

Medway Factsheet

The Experiential Offer – Opportunities & Gaps

September 2020



The following factsheet will review:

- ✓ Key trends that resonate with the Medway offer
- ✓ Area product strengths & opportunities
- ✓ Building on the current product for Medway
- ✓ Medway specific
 - ✓ Opportunities & examples
 - ✓ Gaps & considerations
- ✓ The Cultural Tourism opportunity
- ✓ Experience product snapshot grid highlighting seasonal opportunities

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Key trends that resonate with the Medway offer

Medway is steeped in history linked to renowned historical figures such as Dickens and Nelson, where visitors can visit their homes, experience themed events and explore the dockyards where ships like the Victory were built. However, because of North Kent's entrenched alignment to such characters, it can be challenging for new products to break through. This is where a focus on experience rather than visit, offers new opportunities.

Developing engaging travel experiences is an effective way for a destination to reach and influence customers.

From recent research we already know that:

- ✓ **BOOK IN ADVANCE** - When booking an experience, 65% of the domestic market book before leaving home.
- ✓ **WILL TRAVEL UP TO 1 HOUR** - Approximately 80% of customers looking to book an experience are prepared to travel up to an hour, any longer and the % drops dramatically.
- ✓ **EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE DESTINATION CHOICE** - Nearly 60% of the domestic market are influenced by an experience when selecting a destination

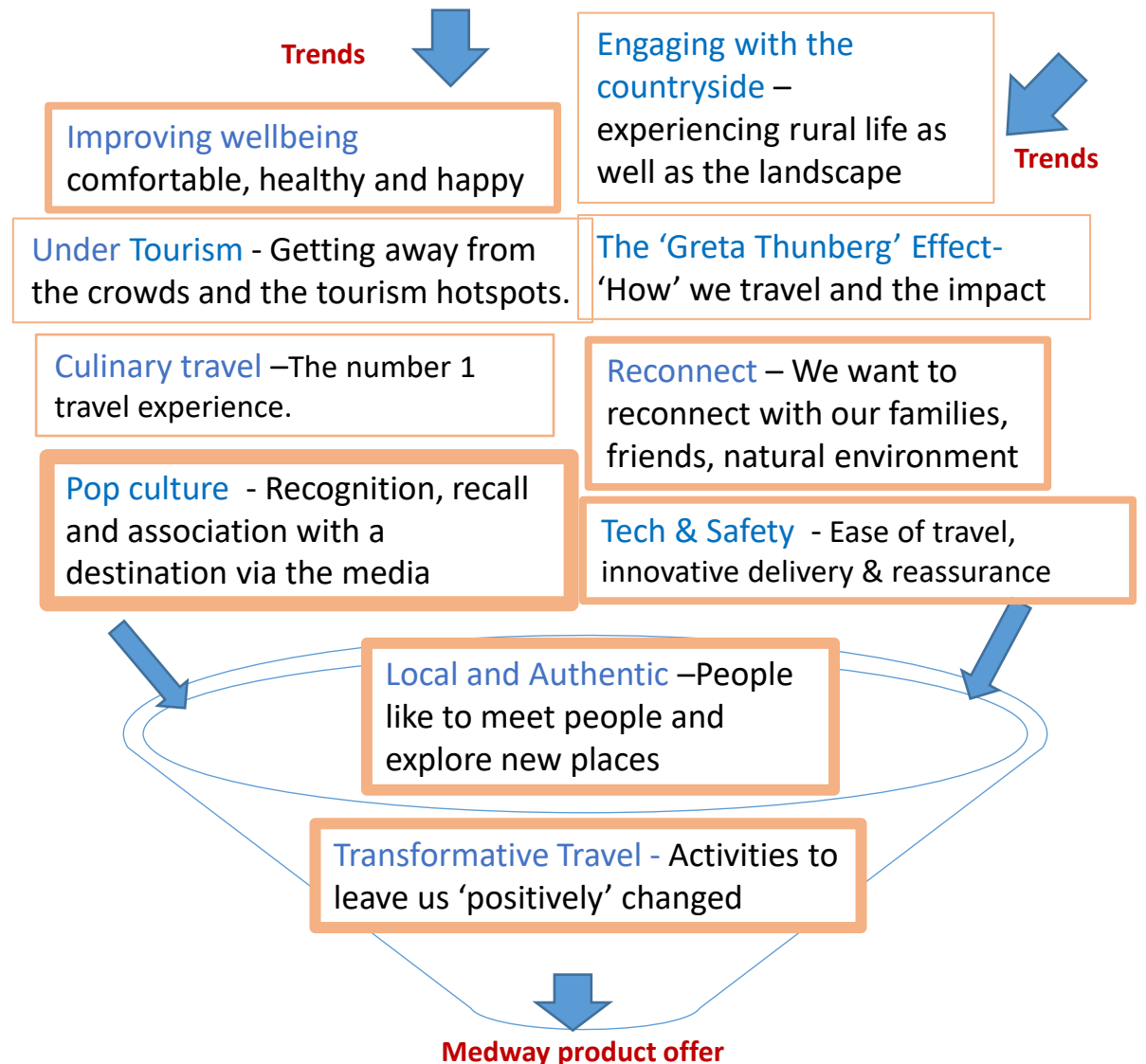
A strong heritage and cultural partnership tap directly into the core visitor trends that are driving the growth in experiential travel:

