

On the Map - Ashford & Tenterden's Visitor Economy Programme

Developing a New Visitor Experience



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visitkent.co.uk



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Overview

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Welcome

Your Hosts

Hollie Du Preez: Visit Kent

Steve Law: Visit Kent



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Putting Ashford On the Map



- **Product development programme**
- **Wine trail map**
- **Dedicated destination campaign**
- **Conference for wine producers**



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Why develop Experiences?

What does the research and trends show us?



Global Travel Trends



Rest and wellness



Convenience



Pursuit of value



**Experiences and
making memories**



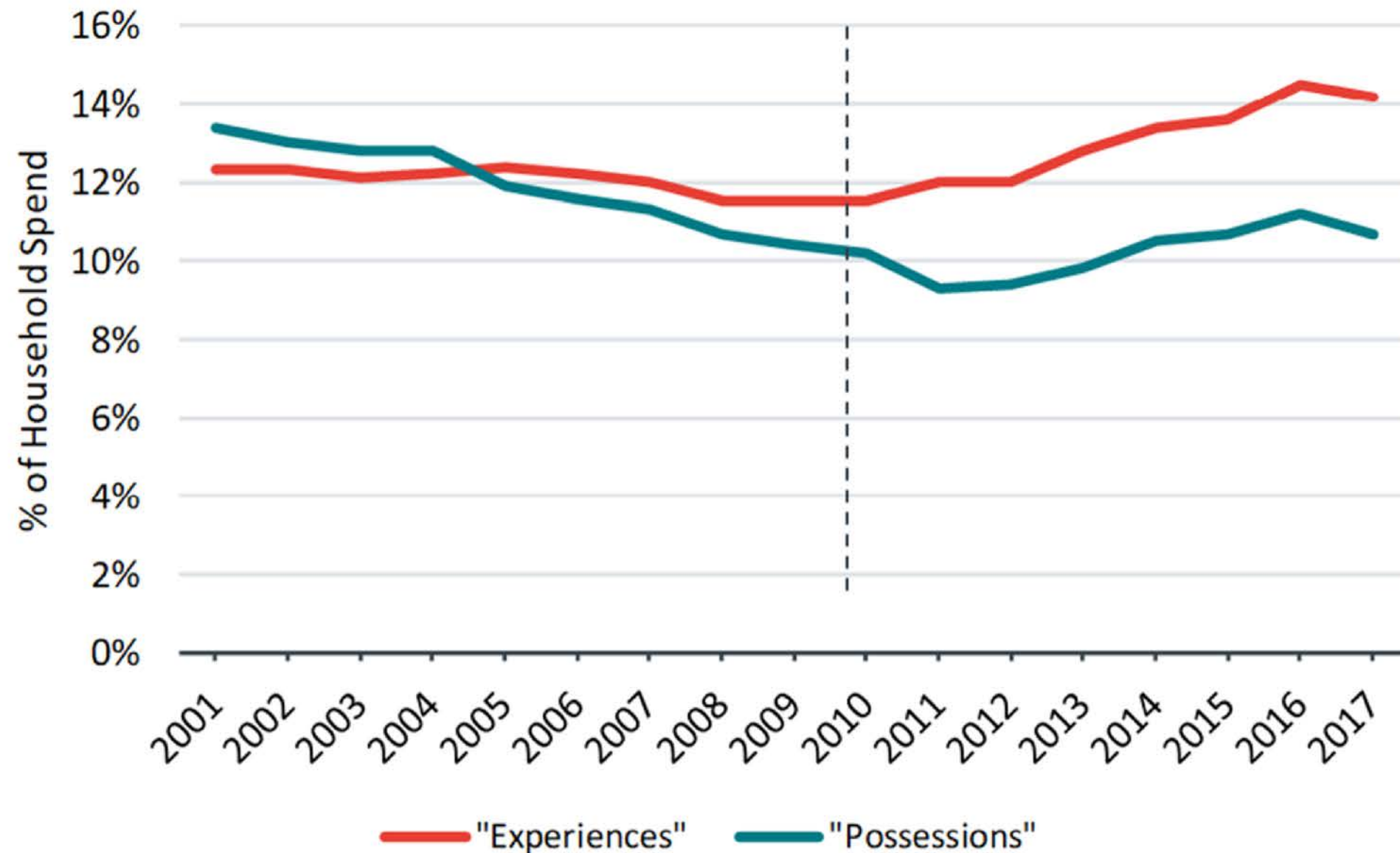
**Leisure and
micro-cations**



Why develop Experiences?

