the sector.

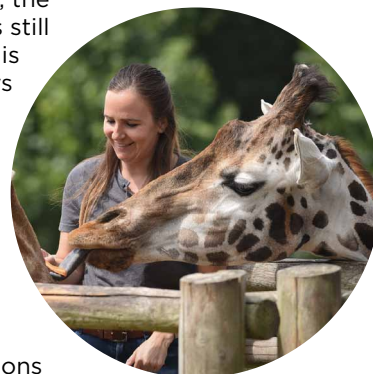
You cannot avoid thinking about the impact of Brexit, and the survey results suggest lower overseas visitors but, post Brexit, even greater reductions (page 26). There are staffing concerns post Brexit and the ability to attract overseas staff for whom

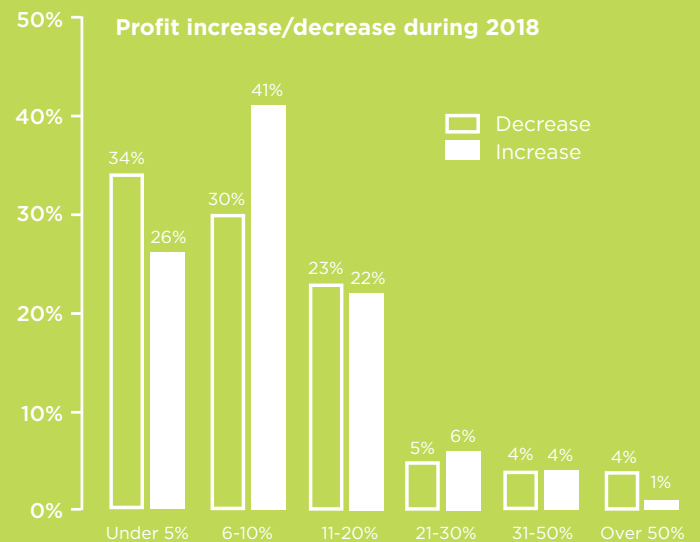
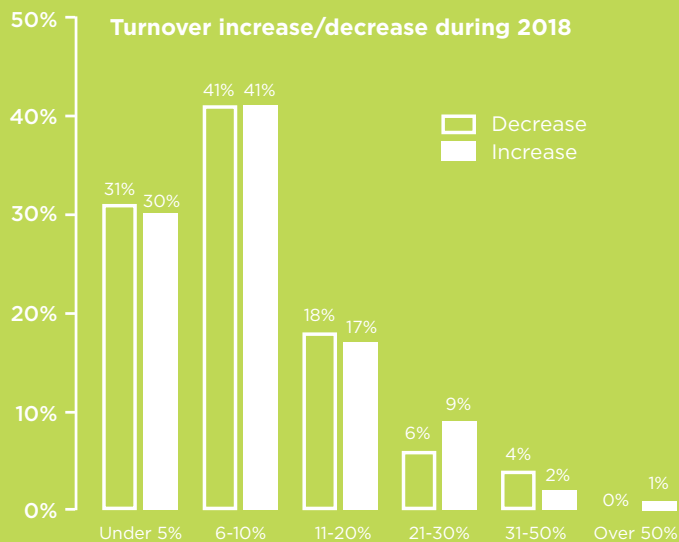
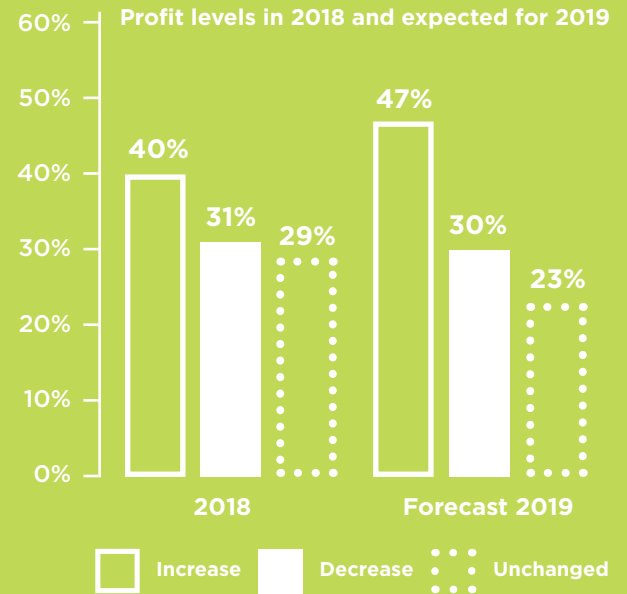
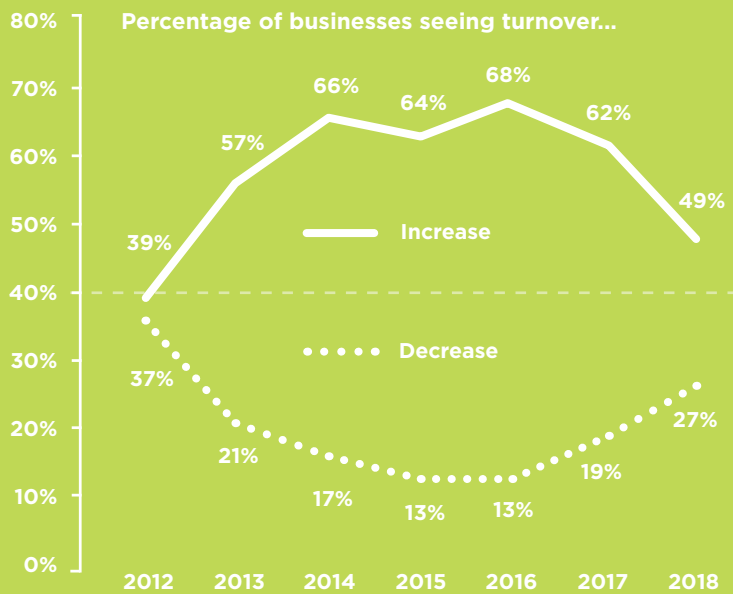
many businesses in the sector rely. We can see on page 21 that a good number of businesses have been recruiting both to full time and part time positions.

The National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage saw above inflation increases again, but for those paid above these scales there was mixed news, with only a few businesses matching the increases while many suggested inflation only or below inflation increases. To fund these changes, some businesses planned cuts, but the highest number planned to raise prices to recover the extra cost – which in turn potentially links back to falling revenues as the leisure spend is incredibly subjective, and totally voluntary. Recent reports on increased visitor numbers to the free-to-enter visitor attractions is potentially evidence of this phenomenon.

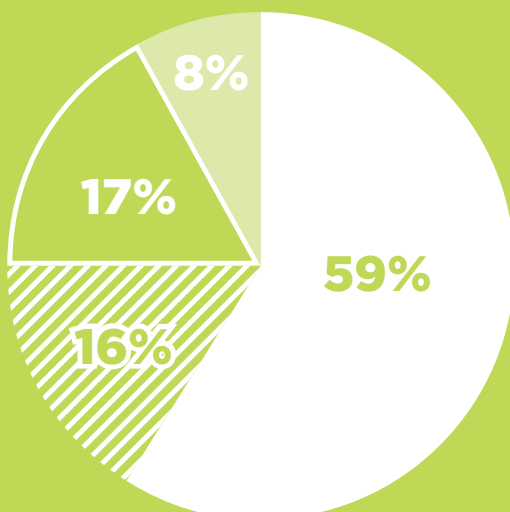
While there is sensitivity on the need for sustainability and reducing plastic, which we explore on pages 6-9, businesses are doing their bit with the majority, across all activities, reducing plastic usage, and while they felt they should do their share, there was a call for support from both local and central government.

While some felt capacity (page 9) was being reached in some areas, the majority (85%) felt there was still plenty of room to grow. This is where working together plays a part and there should be some concern that there are a large number of businesses (page 34) not engaged with their local DMOs or regional brands. There are hurdles ahead to address some of their concerns, but I do believe in the need for these organisations and urge businesses to play their part, so we have given, once again, a voice to a range of the brands and DMOs (pages 31 to 34) to highlight what they are doing.

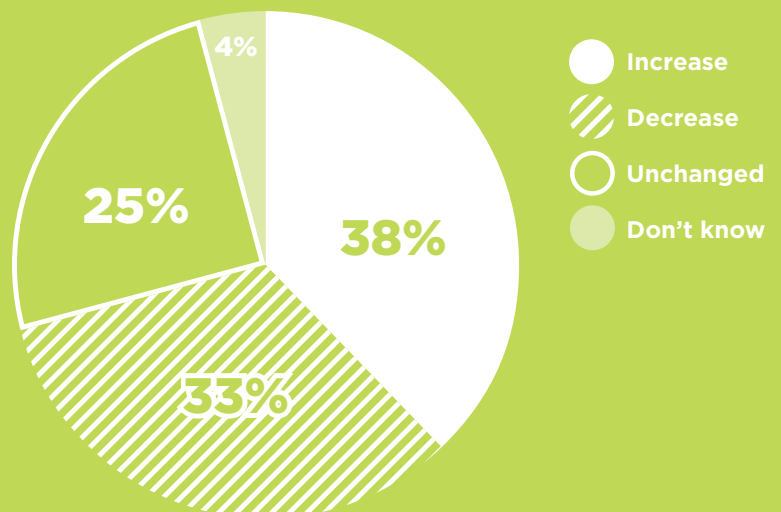




If turnover increased in 2018, expected in 2019?



If turnover decreased in 2018, expected in 2019?



Sustainability makes good business sense.

Going green isn't just for show, it has genuine benefits on the bottom line, especially when it becomes an integral part of a business.



THE GREEN POUND

As Extinction Rebellion activists of all ages brought London to a standstill this spring, an East Anglian company has been demonstrating for the last decade how to care for the environment as well as customers, shareholders and staff.

Spring tides are a fact of life in the east coast tourism magnet that is Southwold, which sometimes threatens the town's famous beach huts and occasionally flooding permanent buildings.

For some years, the area's biggest employer detected developments in the local weather that led it to re-think its business model – ultimately to the benefit of customers, the balance sheet and, crucially, the environment.

Andy Wood, chief executive of Adnams – a multi-tiered business incorporating brewing, distilling, pubs and hotels – explains: “We’re perched here on the edge of the east coast and, going back 12-15 years, we could see the impact of the weather and the longer term implications of climate change. It brought the environment up the agenda for us and became part of our DNA.”

The concerns coincided with the decision to move product distribution out of the town to a nearby site in the country, providing the opportunity to put Adnams’ “green” credentials to the test.

“There are three strands to our environmental concerns,” Andy says. “There is the natural environment, the built environment and the social environment, and our move out of town brought all three into play.”

With a staff of 620, the decision had an immediate social impact; the distribution centre’s unusual and green-influenced design combined with an aim to be visually unobtrusive contributed to the built

environment; and, with the proposed site in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the potential impact on the natural environment was obvious.

At £5.7 million – 20pc over the odds 12 years ago, according to Andy’s calculations – was it worth it?

“A naturally ambient temperature of 14 degrees celsius in the warehouse means we don’t have to use artificial heating in the winter or cooling in the summer,” he says. “Just one example of how the return on investment is better than you might think.”

“Over the long term, these kinds of innovations are saving us money

This ambient temperature is achieved through the environmentally-friendly sedum garden roof, which also serves to reduce the visual impact of the 4,400sq m unit, while photo-voltaic cells in the roof provide 80pc of the hot water requirement.

Rainwater is harvested for general washing at the same time as millions of gallons of water used in the brewing process are recycled across the building. Bottles and cans are also recycled, and packaging has switched from plastics to cardboard.

“Over the long term, these kinds of innovations are saving us money,” says Andy. But there is also another dividend beyond the laudable reduction in the company’s carbon footprint.

“Because of what we’re doing and how we’re doing it, we are building a group of



advocates for Adnams who share our views. Take our regular beach clean events in Southwold, for example. These bring people together two or three times a year for a good cause and help to turn them into advocates, if they're not already!

"We are a big employer in the area, and inevitably we make an impact on it. But we are a part of why people come to Southwold and we want to put something back.

"Many of our biggest customers, such as supermarkets, also have the environment and sustainability on their agenda, and we can deliver that.

"Our relationship with these customers has been transformed because we are doing something a bit different – and that reflects on them as well."

Meanwhile, in the same way the company was able to persuade planners of the benefits of its new building in an environmentally-sensitive area – "we believe we are good neighbours" – its relationships with the farmers who supply the raw materials for its world famous products are strong. There is now an Adnams Barley Growing Group.

"We have bought about half our malting barley from the Holkham Estate in North Norfolk for many years," says Andy. "Even our chairman supplies us with rye through a malting company."

It's a virtuous circle from grain to glass – even the spent hops and grains go for animal feed – which has seen rapid growth for an East Anglian company determined to counter climate change in ways that have undoubtedly benefited the bottom line.

Take a strand out of Adnams' green DNA

Packaging:

- Aluminium cans contain up to 90% recycled content and amber glass bottles contain 25% – some of the highest percentages in the country.
- The weight of Adnams' glass bottles has been reduced by 38%, taking out an estimated 1,100 tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere each year as well as removing 1,400 tonnes of glass from the waste system.
- Single-use plastic can and bottle multipacks have been replaced with recyclable cardboard.



Water efficiency:

- The same water is reused repeatedly to cool Adnams' spirits.
- The water needed to de-alcoholise Ghost Ship to make Ghost Ship 0.5% is reused in the brewing process.
- The water needed to cool beer after boiling is the same water used to brew the next batch of beer.
- The water used for the final clean of tanks is reused as a prewash for cleaning next time.

Electricity:

- 100% of the electricity used across all operations (brewing, distilling, shops, pubs, hotels, distribution, offices and everything else) is from renewable sources, such as wind, solar and hydro.
- Switching to renewable electricity has reduced total company carbon emissions by around 1,000 tonnes a year – equivalent to the energy from more than 300 houses.
- Five electric vehicle charging points have been installed across the estate of managed pubs.