Local & Authentic – Working with local cultural organisations to deliver packaged creative programmes.

Transformative – Building on Medway's literary heritage, creating the opportunity for creative writing courses to pop up in heritage sites that have inspired great writers – Restoration House/ Six Poor travellers House.

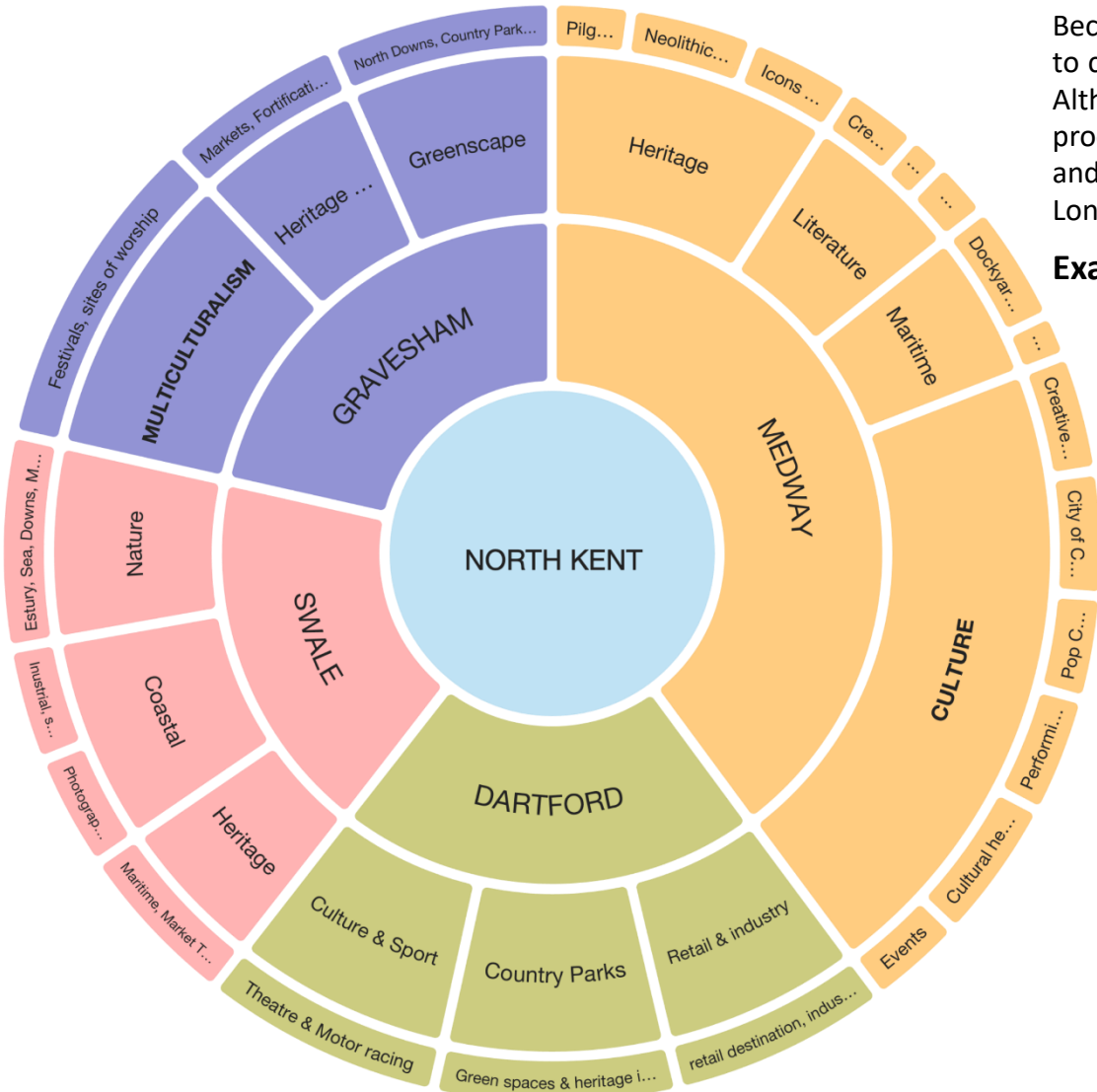
Tech – exploring opportunities to capitalise on the rise integrated technology and augmented reality to deliver scheduled experiences such as cultural geocaching.