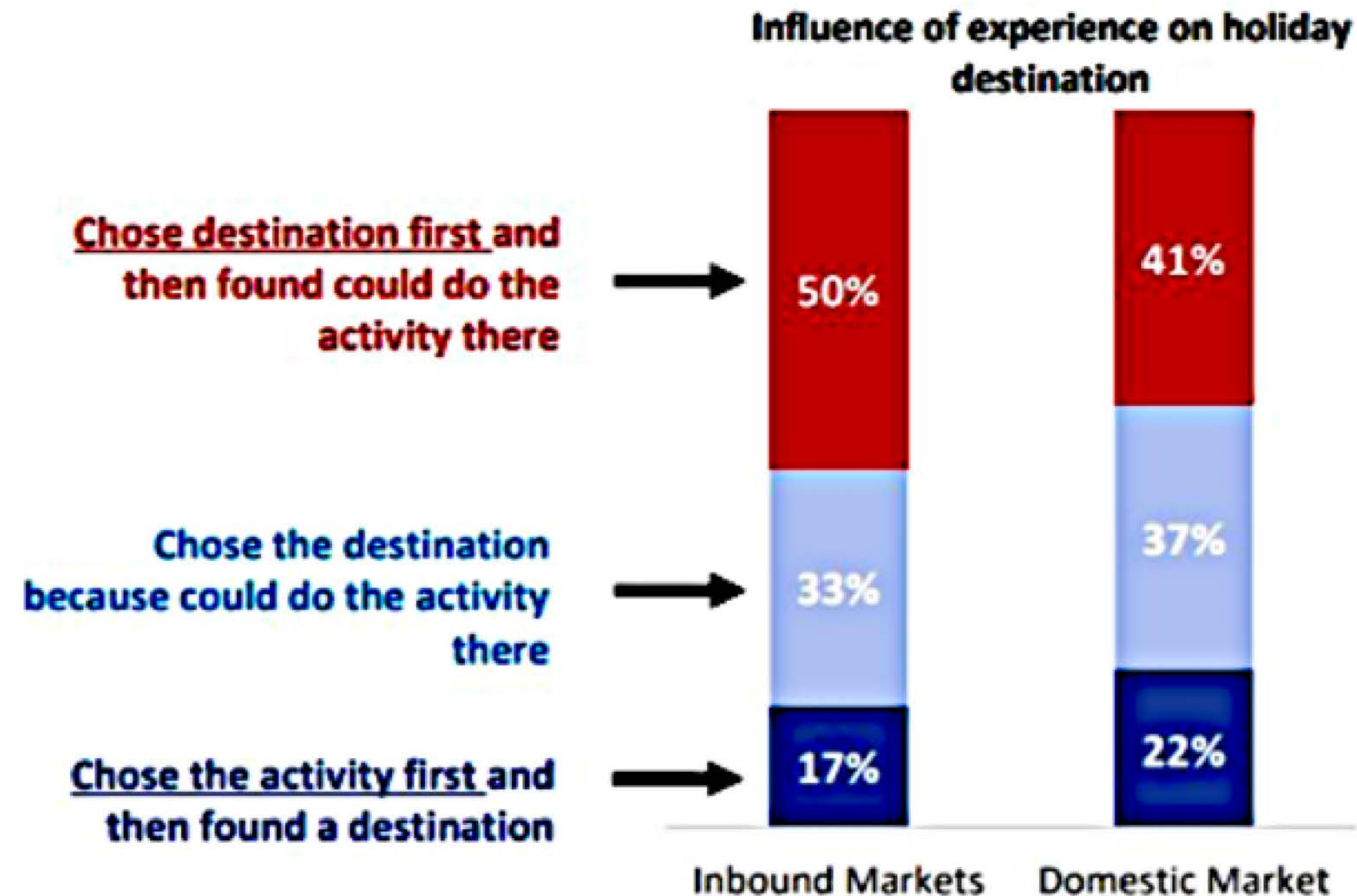
62%

Figure 2 Spend in aggregate categories as a proportion of total expenditure from 2001 to 2017



of 18-34 year olds planned to increase the amount of money they spend on experiences, not possessions, over the next 12 months.