Bees

- Adnams has created a safe home for rescued honey bees at the distribution centre, and over the last five years the population has grown to about 500,000, attracted by specially planted wildflowers and species that they love.
- Surplus honey goes to the chefs at Adnams' pubs.





A CULTURAL APPROACH TO WASTE

There can't be many in the tourism and leisure sector that can say they are inherently a recycling business – but for Camplings Linen, reducing, reusing and recycling are at the heart of everything it does.

From its laundries in Great Yarmouth and Cambridge, Camplings processes up to 500,000 pieces of linen every week, ready to be hired out to more than 300 customers, most of which are in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

But it doesn't stop there. Camplings' managing director, Richard Turvill, wants every aspect of the business to be as sustainable as possible.

"Being sustainable is about being brave and innovative," says Richard. "I wouldn't say I'm prepared to be the first to try something, but I'm happy to be the second and to put different technologies together."

And that's certainly the case when you look at the £5m investment in the laundry facility at Great Yarmouth in 2016, and the current similar investments being made at Camplings' Cambridge operation.

The figures speak for themselves: a reduction in water consumption from nine to four litres per kilo of linen and a third less energy per kilo of laundry washed, made possible through clever technologies, including the recycling of rinse water and heat recovery systems to take the heat from waste water.

The laundry also invested in business intelligence software, called 'laundry dashboard', which uses data from 124 sensors to measure energy consumption and produce real-time graphs, so any dips in efficiency can be immediately identified.



Recent innovations by chemistry suppliers have also led to Camplings manufacturing its own soap in a bid to be more efficient. In a process called 'cool chemistry', chemicals are mixed at point of use for greater potency, meaning less chemicals are needed and temperatures can be slightly reduced while maintaining the whiteness and brightness target.

"We work with our suppliers on achieving zero waste to landfill," says Richard. "One of the big issues for us is barrier protection for our white linen. We've cut the density of the plastic covering, and we're making great efforts to recycle surplus, as well as trialling a system of recycling with customers."

“Businesses need to have good internal processes and a cultural approach to waste

Camplings is constantly looking at future investments, which at the moment include technology to take the energy out of the exhaust of the ironer, and the installation of solar panels.

But Richard is keen to point out that being sustainable doesn't have to involve massive investment. "Businesses need to have good internal processes and a cultural approach to waste," he says. "It's the same as turning off the tap when you brush your teeth, or getting the dripping tap fixed at home; using the equipment you already have to its maximum efficiency is as good as investment."

WASTE NOT WASH NOT

Simple steps at one holiday park are making a difference – and keeping customers happy in the process.

Ruth Knight of Waveney River Centre says: “We are aware of the problems with excessive use of plastics and are making an effort to reduce their use within our park, including replacing our complimentary toiletries with a Norfolk hand-made soap.”

The toiletries used to be provided in small plastic bottles, but now bars of soap from Handmade Norfolk Soaps, based at Wells-next-the-Sea are offered to guests.

The Norfolk soap company is known for its environmentally-friendly approach. The soap production methods use little energy or resources, have no toxic waste, are biodegradable and do not use plastic packaging.

Ruth says the River Centre does not collect or recycle old soap, but currently has no need: “The customers tend to keep the soap – once you use it, you’ll understand!” she says.



PUT YOUR TAP ON THE MAP

More than two thirds of people (70%) view a business more favourably if it gives them free tap water, according to a survey by Brita.

Plus 64% of consumers would be more likely to return for future purchases if they could refill their water bottle.

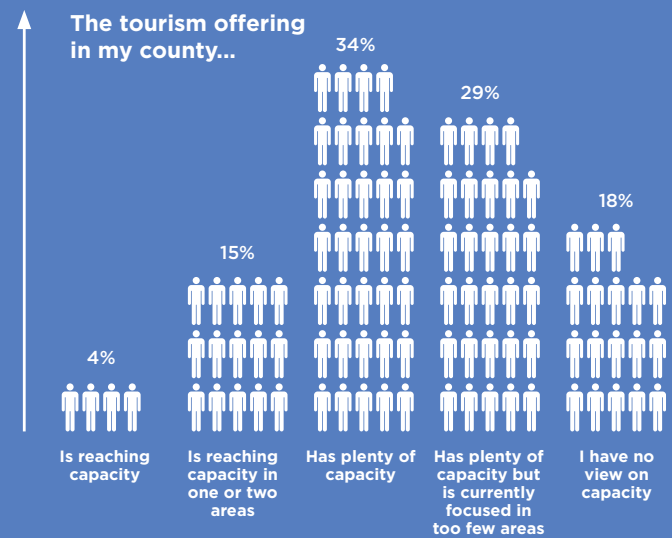
The survey is cited by City to Sea, the organisation behind the national Refill Campaign, which sees businesses promoting a free water refill service via posters and the free Refill app.

Jo Morley, of City to Sea, says joining Refill shows customers a business is taking action against plastic pollution, and increases footfall too by giving people another reason to visit.

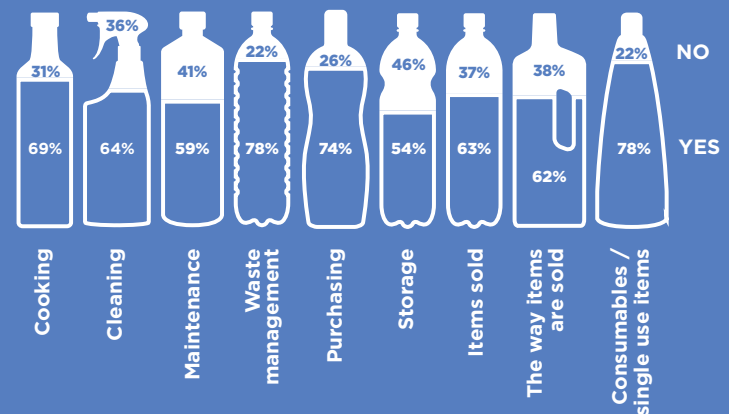
Thomas Foreman, Thorpe St Andrew town council clerk, says the council operates a refill scheme at the Town Hall and its new café. It started the project with Broadland District Council as part of its aim to prevent single-use plastics in the community.

“As we are based in a public open space we thought that being a refill station would be a great idea. During the warmer weather it has increased our footfall slightly,” he says.

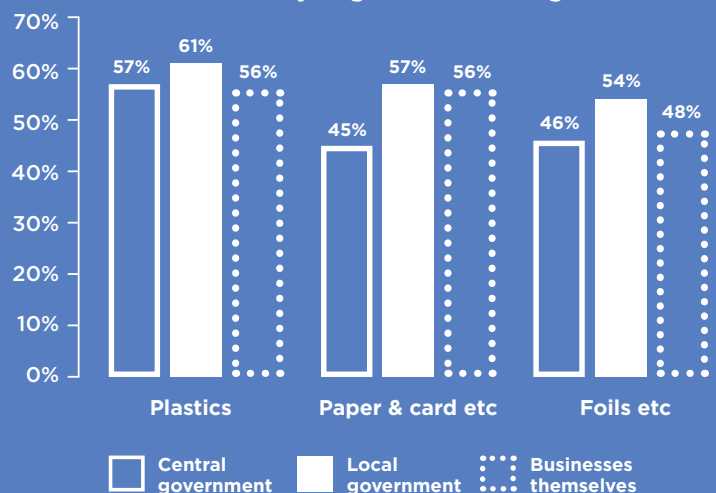
Find out more at www.refill.org.uk



Have you as a business taken steps to reduce the use of plastics? If so, where?



Who should be responsible for helping improve the levels of recycling for the following?



Eat, drink – and be successful.

The “pub” is ever-changing – it has to. But with fresh direction and renewed focus, these changes keep pubs relevant, from a community focus to embracing the fastest-growing food movement.

A COMMUNITY PUB WITH BELLS ON

The pub sector is experiencing turbulent times. Last year it was estimated by the Campaign for Real Ale that around 18 pubs shut down per week in the UK, so it's absolutely vital that local pubs offer a service that customers can't replicate by merely drinking at home.

The Brisley Bell, near Dereham in Norfolk, was in a derelict state before former regulars Marcus Seaman and Amelia Nicholson took over and completely renovated the pub in 2016 with a considerable investment, which saw it triple in size.

“Our shared vision is one of past glories,” says Amelia. “As genuine ‘locals’, we passionately believe this area needs and deserves a great place to congregate, eat, drink and chat – an experience that was on most people's doorsteps not more than a few decades ago.”

Amelia and Marcus felt that positioning themselves as a destination pub was the key to making the business viable, but it was also about creating a sense of community.

As part of the renovation process they worked with local companies and received a helping hand from Pub is The Hub, a ‘not-for-profit’ organisation dedicated to improving community services and activities in local pubs.

“Pub is The Hub was very helpful in the early stages of our ownership. They came over to the pub and straight away identified areas in which they could help,” says Amelia.

Pub is The Hub didn't just provide guidance and support but also funding for the pub's

popular bookshelves, which visitors to the Bell can browse, read and borrow books from at will.

The free-to-use bookshelves are just one of several community focused initiatives the pub runs. It also hosts a weekly IT group, a monthly quiz night and yearly events including a cider festival, reggae in the garden, Burns Night, St Patrick's day celebration and a Summer Solstice evening.

The website does much more than promote the Bell, with sections dedicated to “Things to do” and the “Bell community”, where a reciprocal relationship with everyone from the various funders that helped build the business to local talent and thriving artisan businesses is highlighted.

“This area needs and deserves a great place to congregate, eat, drink and chat

“The local community is very much at the heart of what we do; without that link a pub would be a bit soulless,” says Amelia.

Many destination pubs have the advantage of being near the coast, but the landlocked Brisley Bell plays to its countryside-adjacent strengths by hosting regular shooting parties.

The investment hasn't stopped either, with six individually designed en-suite rooms added for those who want to make





the Bell their final destination for the night. Shepherds' huts set in the two acres of gardens are also a possibility in the future.

The assertions from both Marcus and Amelia that the Bell is very much a community driven establishment isn't mere lip service designed to pull in punters either. Not only do they work with nearby schools and the local church for fundraising efforts, but they also have an innovative loyalty scheme for locals.

"We offer local Brisley residents the 'Brisley Bullion', which is a special coin that gives them 15% off all food and drink. The take-up has been fantastic and locals seem to really appreciate the gesture," explains Amelia.

The pub's menu, which effortlessly blends modern and classic cuisine conventions, utilises local produce from local suppliers as much as possible. The Bell works with nearby farm shops, creameries and breweries to ensure its menu is not only delicious but also helps the local area to thrive.

Even in the current challenging climate of the pub sector, The Brisley Bell is thriving. It's done this by providing both a food destination and a local hub, combining its loyal Brisley customer base with those from further afield looking for good food and a friendly welcome.



pub is the hub

Pub is The Hub's top tips for successful diversification

- Survey your customers and catchment about the sort of service or activity they would like to see.
- Seek support from your parish council and/or community groups.
- Consider whether you can use volunteers to support staffing your service or activity.
- Speak to the local authority to see if they can offer support and/or funding.
- Use local suppliers and employ local people.
- Show how the project is progressing through your website and social media feeds – keep the community involved.



CHEF BROTHERS RETURN TO THEIR ROOTS

The family outing generally ended the same way; after a happy day at the Essex seaside, the Galvins – often in a convoy of up to three vehicles carrying three generations – would complete the day’s entertainment at a country pub with a big garden. Kids outside with crisps, adults inside with beer.

“It’s not like that now,” says Jeff Galvin, who forms half of the famous restaurateur Galvin Brothers. He and brother Chris are each individually Michelin-starred when working for other enterprises and now jointly Michelin-starred in their own establishments in London.

“Pubs are more inclusive now and offer so much more choice,” says Jeff, proud joint owner of the 700-year-old Galvin Green Man at Great Waltham, near Chelmsford, which won the 2018 family dining award in the Essex Life Food and Drink Awards – one of 10 prizes picked up over 18 months.

For the brothers, the £3m venture is a return to their Essex roots in a project which combines fine dining with pub grub and pints. “It’s all about choice,” says Jeff. “It makes business sense for people to visit for different occasions.”

The Green Man is set in 1.5 acres, with the River Chelmer running through the grounds. A conveniently located bus stop outside the front door makes it perfect for locals, while the addition of a new restaurant attracts a foodie clientele.

Chris, who lives in nearby Felsted, and Jeff admit they took a gamble to set up a new business outside London, the scene of all their culinary success. But, with rising costs

and tough competition for restaurant space in the capital, a freehold property in easy distance of their headquarters – and in their home county – was attractive.

In addition, a proportion of the Galvins’ City customers live in Essex and had been pressing the brothers to open something nearer to their homes. Jeff also sees Essex as a long-standing foodie hub, with its rich coastline and farms.

“We see it as a pub,” says Jeff. “There’s a simple menu because we wanted to keep the integrity of the pub and it’s what the local people wanted us to do. They’ve been very supportive.”

“ Pubs are more inclusive now and offer so much more choice

In addition to the bar and restaurant, the Green Man has four private dining rooms for up to 12 guests, with bespoke and sharing menus, overlooking the countryside. In line with the family-friendly policy, there’s a weekly film show in a communal room which also hosts TV sporting events such as rugby and football.

Jeff says there has been no attempt to introduce the high-end style of their London restaurants, although top quality seasonal ingredients and customer service remain priorities. “You can come here for food and struggle to spend £20-25,” he says. “It’s down to our customers how much they want to spend.”

Pioneers of vegetarian, and now, vegan menus (they were producing vegetarian meals 20 years ago), Jeff observes that, while veganism is a strong trend in London, demand is less common outside the capital. Nonetheless, the Green Man offers a vegetarian and vegan menu.