Under Tourism – Away from core season and the events delivery schedule, Rochester is a second 'city' destination behind Canterbury, there is an opportunity to capitalise on the consumers desire to get away from the hot spots and the crowds.





Strengths & opportunities for North Kent and Medway



Because **North Kent** is 'known, yet not known', developing experience led product creates an opportunity to challenge perceptions, creating the chance to support activity such as the City of Culture Bid for 2025. Although dominated by the Thames Estuary and the Medway towns, there is a substantial countryside product; layers of heritage and a range of diverse stories and notable historical characters both fiction and non-fiction that bring the area to life. In addition, the opportunities around the development of the London Resort will profile the area to a family market.

Examples of North Kent opportunities:





Building on the current product for Medway

Cultural Heritage – Literary heritage has a high product recall with visitors to Medway, based on the Rochester and Chatham associations with Dickens. However other sites such as Upnor Castle and Cliffe Fort could be showcased by packaging them under industrial and heritage photography opportunities, both of these location regularly feature on Instagram feeds. The Core events programme are now part of the heritage and tradition proposition for the town, however they bring mass footfall – could elements of these events be adapted into an experience programme?

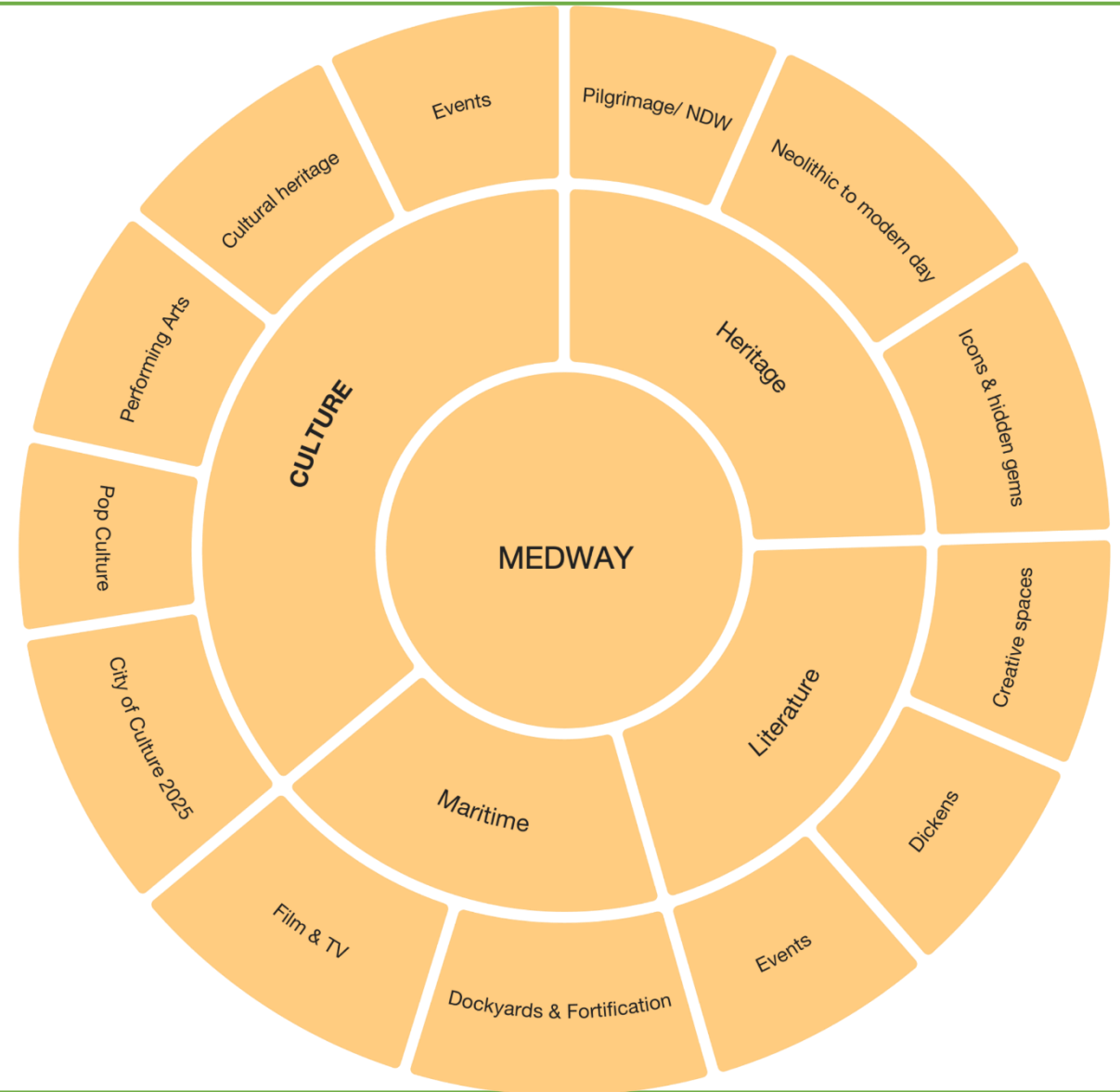
Youth Culture – Working with local FE collages and Universities offers a great opportunity to nurture young talent. Linking into the ‘playcation’ trend for gaming, panic rooms and off season events – this will also strengthen Medway’s appeal to a teen family market which could then align to the London Resort offer.

Hands on heritage – Heritage exhibits have progressed from the glass cases to the live demos, but the visitor wants to get hands on and learn a new experience or skill. This can be delivered via the core attractions or via the creative galleries and spaces such as Nucleus Arts or Sun Pier House. Creative courses and workshops engage all members of the community, tap into the transformative travel trend and are the perfect off season development product.

Cultural & Heritage Partnership: This is where the real strength lies, the greater the collaboration the greater the appeal to the consumer and the opportunity to create an immediacy to travel.



Strengthened and enhanced via a sustainable commitment





Medway – Experience product opportunities

Medway:

Product Strengths: Literary giants such as Dickens, maritime heritage, defence in the form of castles and forts, as well as England’s oldest cathedral. The Dockyards are a great attraction in their own right, but they are also fast becoming known as a destination on the screen tourism trail.