Why develop Experiences?



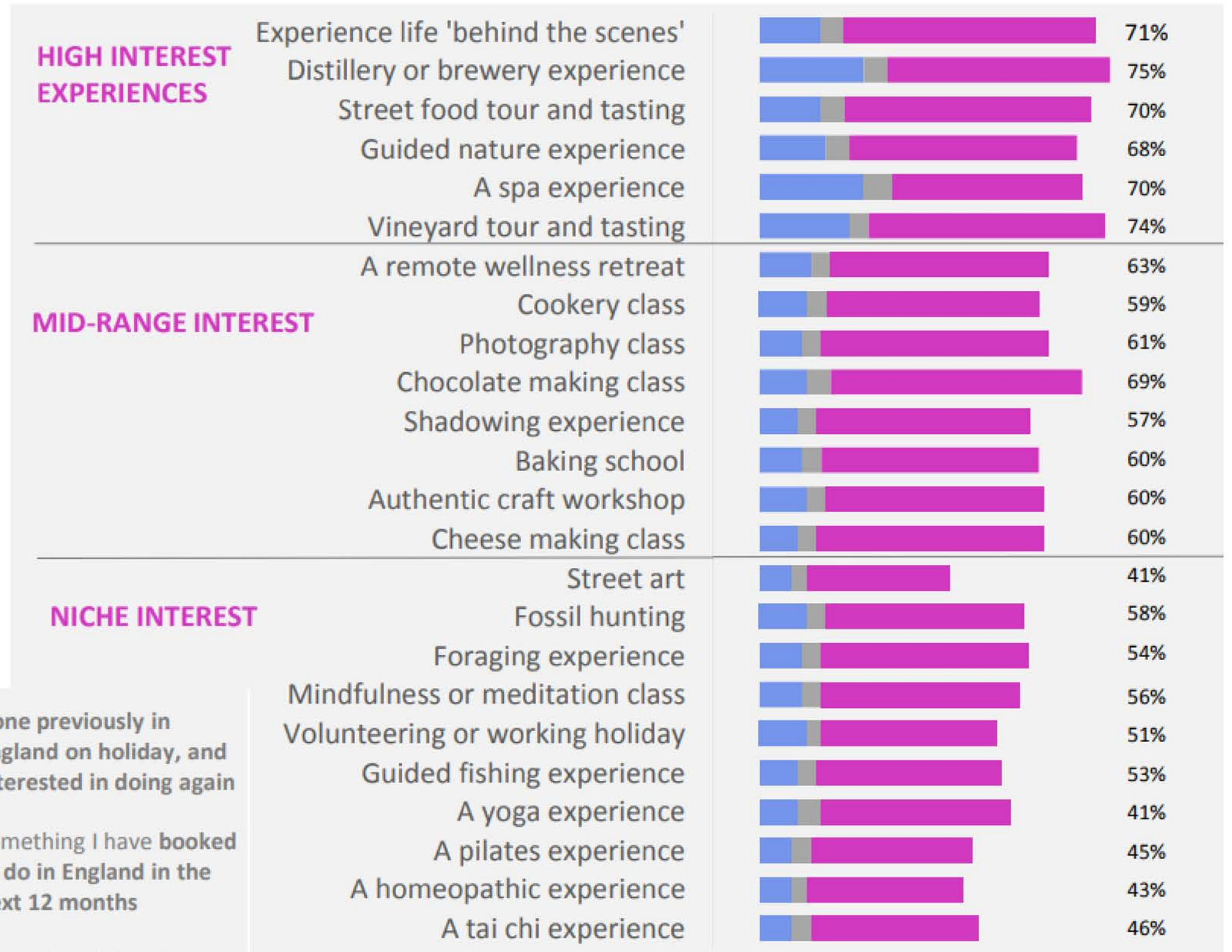
In 2024, we'll be choosing destinations carefully, slowing it down to enjoy the silence and the stars, indulging in our love of food in new and interesting places, and immersing ourselves in wellness practices that help us live longer.