“People are certainly eating less meat protein nowadays – I am, for one – so it’s about listening to our customers and responding accordingly.”

Borrowing a phrase from brother Chris, Jeff adds: “We’ve never been followers of fashion. Chris says our restaurants are like a pair of brogues: a timeless style; people know what they’re going to get when they come to us.

“There is so much more to a restaurant or a pub than a plate of food or a pint of beer. You can have amazing food – but without hospitality it’s not a great experience. We try to do both.”

And at the heart of the experience are the staff, whose training is a priority for the Galvin brothers. “Apprentices [selected from the London-based Royal Academy of Culinary Arts] are the backbone of our business,” says Jeff.

“We take about eight a year, with around 20 in the company at any one time. It’s worked so well for us, in fact, the man in charge of the 160 chefs in our restaurants was an apprentice.”

The apprentices learn cooking, health and safety, PR and marketing and management – and there’s no shouting in the kitchen, says Jeff, who trained under the legendary Marco Pierre White.

“You cannot have that kind of disruption in a successful kitchen, and our kitchens are calm,” he says. “I’m very proud that our industry has come a long way from the days when I worked at the Savoy with 108 chefs who took delight in making life difficult for the front of house. That’s all gone.”

In its place is an establishment like the Green Man, as Jeff explains: “Is there anything nicer than going for a country walk, maybe with a dog, popping into a lovely pub, having a drink, talking to the locals, maybe having a bite to eat?”

Perhaps unsurprisingly, he adds: “Yes, our pub does good business.”



LICENCE LOWDOWN

Jamie Childs, senior associate at Howes Percival, looks at some things to keep in mind when operating a licenced premises.



1. Ensure you operate in accordance with your premises licence (or another form of authorisation under the Licensing Act 2003). Failing to comply is a criminal offence which can carry the penalty of an unlimited fine or six months imprisonment.
2. Some activities (such as the sale of alcohol by retail) are clearly licensable but others not. Plays, exhibition of film, indoor sporting events, live and recorded music and dance performance should be checked for compliance.
3. Consider the licensing authority’s licensing policy and practicalities of carrying on licensable activities. The operator (or an employee) will need to have a Personal Licence and act as Designated Premises Supervisor.
4. Think about alternatives to a new premises licence. Consider a Temporary Event Notice for “testing the water” before committing to a licence or for a one-off event.
5. Regularly review your operations to ensure it adheres to the conditions of the licence, especially that the conditions, operating hours and licensable area are correct.
6. Consider other regulatory regimes including health and safety law, fire safety legislation and, if developing, check the necessary planning position. Also consider access rights, restrictive covenants and implications of the GDPR in relation to CCTV footage, personal data of workers and employees etc.



Jennie Debenham and Jon Halls, owners of Hullabaloo

FREE-FROM FOCUS

Climate change is climbing ever higher up the global agenda. It touches on many aspects of our lives, but one of the areas that's being shouted about the loudest is our consumption of meat and dairy.

The result is a huge movement towards vegan and vegetarian diets, with lots of sources revealing figures to back it up – 987% increase in demand for vegetarian options in 2017 compared to 2016 through Just Eat, while UK vegan numbers soared by 360% between 2006 and 2016, from 150,000 to at least 542,000 (Vegan Society/Ipsos Mori).

To meet the demand of this increasing market, food outlets and their suppliers need to embrace the change and offer appealing options that don't feel like an after-thought.

Food distributor Brakes has been ramping up its "free-from" range as well as educating its customers to help them capitalise on sales in the fast-growing, ever-changing market. Besides a raft of new 'free-from' products the campaign includes a social media push featuring different products each month, a dedicated 'free from' area on the Brakes website, recipe videos, newsletters, advertising and Nectar points on new lines.

"While healthy eating has been high on young people's agenda for some time, this is now helping drive growth of those avoiding meat and following a vegan diet," says Brakes food marketing manager, Becky Hover.

"We are working closely with leading 'free from' societies to ensure that our products are properly approved," adds Becky. "We want to offer our customers reassurances that they can pass on, and at the same

time we want to be at the forefront of revolutionising the menu in order to drive sales for them."

But for Jennie Debenham and Jon Halls, who run Hullabaloo, a vegan café in Ipswich, the movement is about much more than just eating plant-based food.

The couple opened the café in June 2018 and, less than a year later, their sustainable ethos earned them the Best Tea/Coffee Shop award at the Eat Suffolk Food and Drink Awards 2019.

For them, the recent surge in coverage around the environmental impact of eating red meat has created a demand that makes vegan food outlets an increasingly viable business option.

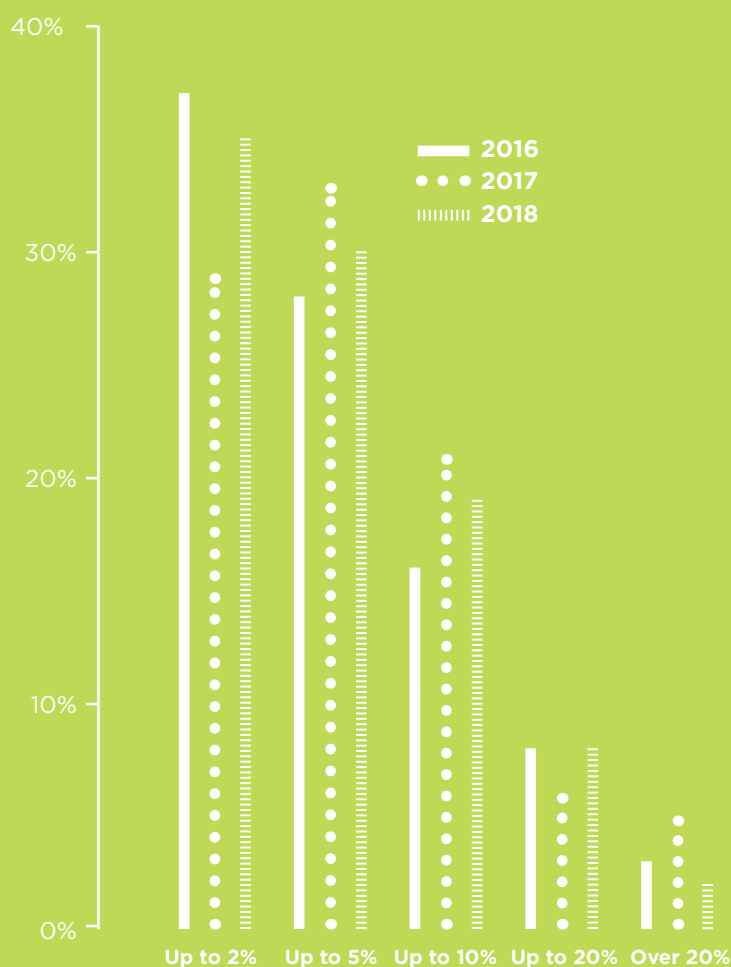
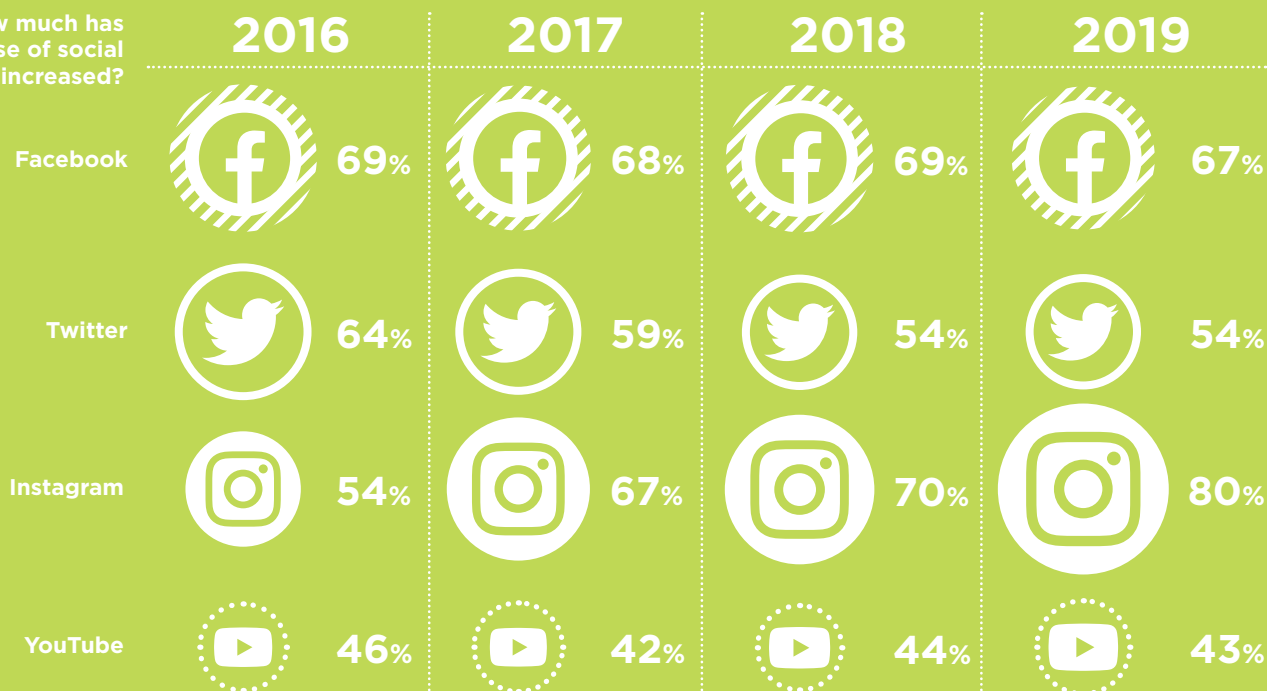
"Our overheads are higher than a lot of other cafes because of the quality of the produce we buy, and therefore our price has to be higher, but I think our customers understand what we're trying to do," says Jennie.

"It's about more than just eating plant-based food – a lot of people who come here aren't vegans, they come because they want to eat more healthily and to know where the food they're eating has come from and what's in it."

Sustainability is the central ethos of Hullabaloo, from the upcycled furniture and local suppliers to regular clothes swap events – the result is a successful and conscientious award-winning business. ●



How much has your use of social media increased?



What proportion of your turnover was spent on promotion and marketing?

In 2018, how did your marketing/promotional spend compare to 2017? How will your spend in 2019 compare with 2018?





From standing still to scaling heights.

A massive factor in business success is the ability to recognise and act on opportunities – and the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors are no exception. Whether it's creating a brand new "experience" attraction or simply improving staff's soft skills to boost reviews, there are lots of opportunities to be had.

TOP OF THE TOURISM POPS

A blueprint for successful tourism business has been revealed in research undertaken by the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA).

Drilling down into the results of the association's annual members' visitor figures over the last six years, patterns of best practice emerge.

ALVA director Bernard Donoghue explains: "These statistics are a barometer of success in our sector - a top of the pops for tourism, if you like - highlighting the attractions that have grown against a backdrop of change, by which I mean wet or very hot summers and, of course, Brexit."

Standing on the spot

"Over the decades we have found that, in times of austerity or recession or political instability, we Brits take great comfort in the past," says Bernard. "It becomes reassuring, comfortable and nostalgic."

"Every time we have to tighten our belts we know for a fact that visits to National Trust properties go up. Similarly, we see TV shows commissioned, like Downton Abbey and Who Do You Think You Are? We want to know where we have come from in order to make sense of where we are going."

To this end, tourism businesses that can

claim a direct link to a moment in history or a famous character from our past should let visitors know all about it.

"It's an umbilical link to the past that allows visitors to attach themselves to something greater than themselves. We know this is a great driver."



Sense of place

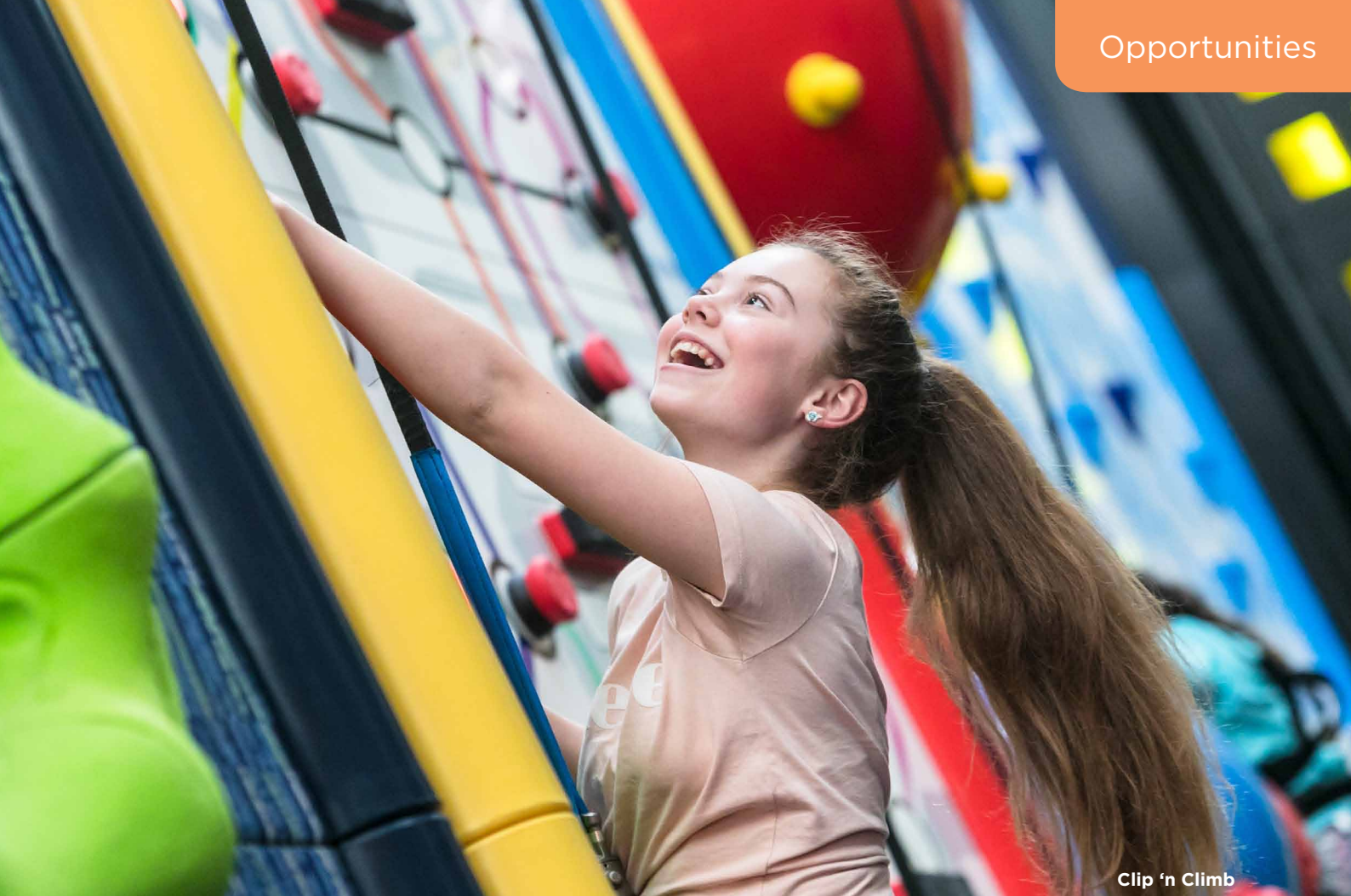
At a time when UK high streets are becoming increasingly homogenous with their national chains, people are responding to something different or unique.