Experience	Lead Opportunity underutilised at present	Product example
Building on Literary Heritage	<p>Major cultural events are one of the few things that can shift the consumer’s understanding of a destination brand. This has been noted in Liverpool, Londonderry and Hull and has put previously dry tourism areas of London firmly on the map.</p> <p>Capitalising on the authenticity of cultural heritage by giving it a new twist by combining old with new, encourages the visiting audience to a.) - Take a second look, and b). - Gives them a reason to travel within a set time frame. Great examples are: The Huguenots & street art walking tour of East London, this combines over 300 years of history with modern day street art around Spitalfields.</p> <p>As visitors look for a new way to experience the traditional walking tour, this could be a great opportunity to rethink how visitor engagement on a traditional walking tour can also act as a cultural showcase.</p> <p>The gravitas of Dickens’ international fame should be the perfect platform to showcase the cities’ creative talents. For example; adapting a Dickens tour to showcase Rochester’s new talent at locations like Café Nucleus. The scale of Medway’s heritage sites offers opportunities to transform them into a cultural canvas – Lumiere Festivals are fast becoming the ‘must visit’ January events across the country... the formula is tried and tested in cities like Durham and Liverpool, however Medway has the opportunity to overlay the spoken word from Dickens to the towns’ yet to be discovered talent.</p>	<p>Alternative London walking tours amalgamates key heritage points of interest alongside cutting edge street art to broaden the appeal of the tours, and so delivering the street art story to a wider audience.</p> <p>Pop up Shakespeare – part of the 2012 cultural Olympiad the programme delivering Shakespeare in ordinary places as snippets and tasters, taking it away from the stage and onto the streets once known by the author.</p> <p>Museum of the Moon by Luke Jerram.</p> <p>Sacrilege by Jeremy Deller.</p>
‘Hands on’ Maritime	<p>Maritime is such a strong theme for Medway with the appeal of the Historic Dockyard Chatham, but is there the opportunity to take aspects of this attraction and turn them into packaged experiences rather than demonstrations? The Ropemakers still operate commercially at Chatham, could this be a bookable experience? Equally build on the trend for outdoor skills development, could the dockyard run day courses in knot tying and lashing, teaching people dockyard skills that they can use in everyday life?</p> <p>Getting involved in Maritime restoration projects is also another opportunity.</p>	<p>www.adventure21.co.uk offers knot tying lessons in the Lake District: In the morning you perfect your skills, then after a hearty lunch the group knot together a bridge or raft.</p>
Literary Heritage as a foundation for new creativity	<p>As many of the smaller Dickens-based attractions struggle to maintain footfall away from the summer period, there could be an opportunity to introduce a creative writing and good food programme or courses and events. This approach could work to increase off season footfall to sites like Restoration house and also open up new opportunities for Six Poor Travellers House.</p>	<p>Creative writing inspired by Penzance – Airbnb experience duration 2 hours.</p> <p>National Trust creative writing courses at Arlington Court – Inspired by William Blake</p>



Medway – Opportunities & Gaps

	Primary Themes	Gaps analysis for selected themes
Medway	Culture	<p>Dickens places Medway on the international literary stage, as the author consistently features in the top 10 authors of all time.</p> <p>To encourage repeat visits both during and out of peak season, Medway has to show that it is delivering something new and exciting to entice the visitor. The current Dickens events are a successful formula, which makes them the ideal vehicle to introduce new product to a captive audience.</p> <p>It is this literary heritage alongside the significance of key sites such as Rochester Cathedral, the Castle and The Historic Dockyard that will play a pivotal role as the backdrop to Medway’s City of Culture bid.</p> <p>In preparation for 2025, current product will need to evolve. How can the tourism experiences support this?</p> <p>Introducing new product to an already established, well performing heritage offer, is all about ‘continuing’ the story. Talk about the ‘new’ as well as the past, will help to galvanise the consumers belief in Medway as a cultural destination. Linking the old and the new is vital to reconfirm change. E.g. Museum of the moon.</p> <p>Focusing on experiences would give SME’s the opportunity to weave in additional narrative to the towns’ story – e.g. Dickens and the underground art scene... or, the Historic Dockyard Chatham as a modern-day film studio.</p> <p>Integrating creative writing workshops with the literary heritage tours is a natural transition and are more readily accepted by the customer, i.e. because of Rochester's literary credentials, it is more believable that this would be the right place to get involved in a creative writing workshop.</p> <p>Filling the gaps in the first instance is about extending the offer to incorporate something new and reviewing the potential to utilise other heritage attractions such as Upnor Castle as creative as well as heritage spaces.</p> <p>Working with local FE colleges and Universities offers a great opportunity to nurture young talent. Equally, Coventry have just launched a City of Culture apprenticeship scheme aligning to the national apprenticeship programme, to place young people at the core of the delivery. Could there be an opportunity for cultural businesses to offer an apprenticeship role as part of experiences? www.coventry2021.co.uk/get-involved/apprentices</p>



Culture



How does the cultural product connect with the consumer?



How does the cultural offer connect with the consumer?

Engagement with heritage and culture is the no.1 reason for international visitors choosing the UK; but their view of culture and heritage often overlap and what they look for isn't a single proposition, but a multi layered experience.

This multi layered engagement start way before the destination visit. For Medway, this is through film, TV and literary delivery of Dickens, both the man and his novels or through association to historical icons such as Nelson.

The cultural tourism offer is at it's most appealing when it combines all three elements – core product, creative relationship and desired experience.