CNTraveller

Why develop Experiences?

Across generations, approximately half of travelers' top focus is on culinary experiences and there is widespread interest in eating local and regional cuisine (86%)

Hilton Trends 2024



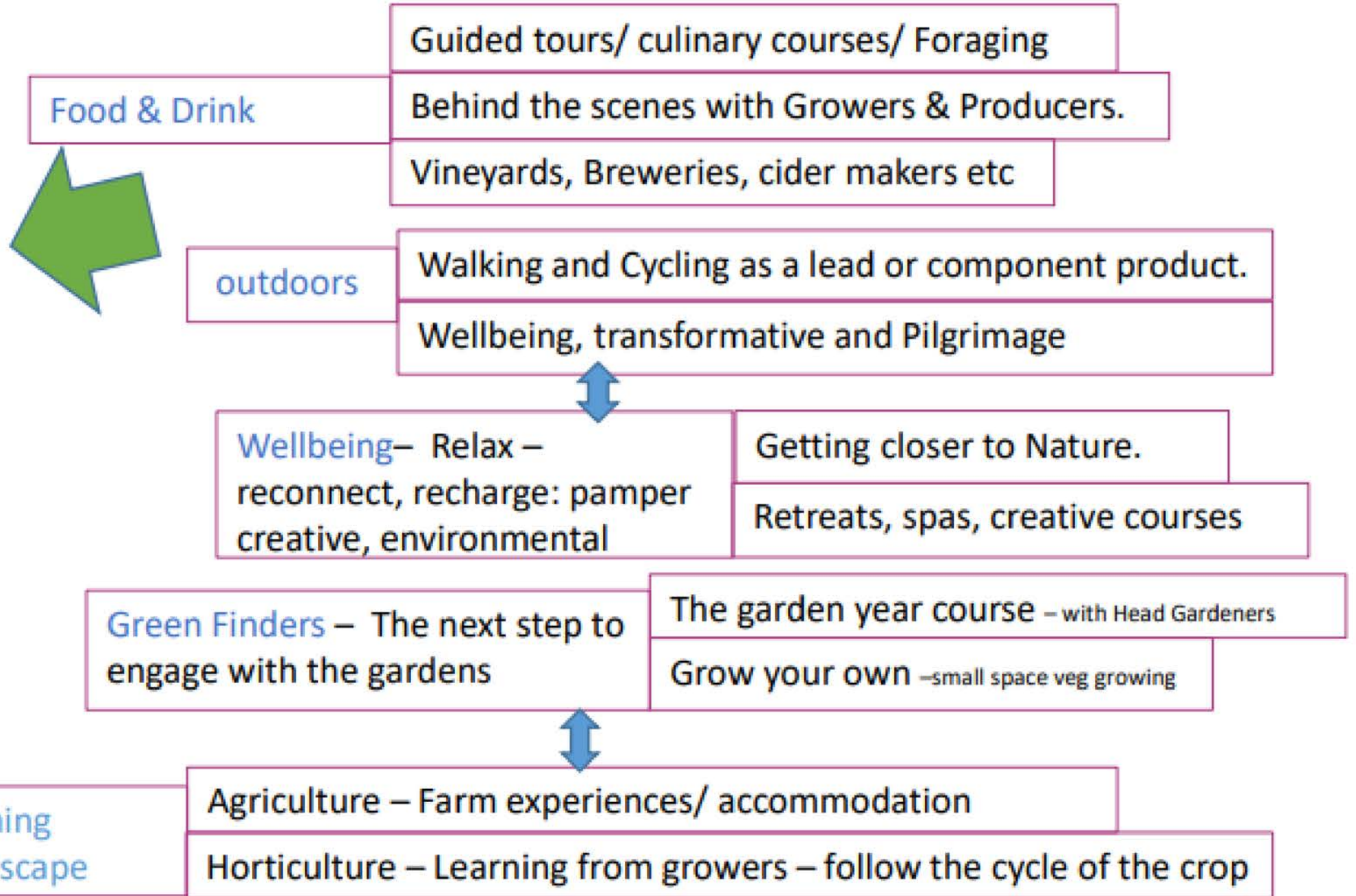
■ Done previously in England on holiday, and interested in doing again
■ Something I have booked to do in England in the next 12 months
■ Interested, but not something I have yet done on holiday to England



