

Module: Independent Project

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Module code: (BMTP6015)

Assignment title: Project Initiation Document

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Project Overview

Tourism is a cornerstone of the Welsh economy, playing a fundamental role in generating employment, supporting business expansion, and fostering regional development (Visit Wales, 2023). Despite its renowned cultural heritage and scenic landscapes, Wales faces obstacles in attracting international visitors, balancing seasonal tourism patterns, and competing with nearby destinations such as Scotland and Ireland (Sharpley, 2018). These points show the need for a refined, strategic approach to tourism development and marketing in Wales.

This consultancy project, working alongside Visit Wales, will undertake an in-depth evaluation of the existing tourism framework to pinpoint inefficiencies and recommend strategic recommendations for Visit Wales in the future. The key objectives of the project are to increase visitor numbers, enhance digital outreach, and promote sustainable tourism initiatives to attract more international visitors to Wales by generating marketing ideas that could benefit Wales. GOV.WALES states that, “In 2023, Wales received 892,000 international visits, which is significantly lower than the number of international visitors to Scotland (3.987 million) and England (16.93 million)”.

This data shows that Wales needs to do something to increase its appeal to international visitors which this project aims to achieve. Through a combination of primary research, secondary research, industry benchmarking, and best practices, this project aims to create new marketing ideas and show inefficiencies in Visit Wales’s Marketing campaigns by introducing new insights that align with Wales’ long-term tourism strategy.

The Year of Croeso (2025) celebrates Wales’ hospitality, culture, and inclusivity, promoting tourism through immersive experiences, community engagement, and sustainable initiatives, ensuring visitors feel truly welcomed and connected to Welsh heritage but also promoting the word Hwyl as it’s a part of Welsh identity. (GOV.WALES, 2025).

Following the Year of Croeso , This Marketing campaign could introduce 2026 as the "Year of Community" (Blwyddyn o Gymuned), emphasising local engagement, heritage, and sustainable tourism. According to Visit Wales, cultural tourism accounts for a large proportion of visitor spending, as tourists seek authentic experiences, historical sites, and immersive storytelling (Visit Wales, 2023). Welsh culture fosters deeper connections between international visitors and local cultures, benefiting both residents and the economy as Wales needs to show off their local traditions more to attract cultural tourists. (Goodwin, 2017). Initiatives could include heritage festivals such as the Royal Welsh that showcases Welsh livestock (Royal Welsh, 2024), volunteer programs, and cultural exchanges, supporting responsible travel and small businesses. A #TogetherInWales campaign and interactive digital maps could highlight community-

driven experiences. This theme would reinforce Wales' identity, ensuring visitors feel not just welcomed, but genuinely immersed in Welsh life that could be included in the Marketing Campaign.

Furthermore, this study seeks to highlight potential economic and social benefits that a Visit Wales tourism strategy can bring to Wales. By increasing the influx of international tourists, the local economy will experience growth through increased spending in hospitality, retail, and entertainment industries. In 2018, there was £6.3 billion of visitor spending generating £3 billion in gross value added to the economy (Evidence, 2025). Additionally, by promoting Wales as a leading sustainable destination, the project aims to preserve cultural and environmental assets while catering to the more modern traveller expectations. Ensuring a balance between economic benefits and environmental sustainability is critical to the long-term success of Wales as a global tourism hub.

Scope Statement

This project applies a comprehensive assessment of Visit Wales' marketing strategies, branding efforts, visitor engagement methods, and tourism infrastructure. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis will be employed to examine internal and external factors affecting the tourism industry in Wales (Johnson et al., 2017), alongside a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) analysis to assess broader macro-environmental impacts (Kotler et al., 2017).