"If you are in the Norwich Lanes, you know exactly where you are," says Bernard. "If you're standing on Aldeburgh beach, you know you're in Suffolk; go to Clacton or Southend and you're getting the special sense of Essex."

"I call it the reek of locality. It might be the local accent of the staff, but also food and drink. For example, if a business sources its ingredients in, say, a 30-mile radius, call it 'the 30-mile menu'. Your guests are eating and drinking the view!"

Staff not stuff

The chief executive of Airbnb recently told a conference that most five-star (excellent) TripAdvisor reviews of UK attractions were four times more likely to include an employee's name than four-star (very good) reviews.



Clip 'n Climb

“What it means is that the difference between very good and excellent is the staff,” says Bernard. “It underpins the importance of soft skills.

“Staff are the crucial building blocks of a successful tourism business - it's the people that make the difference.”

Refresh and entice

“If a business is investing to refresh its offering - whether that's a new coat of paint or a new garden - it provides a new reason for people to come back,” says Bernard. “It's about refreshing what you already have.”

And if you are carrying out improvements, don't cover them up - tell people about what you're doing and let them see the work.

REACHING EXPERIENCE HIGHS

Our love of sharing fun and challenging experiences is something that Mark Patterson, the owner of a new Clip 'n Climb facility in Ipswich, says will be his “best marketing tools”.

Clip 'n Climb has 240 locations worldwide, but this latest opening heralds its biggest one yet. With a 9,000 sq ft location and 42 belay lines, giving an hourly climbing capacity of 60 people, it offers colourful climbing walls on a massive scale.

“The power of social media has made experiences even more engaging for

everyone,” says Mark, who runs the facility with business partner Josh Davey. “While we have a detailed marketing plan in place, our best marketing tool will be our customers sharing what a great experience they have had at Clip 'n Climb.”

Another element to the experience is a local collaboration with Suffolk coffee brand Paddy & Scott's as a concession for the café, which sits on a mezzanine floor overlooking the climbing arena.

Martin Westhorp, sales director at Paddy & Scott's, says: “Two great brands collaborating isn't a guaranteed recipe for success, it has to be the right fit for both parties. Very early on Mark made it clear that Clip 'n Climb was focused on health, energy and having fun. Clip 'n Climb are doing for the leisure industry what we're doing for the coffee industry - our tagline and ethos is ‘fuelling ambition’.”

Both brands also identify millennials as a key market. “You only have to look at our coffee shops to see that millennials are a key and growing market,” says Martin. “Social media is a massive part of what we do, it's where we engage in banter, run promos, test products and generally shout about how great our coffee is.”

And they must be doing something right, as Paddy & Scott's has more than 30 million watched minutes on its YouTube channel and more subscribers than Costa, Pret A Manger and Caffè Nero combined - not bad for a Suffolk coffee company!

AND POOCH CAN COME TOO!

With increasing numbers of people wanting to take their pets on holidays, more visitor-related venues are discovering that opening their doors to pets makes business sense.

Georgia Dawson, of The Original Cottage Company, based in Reepham, Norfolk, says: "Norfolk is an outdoors destination, and this year to date more than 27% of bookings for Norfolk Cottages include at least one dog, although the biggest increase we've seen is in people bringing two dogs."

In Suffolk, meanwhile, 23% of bookings include a pet, says Sally Owen from the Suffolk arm of The Original Cottage Company – branded as Suffolk Secrets.

“ I like an environment where people and their dogs feel welcome

"Google searches for pet-free properties are very low, although we do have a page to promote our pet-free properties for people with allergies," says Sally, adding that larger properties are recommended to owners with more than one pet.

And at £25 per pet per booking, it's a good option for both customer and property owner, providing an income boost while still being much less than kennelling costs.

Rachel Butler and husband Robert offer holiday lets in their property – The Coach House in Dunwich – through Suffolk Secrets, and allow up to three pets.

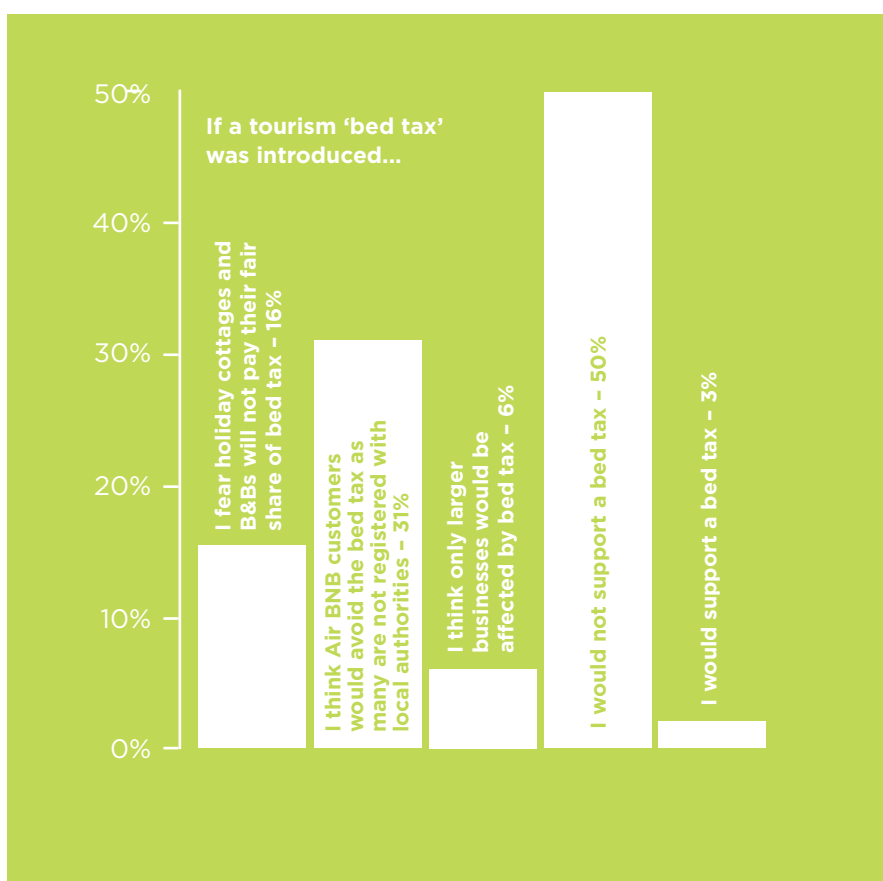
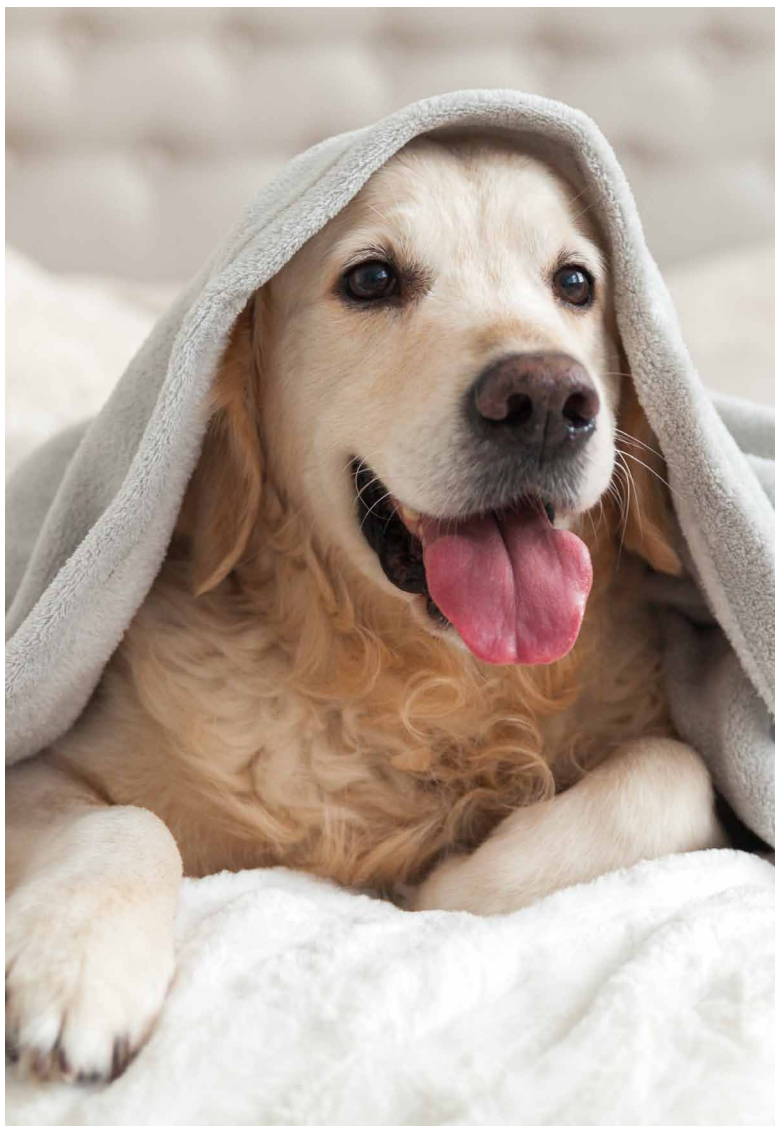
The house is a stone's throw from a dog-friendly beach, and they say dogs and owners also love walking along the heathland which flanks the beach.

"My husband and I have our own dogs and have always struggled to find high-quality accommodation when we go on holiday," says Rachel. "It was always important to us that our guests and their dogs could have a great holiday too."

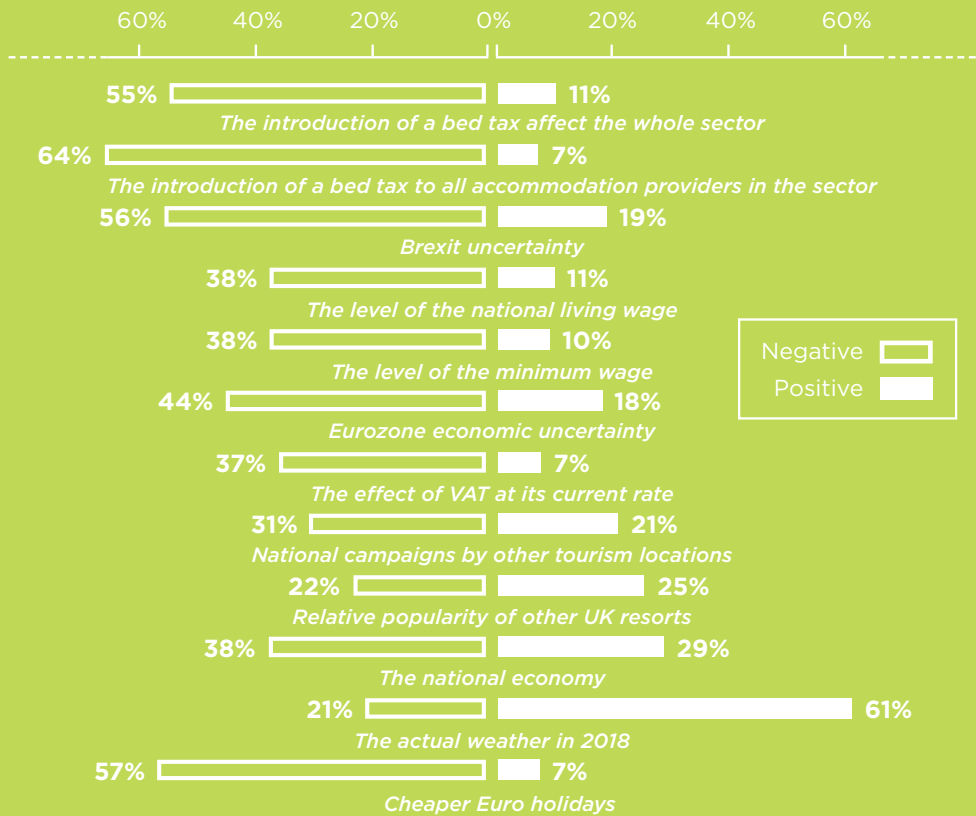
East Anglia's dog-friendly reputation is down to more than just places to stay. Indeed, Holkham's beach café at Wells-next-the-Sea has been awarded the most dog-friendly café and beach in the UK by the Kennel Club.