Creating an immersive cultural experience, such as a pop up installation, walks, talks and workshops offer the opportunity to create an experience that will leave the customer 'positively changed'.

Layering new and engaging cultural elements to a destination offer, also creating a sense of immediacy to travel (something that iconic heritage attractions sometimes lack).

Examples:

Rochester Cathedral housed 'Museum of the Moon' resulting in a record breaking 120,000 visitors during the off-peak season Feb / March. This event has shone the light on what's possible when art and heritage combine to create an immersive experience.



Time restricted, creating a sense of immediacy.



The Mountebank comedy walk is one of the most popular Airbnb experiences, as it offers layered cultural engagement.

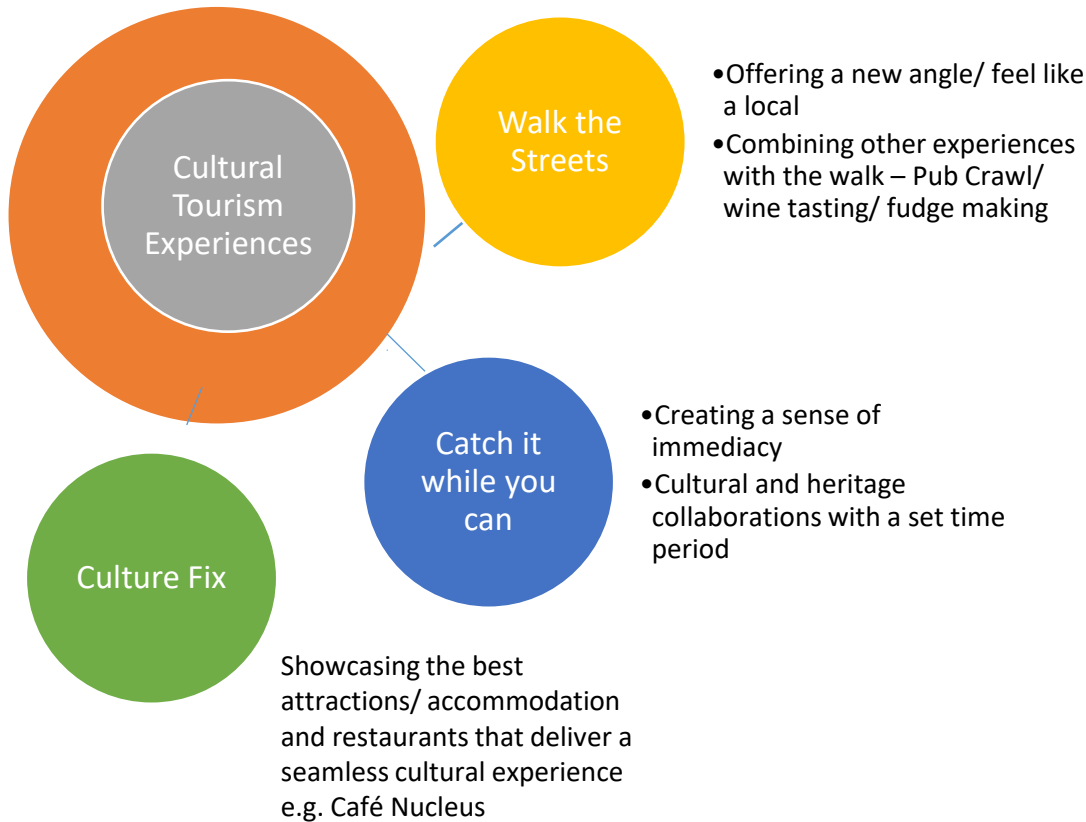
- ✓ Heritage/ Iconic/ educational.
- ✓ Builds on the cultural relationship the consumer already has via famous Scottish comedians/ the Festival and Fringe.
- ✓ Delivered by a local – Authentic/ immersive, current and entertaining.