A major focus of the study will be an in-depth evaluation of Visit Wales' digital marketing strategies, including its social media effectiveness, website user experience, and engagement with global tourism trends such as virtual reality travel experiences, AI-driven recommendations, and influencer partnerships (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Social Media Campaigns will use platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to showcase authentic Welsh experiences through influencer collaborations and user-generated content. Campaigns will be designed to tap into niche markets such as adventure tourism and heritage tourism, utilising location-based hashtags and geotargeted ads. This campaign will give unique ideas to Visit Wales on important viral trends on social media. This will include improving on Website Optimisation and User Experience enhancing Visit Wales' website with interactive features like 360-degree virtual tours that are behind on quality compared to Visit Britain.

The study will examine tourism infrastructure and visitor experience, focusing on accessibility, transportation networks, and accommodation quality to identify

improvement areas. Although Wales has good transportation in some areas, it requires enhancements and better marketing to help tourists choose the best travel options before arrival. Challenges include poor connectivity in remote areas, limited off-peak services, and inadequate integration between transport modes, affecting accessibility and convenience for locals and tourists (Wales Audit Office, 2020).

The project will also explore how Wales can develop niche tourism markets, including heritage tourism, adventure tourism, and eco-tourism. Comparative case studies from destinations such as Scotland and New Zealand will be used to illustrate how strategic positioning can attract specific visitor demographics, (University of Surrey, 2021). A study by Ali-Knight States, “Niche tourism helps destinations to differentiate their tourism products and compete in an increasingly competitive and cluttered tourism environment”. This shows Marketing material on Niche tourism markets can help Wales pull further ahead of England and Scotland if done right.

This Campaign can integrate cutting-edge technological solutions to streamline the visitor experience. Wales has a great opportunity to use Innovations like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) can offer visitors virtual tours of historic sites like Caernarfon Castle, while mobile apps and interactive maps can help them explore both cities and rural areas more easily (Li et al., 2021). Data analytics can be used to manage visitor numbers, making tourism more sustainable and reducing overcrowding (Goodwin, 2017). Smart infrastructure and AI-powered recommendations can help improve the overall visitor experience, making Wales a more accessible and tech-savvy destination, but this can only happen if the right Marketing is used to educate international tourists that this technology is available. (Buhalis, 2020).

This project will not include a financial audit of Visit Wales or make policy recommendations for the Welsh Government. Instead, it will focus on actionable insights that Visit Wales can integrate within its operational framework to drive engagement and strengthen its global appeal through Marketing and weighing the positives and negatives of Visit Wales’s work and future projects.

Stakeholders

A diverse group of stakeholders will be involved in this project, each contributing valuable insights and perspectives. Visit Wales will act as the primary client, as the findings from this research will directly inform its marketing and strategic planning. The Welsh Government, responsible for policy direction and funding, will also be a key

stakeholder. Local businesses including hotels, restaurants, and tour operators play a crucial role, as they directly benefit from tourism growth. Their participation in online questionnaires and emails will help ensure the study reflects industry realities (Middleton et al., 2009). Tourists, both domestic and international, are essential stakeholders, as their feedback will shape improvements in visitor experience meaning this project will be gathering lots of feedback from locals to see their perspective on the topic. Additionally, tourism academics and research will provide expert insights into sustainable tourism strategies (Hall & Page, 2014).

Industry associations, including VisitBritain (VisitBritain, 2025), and the Welsh Tourism Alliance (Wales Tourism Alliance, 2024), will also be vital for research to gather insights into regional tourism trends, investment opportunities, and collaborative marketing efforts. By engaging with a wide array of stakeholders, the study will ensure that recommendations align with industry best practices and stakeholder expectations that has a positive effect for Wales. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local community groups will also be involved to assess the social and environmental impacts of increased tourism. An example of an organisation in Wales is MWT Cymru Since 1991 has been the leading tourism organisation in Mid Wales and support over 600 tourism businesses across Powys, Ceredigion & Southern Snowdonia (MWT Cymru, 2025)

Timeline

The project will be executed over four Months, with five key phases ensuring a structured approach. The initiation phase in February 2025 will involve stakeholder engagement, research planning, and academic literature reviews. During March 2025 and April 2025, primary and secondary research will be conducted incorporating surveys, communication to visit Wales, academic research and engagement with the local community. The strategy development phase (February – March 2025) will focus on analysing the data collected and formulating evidence-based recommendations. The implementation planning phase in April 2025 will develop an actionable roadmap for Visit Wales, detailing proposed digital marketing enhancements and visitor engagement strategies with the end goal to create a campaign that helps Visit Wales increase the number of international visitors coming to Wales.