Philip Turner, founder of the Chestnut Group, which has nine inns in Suffolk, says as a dog owner himself – with three labradors and a miniature dachshund – ensuring the group's offerings are dog-friendly makes perfect business sense.

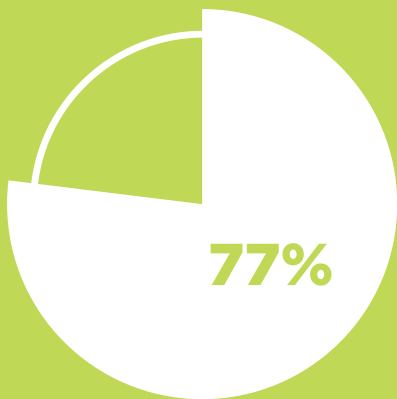
"I like dogs, and I like an environment where people and their well-behaved dogs feel welcome," he says. "Dog people tend to be respectful and those are the type of people we want." ●



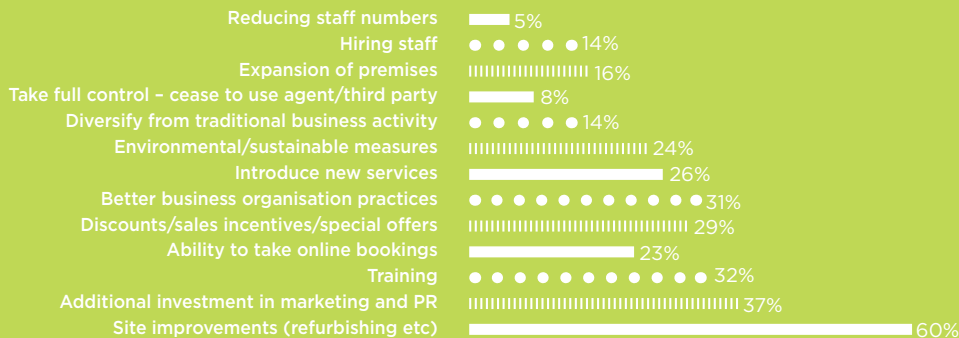
How do/did/will the following aspects affect your business?



Anticipated increase in UK residents holidaying at home post Brexit



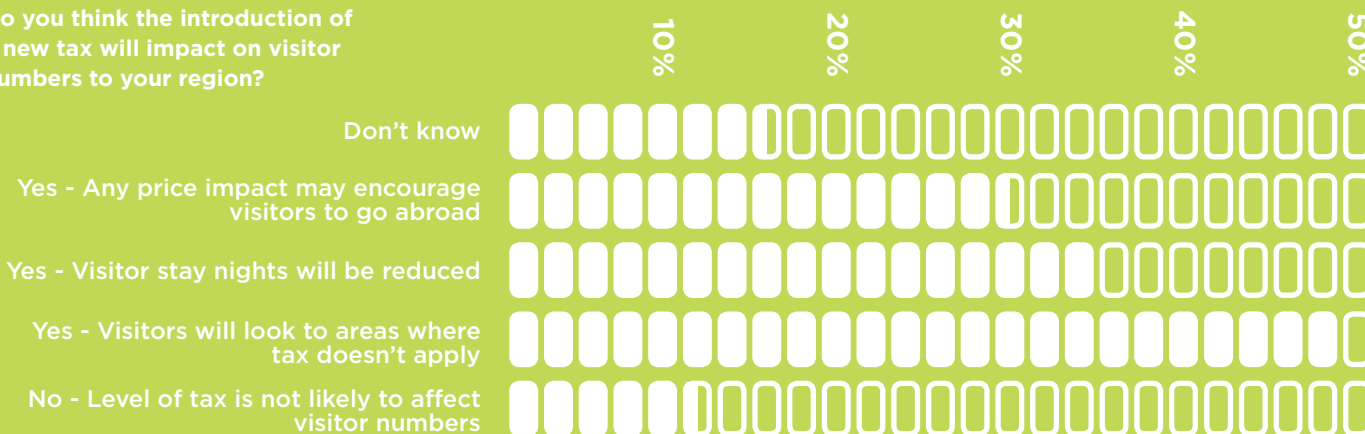
Which of these are you planning to implement in order to improve performance and grow your business?



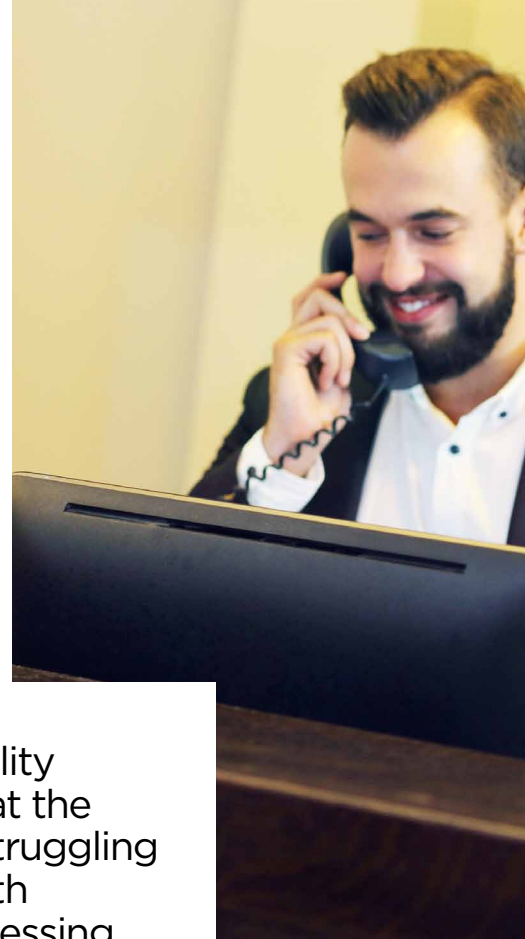
Percentage of businesses who would support a "bed tax" if funds raised would be ring fenced for promotion of area to visitor economy



Do you think the introduction of a new tax will impact on visitor numbers to your region?



Changing perceptions for a stronger workforce.



If you ask any successful tourism, leisure or hospitality business about its staff, most will tell you they are at the heart of everything. Yet despite this, the sector is struggling to attract and retain its workforce – and with growth predicted, it's an issue that desperately needs addressing.

SKILLS PLAN PUTS WORKFORCE AT THE HEART OF GROWTH

They call it the visitor economy – and it employs around 160,000 people in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and is worth an estimated £8bn-plus a year to the region. Now, against a background of political uncertainty, stakeholders are focusing on employment to help safeguard tourism growth rates currently forecast to outstrip the overall economy over the next five years.

The workforce is at the heart of every successful tourism business, but there is growing evidence that traditional staffing in the sector has been haphazard and lacking in the career paths needed to incentivise new entrants.

National tourism staff churn rates of 75% – compared to an average 15% in other sectors – underline a perception that the business is low paid, low skilled and seasonal.

Research undertaken last year on behalf of the British Hospitality Association reveals that EU workers represent 75% of waiters and waitresses in the country, 37% of housekeeping staff and 25% of chefs.

The report predicts that “nationally, the hospitality sector faces a shortfall of 60,000 workers a year from 2019” adding that “by 2029, it could be looking at a recruitment gap of more than one million workers”.

And, Brexit notwithstanding, at the root of the problem, it says, is “a lack of interest from UK labour”.

This year, key stakeholders, including Visit East of England, the New Anglia Skills Board (part of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership), Visit Norfolk and Visit Suffolk and the SkillsReach consultancy, have

launched a tourism skills plan to develop and prepare the sector for the next decade.

The group estimates that there will be demand in Norfolk and Suffolk for up to 11,000 new workers in tourism by 2024.

Pete Waters, executive director of Visit East of England, explains: “Skills training and development are important to help grow and sustain a year-round visitor economy and to ensure we have the workforce to match the industry's ambitions.

“A key driver is to improve productivity, and we can do this by developing a year-round visitor economy in our region. The proposition is already a fact of life in the region. Take stately homes – not so long ago, they used to be open for a few months of the year; now they're only closed for a short period. Typically, our visitor attractions are open from around February to October with many of them 12 months of the year.

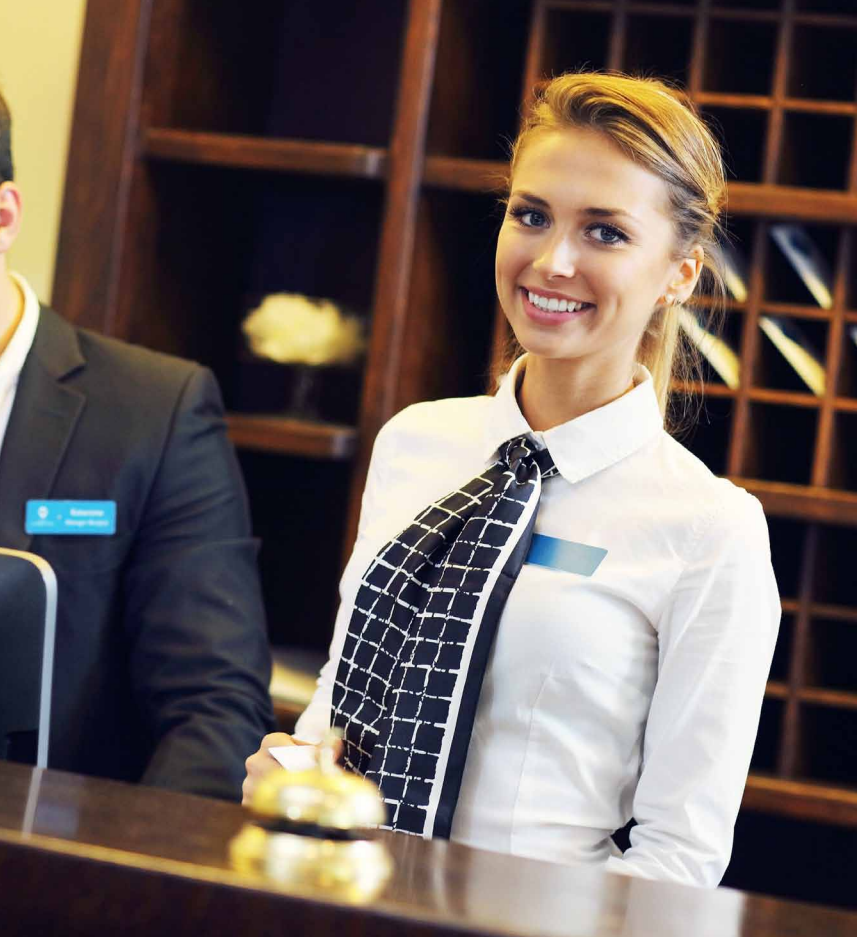
“We also have our coastline, our countryside and the unique Broads National Park – they're open every day of the year.”

Pete adds: “In this mindset, businesses will be encouraged to invest in skills and training and develop better full-time careers.”

Available statistics are mainly historic but trends suggest optimism for the future, with 22% of employees in East of England tourism without any qualifications in 2001 compared to 13% in 2011, for example. Over the same period, the number of employees with Level 4 qualifications increased from 13% to 20%, and apprentice numbers in East Anglia for the sector went up from 7% to 12%.

The tourism skills plan, however, outlined





a number of employment barriers to growth in the sector, including employer concerns about filling immediate frontline vacancies, staff retention, unfavourable perceptions of career progression and a lack of educational pathways. The group is now working with DMOs, education establishments and government to:

- Identify local and national funding opportunities.
- Support small and medium enterprises to improve retention and career development.
- Raise awareness of existing skills pathways, including the upcoming Technical Levels.

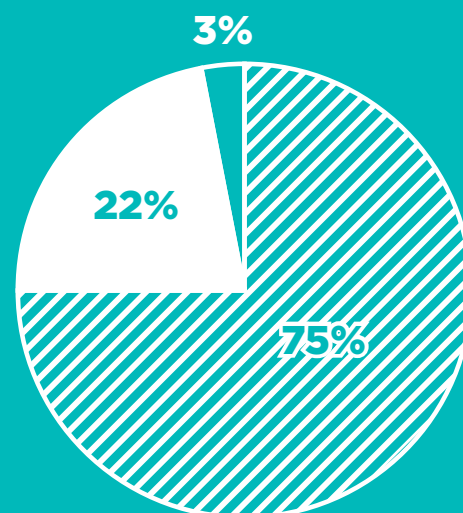
New Anglia LEP skills manager Natasha Waller says: “The visitor economy sector is one of the best established and fastest growing sectors in Norfolk and Suffolk. This means we have a wide range of opportunities at all career stages.

“Every year we have more visitors, so we need more dedicated people working and progressing in the industry. Employers are realising that they need to support their staff through apprenticeships and upskilling.

“Local education providers are keen to support this progression and funding is potentially available through the ESF Skills Support for the Workforce programme.

“At 3.8%, the sector’s predicted growth will be faster than the nation’s overall economic growth by 2024, so this presents major opportunities for people, businesses and the local economy.”

Visit www.newanglia.co.uk/sector-skills-plans



Do you employ staff?

YES

NO

No, but I plan to in 2019





Paul Milsom



KITCHEN TO BOARDROOM

A career in hospitality that started 32 years ago at the kitchen sink has blossomed into the boardroom.

Stasos Demetris Anastasiades, known as Stas, developed a love for the business as a schoolboy on work experience at The Pier Hotel in Harwich, part of the Milsom Hotel & Restaurant group.

Today he is group operations director of the same company.

Coming from a family of wholesale greengrocers, Stas was used to the hurly-burly of hotel kitchens. But, when it came to explaining to his dad that he wanted to be a chef, there was a mixed reception.