Strengths & opportunities for West Kent and Ashford Borough

West Kent is dominated by a strong rural countryside product, thanks to a considerable proportion falling into the High Weald and North Downs AONB, offering an excellent opportunity around outdoor activity. The area is rich in heritage attractions along with an appealing rural towns/villages product. Over the past 10 to 15 years, this has formed the perfect backdrop for the development of an excellent food and drink offer; most notably being the rise in vineyards.

This established heritage and landscape offers reassurance to the visitor, but doesn't always establish an immediacy to travel. Focusing on experiencing rather than on just visiting, can create a reason.



Task 1: What's the Story?



- Identify food and drink stories across Ashford/Kent
- What's the expected? What's the unexpected?
- Who are the people behind them? Present day or historical.
- How unique is the story to the destination?

Group discussion: tables, one person to feed back

Whitstable Oyster Trading Company

Get an up-close look at our oyster farm, where you will learn about the different stages of oyster growth, the process of harvesting and the importance of responsible aquaculture. Our knowledgeable guide will provide insight into the fascinating world of oyster farming, answering any questions you may have along the way.

But the experience doesn't stop there. After the tour, you will get to taste the fruits of our labour with a sampling of freshly shucked oysters and a glass of local bubbly or our Whitstable Brewery beer.

 Tripadvisor

Whitstable Oyster Farm Tour

Tripadvisor Traveller Rating
●●●●● 6 reviews

Tripadvisor Ranking
#1 of 4 Food & Drink in Whitstable

Recent Traveller Reviews

"Oysters rock!"

"Oyster tour"

"Whitstable Oyster Farm Tour - Informative and..."

"A must do tour for Oyster Lovers!"

"Tour of Oyster Farm"

[Read reviews](#) | [Write a review](#)

Authenticity



£45 per person

The Wild Kitchen

A Forager's Easter with Beach Hit Feast

After seashore foraging for mineral-rich seaweeds from rock pools; fragrant flowers & tree food from the iconic White Cliffs of Dover, Lucia hosts the wild food feast from our stylish beach hut. Our 'rolling banquet' is paired with canapés, botanical cocktails and herbal teas.

- 2 hours foraging in different eco environments fitting the season.
- Take home wild food.
- Canapés, botanical cocktails and herbal teas & cordials.
- A 4-course gourmet wild food menu (Vegetarian & vegan friendly)
- A gift to remember the day.

Expert knowledge



The Kent Gin Train

Arrive at Tunbridge Wells West and board our heritage 1960s carriages before you set off through the High Weald. On your table will be a selection of three different Gins brought to you by the fantastic Anno Distillery, based in Marden with the occasional guest gin too!

- Train travel from Tunbridge Wells West to Eridge and return.
- 3x individual 25ml Gins from the Anno Distillery (varies per train).
- 1x 200ml Fever Tree Indian Tonic water or other mixer dependent on seasonal gin cocktails.
- A selection of canapés per person.
- Your own branded Spa Valley Railway balloon gin glass!
- Additional gin cocktails at £6 each available on request!

Collaboration



Task 2: Crazy 8s



On my own or in a group?: On your own

How long do I have?: 8 minutes (1 minute per square)

What resources do I have: 1x A3 Paper (Fold it into 8 sections), Pen, scissors

What do I do?: Come up with 8 visitor experience concept ideas which tell the stories of local food and drink. These could be related to your business but could also be general ideas linked to the stories, perhaps how you could collaborate with others. There are no barriers, the crazier the better.

Once you are done, cut up your paper into the 8 sections

Task 2.2: Crazy 8s



On my own or in a group?: As a group

How long do I have?: 5 minutes

What resources do I have: Your crazy 8 sheets

What do I do?: Discuss your ideas as a group and see if there are shared themes or ways that experiences could be paired together. Select the TOP 3 ideas to share with the wider group.