The finalisation phase (May 2025) will see the completion of the consultancy report and presentation of key findings. Please refer to 'Appendix A' for a visual representation of the project's timeline via the Gantt chart of the timeline of the project. A Gantt chart is an essential tool in project management, as it provides a visual representation of a project's timeline, allowing for effective task management and tracking of progress. By breaking down the project into manageable tasks and assigning start and end dates, it helps ensure that deadlines are met. (Ramachandran and Karthick, 2019)

Budget

The project will incur several costs to ensure its success. These will include expenses for secondary research materials, such as books, journals, leaflets, and videos. The total cost for accessing all necessary secondary research materials is expected to be no more than £100. For primary research, transportation costs will be required to conduct surveys and interviews with stakeholders. Additionally, there will be costs for any online tools used to design and distribute the surveys, with an expected total of no more than £50.

Finally, there will be costs associated with social media and digital technology. This includes the creation and promotion of social media campaigns, as well as expenses for printing physical advertisements like posters and brochures. Costs for hiring digital technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) for advertisement purposes, will also be included. The total cost for these digital and physical promotional materials is expected to be no more than £300.

Resources

This project will need a variety of resources to work effectively. For example, technological resources will include academic sources such as Google Scholar, the online library, online survey tools (e.g., Google Forms), digital marketing platforms, and Google Analytics. These will come together thorough quantitative data collection and in-depth analysis of qualitative research, leading to targeted recommendations. Qualitative research provides insights into people's behaviours, attitudes, and experiences, while quantitative research offers measurable data to identify patterns and trends. Both are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (National University, 2023).

Specialised tools such as Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping software will be used to analyse visitor flows and identify international visitors' needs in Wales. By mapping visitor movement patterns, GIS software will inform location-based strategies to distribute visitor numbers more evenly across the country. For example, it can highlight areas that are over-visited and suggest underrepresented regions that could benefit from targeted marketing promotion. This will enable the creation of strategies to improve regional tourism balance (USGS, 2023).

Google Analytics will also play a key role in assessing the effectiveness of digital marketing campaigns by tracking key statistics such as website traffic, visitor demographics, and user behaviour. This data will be essential in evaluating the reach and impact of marketing efforts aimed at attracting international visitors, helping to refine Visit Wales strategies for increasing engagement with global audiences. Personal

materials such as a car, laptop, Wi-Fi, and printing materials are essential for ensuring the project is completed efficiently.

Methodology

A mixed-methods research approach will be employed in this project to ensure a comprehensive analysis of Visit Wales' tourism framework (Creswell, 2014). The methodology will combine qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, allowing for a detailed exploration of both statistical trends and stakeholder perspectives.

Primary Research

Primary data collection is important because it provides firsthand, reliable information that is directly relevant to the research, ensuring that the findings are accurate and specific to the topic. (Imed Bouchrika, 2021) This includes surveys, structured data collection with locals, and focus groups. Surveys will be distributed to domestic and international tourists to gather insights into their travel preferences, motivations, and satisfaction levels with Wales as a destination. Written communication with Visit Wales representatives, tourism business owners, and policymakers will provide industry insights. Focus groups will engage key stakeholders, including local businesses, to discuss challenges and potential solutions for improving tourism in Wales.