"Dad insisted, if I was going to do it, it had to be at The Pier," says Stas. He completed his three-year apprenticeship, including a spell in Switzerland, returning to Essex and working in different parts of the business before taking a position elsewhere.

His big break came when, having returned to the company as head chef at Milsoms Hotel at Dedham, he was asked to take over as general manager on top of his kitchen duties.

By 2008, Stas was group operations director, standing in for owner Paul Milsom in his absence.

"All this shows that you don't have to move around too much to progress your career if you get in with the right company," says Stas. "Milsoms has enabled me to do pretty much every job in the organisation and understand the roles.

"It means I can support everyone in the team – or challenge them – because I know how things work."

'ATTRACTING THE RIGHT STAFF IS AS CHALLENGING AS ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS'

Further education establishments are contributing to a likely shortfall in the government's bid to create three million apprenticeships by 2020 while denting businesses' staffing expectations, according to a leading hotelier.

In a two-pronged attack on the current system, Paul Milsom condemns the apprenticeship levy as "another tax on business" and bemoans a shortage of young apprentices who, he says, are being wooed away from work and into further education by colleges and universities.

"If only youngsters and parents realised how easy it is to do an apprenticeship, I'm sure we'd see more of them," says Paul, owner of five hotels in Essex and Suffolk, with a staff of more than 450 serving 360,000 customers a year in six locations under the Milsom Hotels & Restaurants brand.

"No one is promoting apprenticeships – the education system is geared to keeping students in the system."

Paul adds: "Another problem is the apprenticeship levy [payable by companies with annual payrolls of more than £3m], which is just another tax on business. It's not easy to understand how to unlock it and see what you get for your money.

"And, even if you could work it out, where are you going to find the apprentices? In this area we are almost at full employment, so attracting the right staff is as challenging as attracting customers."

On a positive note, Paul is about to employ a young woman on a management apprenticeship and has a chef apprentice doing well at The Pier in Harwich. He is very much an advocate of apprenticeships, especially in the hospitality sector, and supports the "earn as you learn" concept.

"We see ourselves as a kind of training academy – something that we are developing in our Milsom people programme. We have trained a lot of successful people in our company, some of whom have gone on to good careers in other areas."

He adds: "For us, attracting good people is our big focus going forward – not just apprentices, but it would be helpful if there were more available. I think we now need more leadership from the government to address the situation."

RECRUITMENT 'CRISIS'

Recruitment in the hospitality sector is in crisis, according to one of East Anglia's leading restaurateurs.

Richard Hughes, chef director of the Assembly House Norwich and owner of the Richard Hughes Cookery School, partly blames a lack of available apprentices for a situation in which "there are more customers than we can shake a stick at, but it's very difficult to find the staff to serve them," he says.

"I was an apprentice and I'm a huge fan," he adds. "We've had apprentices here who have gone to work in New York, Amsterdam, Disneyworld and, locally, at Strattons Hotel in Swaffham and Byfords in Holt."

Richard believes youngsters are not being encouraged to take up apprenticeships and are being "pushed into further education".

He says: "Further education is not for everyone and, yes, you can take a degree in hospitality, but then you come out with an enormous debt.

"More so than many other trades, in hospitality there is a defined career progression. And, while the work used to be poorly paid, that is not true today. We pay our apprentices £4 an hour for six weeks, but they don't stay on that for long.

Once they're a member of the team, they are paid more."

Eighteen-year-old Alex Mitson started as an apprentice at the Assembly House last August on day release from City College Norwich – and he loves the work.

"I really like it," he says. "It's practical rather than theory, the work is enjoyable and I like the other staff."

As a Level 2 commis chef apprentice, Alex is earning up to £6.25 an hour including tips, having recently had a small pay rise.

Asked how many of his friends have taken up apprenticeships, he replies: "Just one, he's doing plumbing. All my other friends are in full-time education."

Mr Hughes says: "There are plenty of placements in hospitality, but staffing is in crisis."

The Assembly House is now looking to expand its apprenticeships outside the kitchen into front of house and management, while adapting its recruitment policy to include older people, some in their late fifties and sixties. ●



Millennials: navigating the minefield.

It's a market that's as diverse as it is unpredictable, but as the proportion of the earning population that's made up of millennials continues to grow, it's a market that the UK tourism sector needs to get a hold on... now.

MARKETING TO INTEREST, NOT AGE

Engaging with millennials is a big challenge - Visit England research suggests that the number of UK 18-35-year-olds taking a staycation has dropped by 1.4 million over the last decade.

So how do you convince millennials to choose a holiday here over abroad?

Thissaway, the dedicated travel, leisure and hospitality arm of Norwich-based strategic marketing agency Shorthose Russell, has published a report called Future-proofing the UK Staycation Market, which offers a number of key insights on ways to better connect with millennial holidaymakers.

"We should always be careful when categorising behaviour by how old people are," says Mark Sowersby, deputy managing director at Thissaway. "In fact, one of the key findings of our report was that travel brands would do well to market to interest, as well as just targeting people based on their age.

"That said, it did highlight two clear traits that companies would be wise to take note of when it comes to better connecting with younger travellers: firstly, a sense of adventure, and secondly, the desire to be inspired."

The research from Thissaway also suggests that there are fundamental flaws in how the UK is marketed.



"The vast majority of the millennials we spoke to (92%) are keen to explore and experience what the UK has to offer as a holiday destination, but, worryingly, more than half (52%) think travel brands are failing to inspire them to do so," says Mark. "Younger travellers are bombarded with hundreds of digital marketing messages every day - it's the brands that manage to surprise and delight these potential customers that have the best chance of cutting through."

Nearly a quarter of the millennials spoken to said they felt there was a lack of things to do on a staycation. "This again highlights the need for tourism and leisure businesses to showcase the activities audiences are genuinely interested in and invest in marketing that inspires them to book."

Social media is arguably the biggest impact millennials have made on the world, and 97% of those surveyed said they share photos or videos of their travels online.

"Millennials are the first truly digital generation - they live on their devices and have grown up expecting to be able to get information whenever they want," says Mark. "Businesses that don't meet those expectations with peak performing digital collateral - including engaging content, user-friendly websites and inspirational social channels - run the risk of being left behind and losing out to their competitors."

But, like the generations before them, millennials won't stay young forever, and in the future they'll settle down and become the families of tomorrow.

"The types of holidays and leisure activities they look for, book and enjoy may well change as millennials get older," suggests Mark. "Family life may mean they are less able to be spontaneous and just 'get up and go', and they may have less disposable income."

"One thing I don't see changing is the value this generation places on great experiences, whether real or digital. Companies that use technology to bring those experiences to life and make the customer journey as simple as possible are well placed to thrive over those that don't."

DIGITAL AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING

Lowestoft-based self-catering company Hoseasons has seen a 37pc jump in online millennial bookings over the last three years.

The rise has gone hand in hand with the digital transformation of the staycation

specialist and large-scale investment in modern marketing techniques such as search and video on demand to reach younger, mobile-savvy customers and drive consideration of what can be experienced on a UK break.

The company, which provides UK luxury lodge escapes, hot tub getaways and boating breaks, has at the same time seen a significant increase in online customer searches for activities and experiences.

More than half think UK travel brands are failing to inspire them

"There's a shift in what young adults want from their holidays and a sense that they missed out on discovering the UK when they were younger because their parents took them on foreign holidays thanks to the introduction of low cost air travel," says Simon Altham of Hoseasons.

"That's why providing the most 'Instagrammable' accommodation, activities and experiences is such a key part of our strategy, and why digital is at the heart of everything we do."

Mark's top tips for marketing to millennials

- Think digital-first and ensure a user-friendly digital journey.
- Think beyond your specific product or service and consider the experience.
- Be audience-specific - think people aged 18-35 with a particular interest.
- Make your content shareable to maximise engagement.
- Stand for something and demonstrate commitment to your values.
- Experiment with different channels.
- Try, try again - testing approaches is common practice in the digital world.
- Use data effectively to ensure a personal approach.
- Don't rule out an old school mailer... as long as it's personalised!
- Keep an eye on your competition.

THE VALUE OF STORYTELLING

"If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten," stated Rudyard Kipling.

Since the introduction of spoken language, humans have maintained one very unique and powerful ability, storytelling.

It's such an organic part of our neurological make-up, that we have a tendency to not even realise it's there. But just think about how we communicate with colleagues day to day, catch up with friends in the evening, or lull our kids to sleep at bed time. Storytelling is a vital part of human existence and with 92% of consumers stating that they want brands to make ads that feel more like a story [Social Mouths], it can't be overlooked as a form of marketing.

Delving in a bit deeper, what type of stories really get customers going?

"The human brain can process images 60 times faster than it can words, so it's probably no surprise that the vast majority of consumers prefer visual stories over written ones," explains Tom Vince, head of Archant Video. "In fact, watching 60 seconds of great video content has been proven to be the equivalent of reading 1.8 million words (Forrester)."

So as businesses, how can you best leverage the power of visual storytelling to speak to potential customers?

"While the execution is a bit more nuanced,

the principle is pretty straightforward: get great storytellers (or "influencers" as they're now better known) to tell great stories about you," says Tom.

"Although the term influencer is pretty new, the premise is not. Where influencers are now identified as bloggers, vloggers and podcasters, they were once simply journalists and broadcasters, who spoke through traditional media like print and TV."

But with three out of four customers making buying decisions based on what they see on social media (Sprout Social), Tom says social influencers can be a massive asset to businesses.

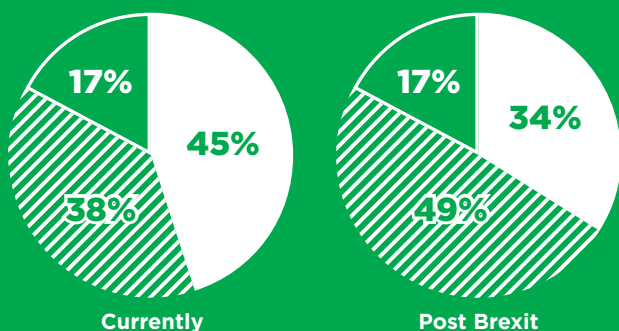
"When utilised effectively, influencer marketing can be a really powerful part of your advertising," he says. "But it's important to understand that it's not a solution that works in isolation."

"Three in five travellers will seek out video content to help them plan their trip, and it's easy to see that creating your own content, and showcasing yourself to customers through strong visual material on your own platforms, is essential in taking a potential customer to the next stage of their purchasing journey."



How do you think Brexit has affected/will affect the number of overseas visitors?

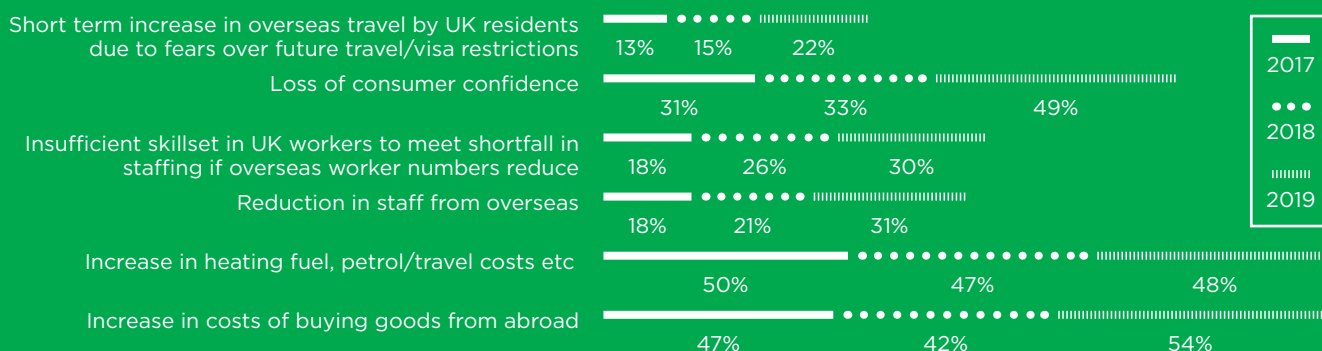
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With customers looking for greater experiences, have you altered your offering/marketing as a result?



What are your fears about Brexit?



INFLUENCER INSIGHT

Focused on authentic accounts of their experiences while travelling, Claire and Laura Jopson – or Twins That Travel (TTT) – engage with an audience of over 100,000 like-minded travellers.

Possibly what's most compelling about their travelling "story" is that it came about as a way to tackle the anxiety that took over most of their twenties. Travel blogging offered a way to take them out of their comfort zone, and it's clearly worked, as travelling is now their full-time job.

TTT also have a string of accolades to their name, including winners of the Visit USA UK Media Awards 2018, finalists for Travel Influencers of the Year at the Cosmopolitan Blog Awards 2018 and winners of 'Travel Bloggers of the Year' at the Blogosphere Blog Awards 2017.

Far from being solely interested in far flung, exotic destinations, TTT produce plenty of UK-based content to attract staycationers. ●

TTT's dos and don'ts for business owners

- Request a blogger's media kit so you can ensure their audience demographic matches the type of customer you're trying to target.
- Don't be afraid to work with a blogger more than once – longer term collaborations are often more effective.
- Allow the blogger to have input into the collaboration – they will ultimately know what is best received by their audience.
- Bloggers won't work like journalists! They need time to take imagery and record social media videos, alongside writing traditional notes.
- Don't underestimate the importance of local micro-bloggers (under 10,000 following) in helping to promote your business.



A way forward in uncertain times.

The industry faces acute commercial pressures, from the uncertainty around Brexit, to rising costs and potential labour shortages. It's also rapidly changing, from the way customers pay for services and goods to the feedback forums that have challenged management of perceptions. But there are positives to be had, as we explore...

TAP AND GO SOCIETY

Card culture is seemingly unstoppable. According to figures by UK finance, there were 1.4 billion transactions on UK cardholders' debit cards in January 2019 – a 9.5% increase on January 2018.