Who's the audience?

Who are Kents audiences?

Who are the foodies?



01

Social Contemporary Seekers

Predominantly the millennial market aged 18-35, comprising of couples and small groups of friends pre-children. Likely to be from London and the Southeast.

As the most likely audience to share their experiences on social media, decision-making and inspiration will be significantly driven by digital content, influencer activity and PPC advertising.

Accommodation choices may include unique self-catering accommodation, Airbnb, and mid-range hotels in more urban and city settings.

They look for unique experiences and can be active and adventurous. Experiences around learning and self-improvement will appeal strongly, alongside shared, creative, and cultural activities.

They also look for locally sourced produce, food festivals, street food, microbreweries, and shared space venues.



02

The Changing Family Dynamic

Families with children of different ages, moving away from the traditional nuclear family composition to include more intergenerational members and single-parent families, which should be reflected in messaging and marketing content.

This segment also ties in with trends around multi-family travelling, which is likely to see an increase.

They look for child-friendly activities, that are educational and hands-on. Likely to look for day trips alongside 3 nights or more, in self-catering accommodation, potentially close to nature and nearby to planned activities.

Fun-seekers – Families looking for value for money, perhaps with smaller children, and more social and value accommodation options including self-catering and caravans.

Aspirational Family Fun - Higher earning families which look for active child-friendly activities which centre around the outdoors and local culture. May also have older children and look for quality self-catering accommodation.



Green Spacers Traditional vs. Cultural

Likely to be older couples and empty nesters.

Split by those interested more in the traditional outdoor offering and those slightly younger motivated by cultural activities alongside the outdoors.

High interest in the outdoors and local heritage, are active and look for attractions such as parks and gardens, National Trust properties and walking.

Activities such as head gardener tours, foraging, vineyard visits and local produce will appeal strongly.

Although they can go for the more luxury end, they will also be conscious of wanting to get value for money and added elements.

This segment will also be the most conscious of safety following the pandemic and therefore will be cautious and increasing confidence and instilling a sense of reassurance will be essential.

03

Hyper Local

This includes residents and the VFR market

Likely to be for a day trip or short break

Messaging should be centred around rediscovering local hidden gems and to discover places that they may not have known existed and supporting local businesses.

Likely to look for unique and one-off accommodation options, including tree houses, cosy cabin lodges and shepherd's huts close to nature.



04



Who's the audience?



Food, Drink & Artisan Experiences

- Mid 30's and above - particularly alcohol experiences
- Cooking classes for small groups and couples
- Foraging and cookery classes for small groups would be ideal of around 20pax
- For the older demographic cookery and fine dining would appeal more so as apposed to foraging
- Popular with Europeans and the French market especially

Who's the audience?

Areas where those who say this image would really inspire them to visit Kent over-index

Demographics

- Explorers
- More likely to take short breaks to Kent in future

Booking Journey

- Accommodation more likely to be the main reason for the visit

Kent Awareness and Perceptions

- Clean unpolluted beaches and green spaces are more important
- More familiar with places in Kent
- More likely to be positive about the quality of food and drink in Kent

Activities and Experiences

- Shopping opportunities are important
- Activities – shopping, history and heritage sites, famous iconic attractions
- Experiences – special/luxury experiences
- Vineyard tour, brewery tour, gin distillery, heritage arts tour, upcycling, wellbeing, relaxing complementary therapies, yoga etc. river tours, gin and steam train

Task 3: Experience Vision Canvas

On my own or in a group?: As a group

How long do I have?: 30 minutes

What resources do I have: 1 of your group's Crazy 8s ideas

What do I do?: Complete the Canvas thinking through the audience, their needs, how they want them to feel and the unique value proposition. What the experience will include, what businesses might collaborate to deliver all of the elements, what the main costs would be and how you would market the product.