Secondary Research

Secondary research is important because it allows researchers to gather existing information from reliable sources, helping to build a foundation of knowledge and context for the study while saving time and resources. (BBC Bitesize, 2020). Data will be gathered from academic research, government reports, industry publications, Google Scholar, and tourism performance data. This will include a comparison review of best practices from leading tourism destinations such as Scotland and England. The research will also analyse historical visitor data, tourism expenditure trends, and consumer behaviour patterns using reports from Visit Wales, UNWTO, and academic sources (Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from surveys will be analysed and presented in graphs to make the information visually appealing, enabling statistical analysis of visitor preferences and satisfaction. To ensure the sample accurately represents the target population, surveys will be distributed using stratified sampling techniques, targeting various demographics such as age, nationality, and visitor type, for example leisure or business travellers. This approach will help capture diverse perspectives from international tourists. Surveys will be collected in multiple ways, including social media platforms, travel forums, and partnerships with Visit Wales and local tourism businesses to reach potential visitors outside of Wales.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups will be processed through Tables showcasing the data identifying common themes and stakeholder concerns. This approach ensures that findings are both statistically correct and visually appealing providing actionable insights for Visit Wales. The research methodology will stick to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent for stakeholders and data confidentiality. Triangulation techniques will be employed to validate findings by cross-referencing data sources, improving the reliability and accuracy of results. (Noble and Heale, 2019)

Risk Management

Several risks could impact the successful completion of this project. One key risk is stakeholder non-participation, where businesses, government representatives, or tourists may be unwilling to engage in communication, surveys, or focus groups. This could limit data accuracy and the reliability of findings. To mitigate this, clear communication strategies will be used, emphasising the project's benefits and how their contributions will shape policy improvements (Saunders et al., 2019).

Another risk involves budget constraints. If additional costs arise, such as increased travel expenses or marketing licensing fees, it could impact the project's ability to conduct comprehensive research. Budget contingencies have been allocated to prevent disruptions. Additionally, data reliability issues pose a risk if sources are outdated or inconsistent. Triangulation, using multiple sources to validate findings, will be employed to ensure accuracy (Yin, 2018).

External factors such as economic downturns, public health crises such as the Covid-19 Pandemic that closed many local Welsh businesses. For instance, the number of pubs in England and Wales fell below 39,000 for the first time in December 2024, with 412 closures that year attributed to rising costs and cautious consumer spending (Kollewe, 2024). Political changes could also affect tourism trends, potentially making some recommendations outdated before implementation. To address this, scenario planning and flexibility will be incorporated into strategy recommendations.

Success Criteria

Several constraints will impact the project. Time limitations are one of the most significant challenges. The project has strict deadlines, with all research and analysis needing to be completed by May 2025. To meet these deadlines, careful planning and scheduling will be essential. Effective time management is crucial in ensuring tasks are completed on time and the project stays on track (Kerzner, 2017).

Resource availability is another constraint. Access to data from Visit Wales may be limited due to the confidentiality of future projects. As a result, alternative sources such as government tourism reports and industry publications will be used. Secondary data is often used when primary data is unavailable, and it can still provide valuable insights into tourism trends. Budget limitations also play a role. With a restricted budget, primary research, such as stakeholder surveys, will be prioritised. However, some areas of the research may rely on secondary sources to stay within budget. Saunders et al note that, “balancing primary and secondary research methods is crucial for making the most of limited resources”.

To measure how well the digital marketing campaigns and the "Year of Community" campaign are working, it's important to have clear performance indicators (KPIs) that go beyond just increasing international visitors. (Qlik, 2024) For digital marketing, key metrics might include website engagement, like how many people visit the site, how long they stay on pages, and how often they leave the site quickly. Social media metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and hashtag use, as well as growth in followers on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, are also important. It's also useful to look at click-through rates (CTR) and conversion rates, which track how many visitors take actions like booking a trip or signing up for a newsletter. (WordStream, 2024)

For the "Year of Community" campaign, visitor satisfaction surveys can help measure how well visitors are connecting with Welsh communities. Tracking event attendance will show how many people are taking part in local festivals and activities. Finally, measuring how local businesses are doing, such as increases in foot traffic or sales,

and how many local organisations are involved in the campaign, will provide more insight into the campaign's success in supporting the community and boosting local businesses.