So is there still a place for cash?

It's a big question, and one that landlord Mike Keen has taken a very clear line on, saying that banning cash from his business is saving 15 management hours a week.

Mike opened The Boot at Freston, near Ipswich, in June 2018 after it had been closed for eight years, and it was quickly reported as the UK's first cashless pub.

"Cash was just 20pc of payments in places I had run before, and the pain cash causes is totally disproportionate," he says, adding that he had received several calls from hospitality businesses keen to introduce card and phone payments only.

The only cash now seen at the traditional foodie pub is tips for staff, but Mike says most of these are paid by card or phone too, and that customers have been happy with the no-cash ethos.

Cutting out cash has helped reduce costs as managers don't have to spend time each day counting and balancing takings, taking the cash to a bank or organising a float for change. There is also no need to worry about losses from counterfeit notes.

"The time spent doing all that is dead time that does not benefit the business. That time

can be far better spent," says Mike.

"At the end of each night you immediately know, with the system we have, exactly how much you have sold, what are the best selling dishes and what has not gone well," he adds.

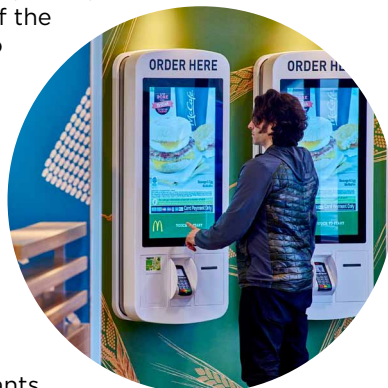
With no cash on the premises, The Boot's insurance premium is lower than if cash was accepted too.

A LESSON IN AUTOMATION

In a challenging hospitality market, the technical feasibility and commercial appetite for automation is on the increase. One obvious benefit is a reduction in staff, and data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) rank food preparation top of the list at 64% when it comes to automation risk by job type.

A "Hospitality Challenges" report by Checkit and the UK Hospitality Association also highlights booking and ordering as an area of hospitality that has the potential to incorporate automation with the introduction of chatbots, voice-enabled virtual assistants, wearables and intelligent analysis of guest behaviour patterns.

But for East Anglia McDonald's franchisee





Kevin Foley, automation doesn't have to mean a reduction in workforce.

"Self-service kiosks have been rolling out across our restaurants for several years, but while it means less staff are needed at the tills, it doesn't mean less staff in total," says Kevin. "Staff are redeployed to food preparation or they are the ones serving you at the table.

"A lot of it is convenience and consumer led. Changes are made because our customer panels tell us that our customers want more convenience."

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, super efficient machines and staff deployment ensure speedy delivery to the customer, but Kevin is keen to point out that McDonald's food preparation is not automated.

Instead, a slick process is behind the ethos of delivering the freshest, hottest food they can.

"It's having the right people in the right place at the right time," he says, explaining that highly efficient machines mean food is cooked to order extremely swiftly.

NORFOLK'S ANSWER TO TRIPADVISOR

Taking the fear out of customer feedback and turning it to your advantage is the

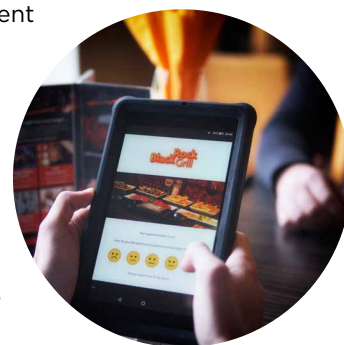
premise behind The One Question, the Hopton-on-Sea-based platform measuring customer happiness.

Developed as a progression of customer evaluations at its parent business, Potters Resort, the basic premise is to capture feedback, discover how customers feel and build up an ongoing relationship.

Rather than a lengthy questionnaire, customers are simply asked how they feel and why, resulting in a much higher response rate, says Mike Scott, co-founder and CEO of The One Question.

The next step is to respond to every answer. Happy customers will talk about their experience and may rebook; unhappy customers will have issues immediately addressed before they vow never to return or head off to online feedback forums – such as TripAdvisor.

"I think there are a lot of businesses in the hospitality world that view feedback as negative," says Mike, explaining that the old school thought was that feedback was for complainers – with results fed into reports and not acted upon. >>



<< “We see feedback as a way to embrace the positive and work on the negative.”

Mike says that asking just one question meant the majority of customers would submit feedback, while lengthy feedback forms resulted in very low completion rates.

Responding to positive feedback works to boost customer loyalty; responding to negative feedback helps the business to improve.

Feedback is completed with touchscreens, mobile phone QR codes or email links. The One Question has expanded the system developed for Potters Resort for other companies to use, and the idea is rapidly spreading.

Feedback ensures each company is up to date with its customer happiness score and, with staff feedback systems, with staff happiness too.

“We are taking the happiness logic from Hopton-on-Sea and spreading it around the world,” says Mike.

HOME FROM HOME... ONLY BETTER

When customers book self-catering accommodation, more and more they are looking for the comforts and technologies that make it a real home-from-home – and increasingly their expectations are that it should be even better than their home.

When Fynn Valley Holidays was first set up, the owners understood the need to offer something extra to attract customers to the three luxury lodges, located north of Ipswich in the Suffolk countryside.

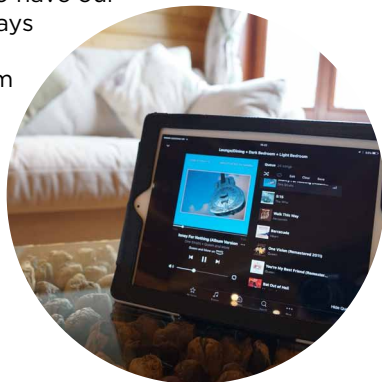
“We felt it was important to offer something unique, so invested in automated lighting and music systems for the lodges, which are all controlled via an iPad,” says Katie Coe, general manager and one of the directors of the business. “We also have our own interactive Fynn Valley Holidays app. It was a big investment, but was important to set us apart from the competition.”

The app promotes the local area and includes tourist information to encourage spend in the local community – even the menu for the nearby Café Terrace at Fynn Valley Golf Club is included, providing their own form of room service.

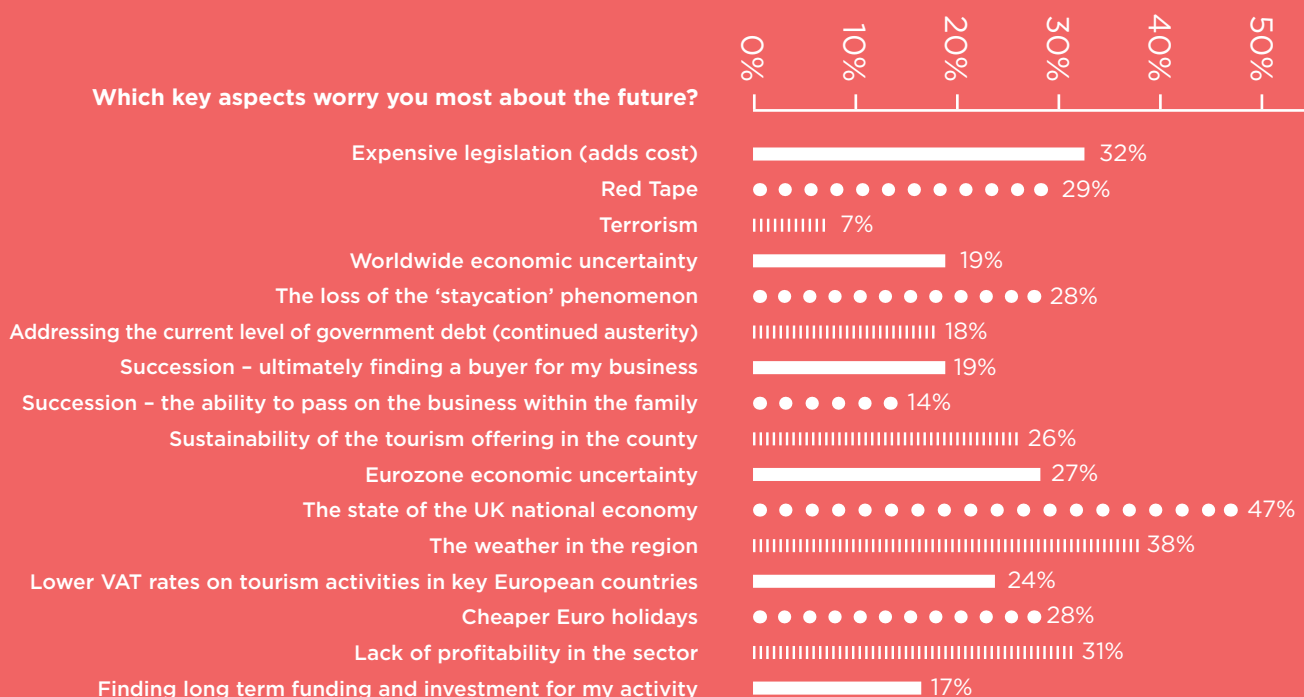
But probably the most valuable feature is the direct link to Katie through the app should they require anything during their stay. “When working with a previous holiday company, I had found that people don’t always like to pick up a phone and call during their stay when they feel the problem is minor. Often guests would comment at checkout that they ‘had had a great stay, but...’.

“Because we are not on-site every day, it enables us to offer a more personal, interactive service to our guests and means we can quickly react to any issues should they arise.

“All of this goes a long way towards our fifth consecutive Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor, earning us the ‘Hall of Fame’ Certificate in 2018.” ●



Which key aspects worry you most about the future?



Combine and conquer.

Local DMOs have a whole host of ideas and plans to get tourism destinations recognised for all they have to offer, from clever digital campaigns and restaurant events to a complete name change. Working together is still a strong message, with businesses in the sector encouraged to get in touch and get involved.



VISIT EAST OF ENGLAND

An important rebrand from Visit East Anglia to Visit East of England at the beginning of 2019 has a two-fold effect, says executive director Pete Waters.

“First, to fall in line with other regional organisations, such as Visit South West, Visit North West, Visit South East, and second as experience suggests that visitors don’t understand what or where East Anglia is,” he says. “We will be looking to attract more visitors from abroad and properly put ourselves on the UK map.

“While we are currently a lesser-known destination, we have one of the best-connected airports in the UK with Norwich International and the fastest-growing airport at London Stansted, which is also the International Gateway to the East of England.”

Visit East of England encourages businesses to work together to attract visitors of all demographics, turning day trippers into stay visitors, building on current markets as well as developing new ones.

“Due to our shared history, we think there are opportunities to attract more visitors from North America and the close continent - Holland, Germany and Belgium,” says Pete. “With recent political uncertainty, there is clearly a PR and promotional exercise to do to say that we are still an integral part of Europe and will always welcome European visitors.

“We also need to encourage users of the twice-daily Hook of Holland-Harwich Stena Line ferries that they’ve arrived at their

destination when they come off the boat, rather than head on to the A12 or A14 out of the region.

“We will work with our transport hubs and providers to market ourselves, and businesses should make the most of the investment in the ongoing infrastructure in the region,” he adds, referencing the £1.5bn investment in new rolling stock and services by Greater Anglia, providing access to the growing population of the ‘brown field’ east of London - who need to be encouraged in our direction for their breaks.

A cultural destination

As part of its rebrand, Visit East of England has launched a new website which promotes the area’s unique festivals, events and arts offering. Working closely with colleagues on the LEP Cultural Board, the approach is to complement, not compete, with the work of the local Destination Marketing Organisations.

Every tourism-related business and service can take a free listing on the website, while accommodation providers can join a free real-time booking mechanic that allows them to compete with the global Online Travel Agents (OTAs).

“We work with a local company from Ipswich, and charge less commission, providing an ethical, transparent, free trade alternative to OTAs who take money out of our local economy,” says Pete Waters. “Our alternative enables businesses to keep more value from their bookings and the commission stays in the local economy too.

“This is a new and unique way to promote the region and grow our visitor economy. A number of key sector players have already signed up.”



VISIT NORFOLK

Speaking for Visit Norfolk, Pete Waters says: "Investment in accommodation and attractions is paying off for Norfolk, with notable growth in the tourism economy as it goes from strength to strength."

"Our visitor economy is now over £3.25bn a year, putting it far ahead of Cornwall, growing 14% since 2012, compared to the national 8%."

As for current activity, businesses involved in the Visit Norfolk website will benefit from two digital campaigns: #FallIntoNorfolk and #SpringIntoNorfolk - delivering more audience to the already successful website, says Pete.

"We have commissioned some 20 digital films that work well across all our digital platforms and we are embarking on our first research project for five years to guide our future strategy."

VISIT SUFFOLK

Building on Suffolk as a place to relax and recharge is a key for visitor businesses, via the digital and short film Suffolk Unplugged campaigns promoted by Visit Suffolk.



Pete Waters, speaking for Visit Suffolk, says: "Suffolk's visitor economy topped £2bn for the first time in 2017, and is on an upward trajectory. The website and social media channels continue to grow audiences, supported by the successful digital campaigns promoting key destinations and activities."

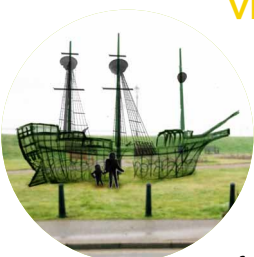
"Working together to show Suffolk as a place with plenty on offer as a destination, rather than just a collection of attractions, is key."

"We are looking to grow the sector by converting day trippers to stay visitors and develop a year-round visitor economy. It's an incredible destination with a huge variety of things to do and value-for-money accommodation, but we just need to keep pushing the Suffolk Unplugged message."

VISIT ESSEX

Working with organisations to press the same message is a strategy used by Visit Essex to focus on local people.