Present your idea as an elevator pitch to the group

Future workshops



Mapping your Audiences

Thursday 15 February, 10:30-11:30

Reaching your Potential Visitors

Thursday 29 February, 10:30-11:30

Pricing and Packaging Visitor Experiences

Thursday 14 March, 10:30-11:30

Working with Influencers

Thursday 21 March, 10:30-11:30

Next Steps

Rural prosperity fund:

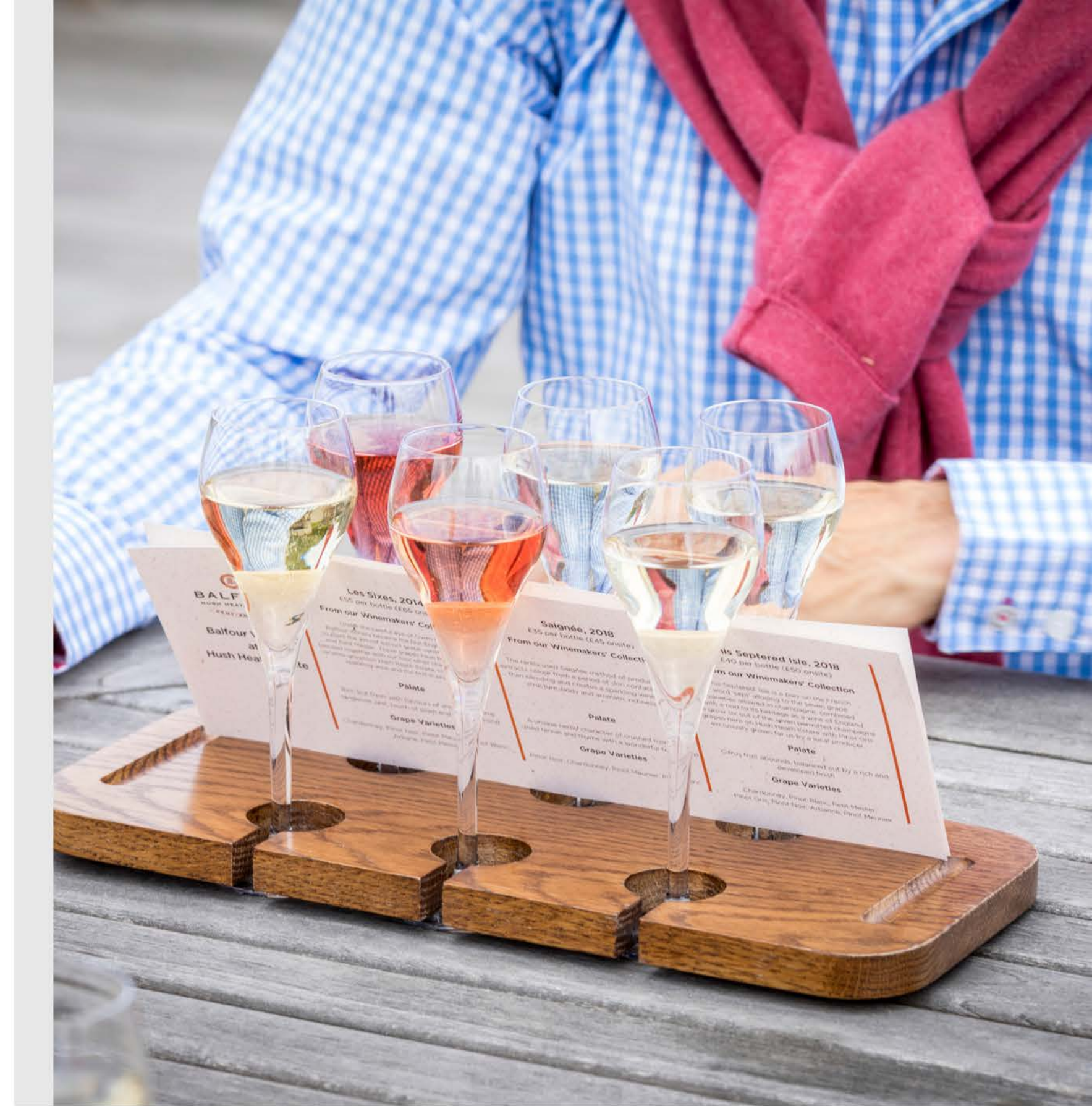
<https://www.ashford.gov.uk/business/get-business-support/rural-england-prosperity-fund-grants/>

On the Map campaign:

Coming soon



Thank you for joining us!



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