Ethical considerations regarding data collection, particularly visitor privacy, are also important. The project must comply with ethical guidelines and data protection laws to ensure privacy and security (Bryman, 2016). The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO, 2023) provides clear regulations on how personal data should be handled, which will be followed throughout the project. Despite these constraints, the project can still gather enough data from both secondary and primary research to develop a solid marketing campaign.

Constraints

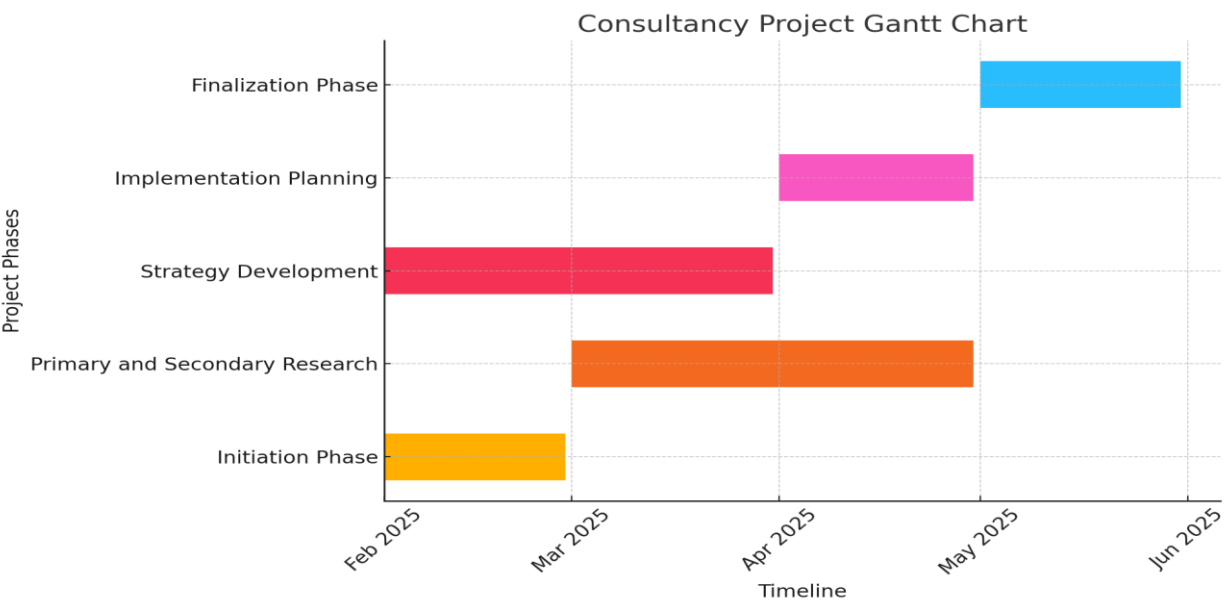
Several constraints may impact the project. Time limitations require efficient scheduling to meet deadlines, as all research and analysis must be completed by May 2025. The efficient management of time will be crucial to the success of the project, ensuring that research tasks are prioritised and completed within the designated time frame. Resource availability is another constraint. Gathering data from Visit Wales may be restricted due to the limited information they can provide about future projects. In this case, alternative sources such as government tourism reports and industry publications will be utilised. These sources will provide valuable insights into the tourism trends in Wales, allowing the research to remain comprehensive even with restricted access to proprietary data (Yin, 2018).

Budget limitations will also impact the extent of primary research activities. While in-depth stakeholder surveys are prioritised, some areas of research may need to rely on secondary sources due to financial constraints. Saunders et al. (2019) emphasises that balancing primary and secondary research methods is key to ensuring quality research within a limited budget. Secondary data, such as industry reports, will provide essential background information on tourism trends without the costs of additional data collection.

Regulatory considerations for data collection will comply with ethical research standards (Bryman, 2016) and data protection regulations set by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO, 2023) to ensure responsible handling of sensitive information. Despite these constraints, the secondary and primary research data should be sufficient to achieve the project's marketing objectives.

Appendices

Appendix A



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