Lisa Bone, strategic tourism manager, says a focus of their campaigns



is to target local people to visit local attractions, such as 92,000 tickets to Essex Big Weekend. Businesses in the sector, which join the promotions, are helping to feed the campaigns designed to increase visitor numbers.

"Promoting local is really important as 35pc of our visitors are visiting friends and family; they then go home and tell people about their great stay," says Lisa.

Visit Essex works with Visit England and other DMOs to attract the London audience, among others, to specific events and projects such as the Mayflower 400 Compact, an international consortium of destinations working to promote the 400th anniversary in 2020 of the voyage of the Mayflower.

Overseas visitors are a huge part of the visitor economy, partly thanks to Harwich port and the airports, while the world's largest cultural geocaching route, stretching from Kent to Suffolk, is a big attraction, says Lisa.

Short stays with a theme target the domestic and international market and businesses can get involved by promoting themselves within those themes - more support makes for a stronger offering which in turn attracts more visitors.

Lisa makes the point that Visit Essex isn't now just about attracting visitors, but attracting people to live there too, saying: "If it is an attractive place to visit it is an attractive place to live, work and do business - we are looking at the bigger picture."

So what are some of the local brands and DMOs doing?

VISIT NORWICH

Opportunities for visitor businesses in Norwich are wide scale as a focused rebrand promotes it as a city for all ages and interests.

Marketing campaigns will target various demographics, so organisations can develop their offering to one or more specific markets.

Melanie Cook, PR and marketing manager at Visit Norwich, says the DMO primarily works within the domestic travel market, with close ties to British national travel media and Visit England.

It also seizes opportunities to work on overseas markets, for example, The Broads National Park is part of a Discover England Fund project with Visit England's English National Parks Experience, which targets



bookable experiences to the Australian and German markets.

Visit Norwich hails the city as a destination fit for all ages, targeting specific-to-visitor segmentations defined in research by Visit Britain/England: Free and Easy Mini-breakers, Aspirational Family Fun and Country Loving Traditionalists.

"We present Norwich as a destination which offers the whole package: and is a great city for mixing old with new," says Melanie.

"We are building up campaigns and branding to further celebrate Norwich as the City of Stories, and will incorporate the city council's 2040 vision of being a creative, liveable, fair, connected and dynamic city.

"Through new assets and digital campaigns (including Instagram) people are going to notice something new and exciting happening with Norwich."

VISIT THE BROADS

Getting involved with events and campaigns serves to grow business and promote areas to visitors, encouraging return visits and longer stays, says Ruth Knight, chairperson of Visit the Broads.

Individual businesses can get involved with events such as the first Broads Restaurant Week, which focuses on promoting local pubs and restaurants within The Broads and a celebration of menus featuring local produce and local drinks.

Plus visitor businesses can be featured in a new comprehensive guide covering attractions, places to eat and drink, gift

shops, art galleries, history and helpful information.

"This year we've introduced an A6 Visit The Broads pocket guide which is proving to be extremely popular with both locals and visitors to the area," says Ruth, adding that they've moved on from the Britain's Magical Waterland branding.

"It was felt that while this is still accurate, we would be able to get more recognition nationally if we were to use the National Park brand," she explains.

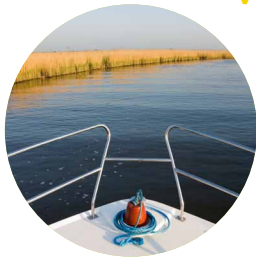
Studies have shown that a high level of familiarity with a destination has a positive affect on the intention to visit a destination. The more information and images people see about a destination, the more they feel familiar with it and the more likely they are to intend to visit.

But raising the profile isn't straightforward Ruth explains: "Norfolk and Suffolk have so much to offer that it is very hard to associate the area with just one theme. This in turn means that it is very hard to promote the area. Did you know that Norfolk has more visitors than Cornwall? It is hard to believe that a lot of people still don't know where Norfolk is!"

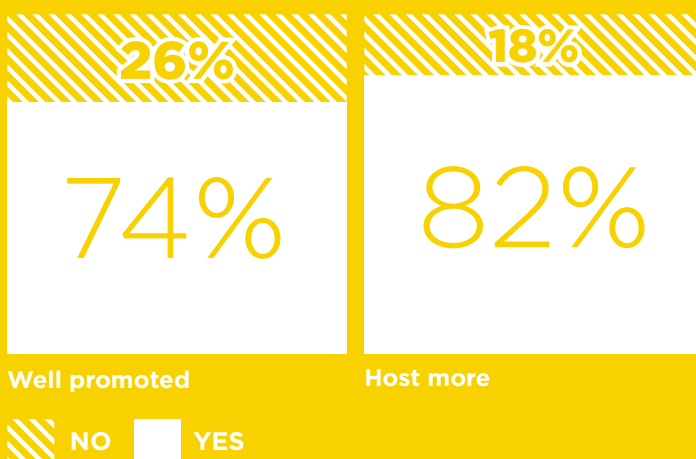
IPSWICH CENTRAL

Research is showing a comprehensive project to boost visitors and the tourism trade in Ipswich is paying off.

The Ipswich Vision scheme involves local businesses and strategy planners working towards the same goal, with a tight, transparent relationship between organisations. >>



Do you think events and festivals (of all descriptions) in your region are well promoted and should your region host more?



Does the Government provide enough support to the sector?



<< “Ipswich Vision supports regeneration, better transport, better shopping and improvements to public spaces and buildings,” says Fiona Wright, marketing director at Ipswich Central, adding that attracting investment has been the primary role of the scheme.

Successful collaborative campaigns include RAWsuffolk, which was aimed at a younger demographic (under 35s) and ran across 2018 and into early 2019, and Be Inspired, an arts and entertainment campaign communicated through an online advertising campaign to encourage people living in Colchester to visit attractions, arts and entertainment within Ipswich town centre.

The campaign returned 1.9 million impressions, 55,000 campaign sessions and 3,500 website visitors from Colchester, representing a 44% year on year increase.

Fiona says that businesses can engage with projects such as these by contacting local DMOs.

“Invest time in letting them know about your business, all the events and offers that your business has, as well as engaging with specific campaigns targeting visitors,” she says.



SOUTHEND BID

Southend BID has raised the town's profile nationally with a series of popular festivals and events such as commissioning local artists to paint five portraits of famous celebrities from Essex.

“It was cheekily, and rather provocatively titled ‘Essex

Birds’ and this caused quite a stir,” says Dennis Baldry, chair of Southend Bid and manager of the Victoria Shopping Centre in Southend. “This came after local artist John Bulley painted an eye-catching tribute to the Prodigy’s Keith Flint, which became a national news story and again lifted the town’s profile.”

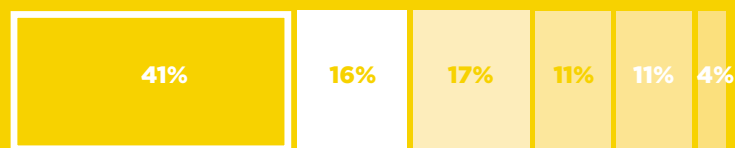
Southend Bid also employs a team of BID Rangers who help visitors with enquiries and needs, plus a Keeping Together scheme, which helps children and vulnerable people who have become lost or detached from their friends and family, or who need some sort of help when visiting Southend on busy days.

“It is additional ideas and investments like these that I believe helped Southend to welcome over seven million visitors in 2018, and we hope that figure is even bigger in 2019,” says Dennis.

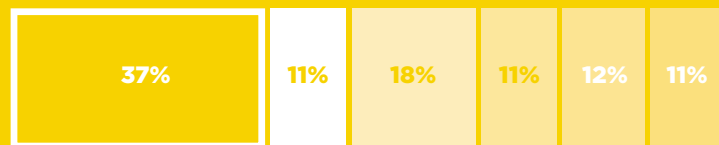
Members of Southend BID are invited to join marketing and management activities and attend various networking opportunities, as well as completing the annual survey. ●

How engaged do you feel with your local DMO and your regional brand?

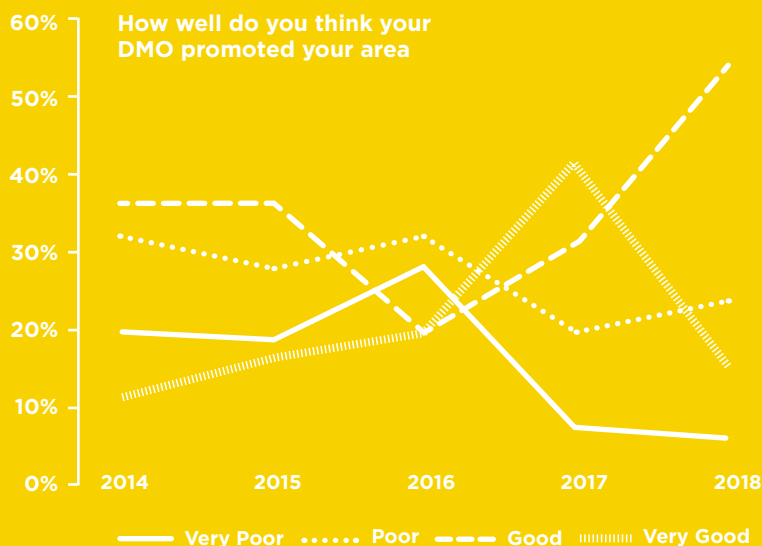
Visit Norfolk/Suffolk/Essex



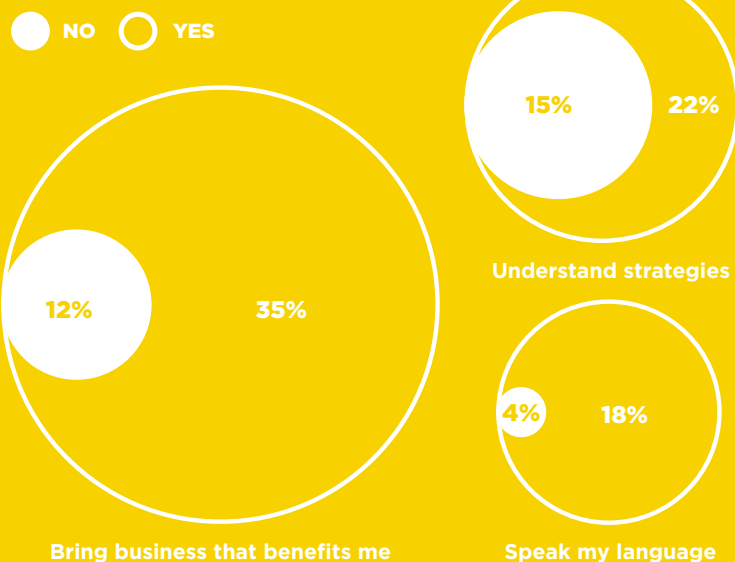
Local DMO



1 - NOT ENGAGED → 6 - VERY ENGAGED



In my opinion DMOs/tourism groups...



Thanks for making it happen.

2018 was a very interesting year for the tourism, leisure and hospitality sector. We seemed to have an endless summer, and as individuals, we possibly all enjoyed the unprecedented warm weather.

But for the sector, it was not all good news. There are again winners and losers, and the reality is it's tough out there. 2019 will throw up more challenges. Rolling political uncertainty shows no sign of abating, but that too brings with it plenty of opportunities.

Our 2019 Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Business Survey was again well supported and I would like to thank all of you who participated in or promoted the survey. Without your support and input we would not be able to put this together.

It's important that the sector continues to work together, and we continue to work closely with Visit Norfolk, Visit Suffolk, Visit Essex, Visit East of England and all the other DMOs that work so hard to build on the successes and growth of the visitor economy. The challenge, as ever, is to convert day visitors into stay visitors, but it's clear with the investment and effort put forth, we are trying our very best to maintain the momentum and direction.

I hope that you have enjoyed the new style and layout of the brochure, and again, I thank those who have helped contribute to the content, sharing their stories, tips and ideas, which provide useful reference points. We endeavour to provide balanced data, covering a wide range of issues, which hopefully provide a useful benchmark.

As always, any feedback is most welcome. Please let me know if you would like to see any specific issues in future publications, any areas of interest that you feel may benefit from being covered or areas which require



more attention and focus from the sector.

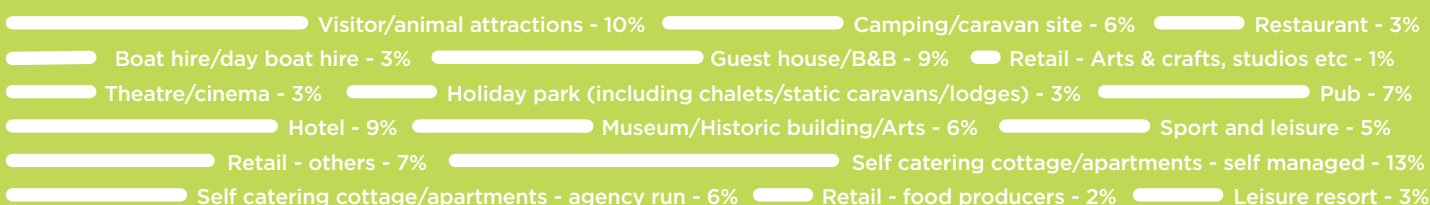
I would like to thank the commercial partners who have helped sponsor this booklet. Without the support of Adnams, Camplings, Howes Percival and Purcell we would not be able to publish this report in the way it is, which I hope you've enjoyed reading.

The one thing that I think has come across this year is that it's tough out there and we must continue to **blast away the myth that Tourism 'just happens'**.

Chris Scargill, tourism, leisure and hospitality partner with MHA Larking Gowen ●

 CScargillLG

Type of business participating in the survey



Providing a great
experience and helping
the visitor economy grow




Professor David Field
CEO Zoological Society
of East Anglia

“ The MHA Larking Gowen survey gives a
real insight into tourism in the area putting
the national story into a local context”

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Now, for tomorrow

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