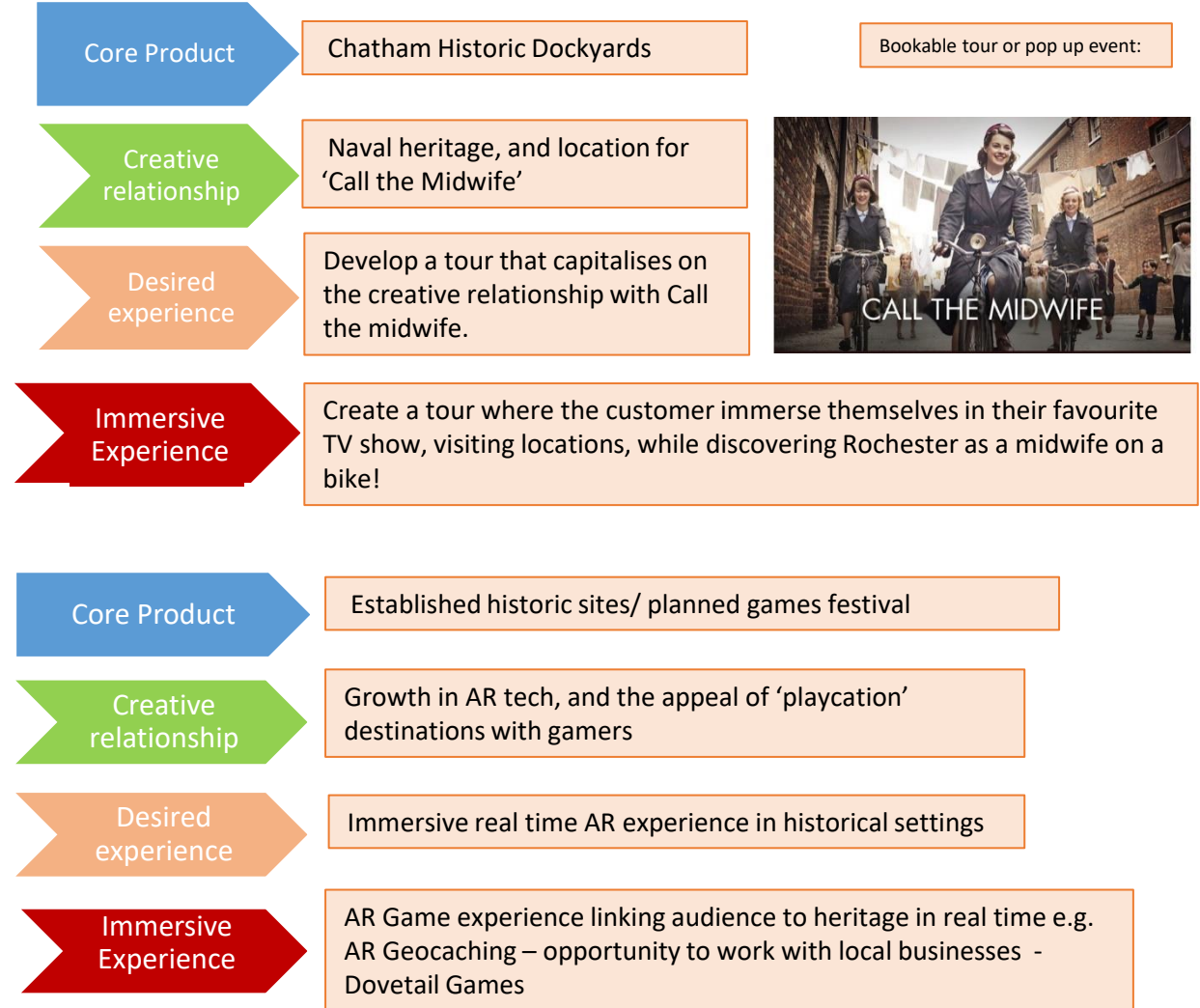
Building on the Medway offer

Dial-up culture

Adapting the current heritage product into a cultural heritage experience, will engage the customer and as we have seen with Museum of the Moon, encourage out of season travel.



Cultural experience ideas



Appendix 1

Kent/Lead District Snapshot - Strength, Opportunity and Gap analysis

– Experience led product only

Please note: This is not a definitive list of the county's tourism product, each district factsheet will have a more in-depth product snapshot.

Strength (S) – The product is already established but could be more experiential/ season lengthened

Opportunity (O) – There is an opportunity to develop this product to raise the profile of the area through experience

Gap for development (G) – There is a consumer interest and potential for the destination to showcase this product

Seasonality Key for product delivery (Actual and Potential)

High	Potential for high product delivery in this quarter – This product may not be currently delivering in this month
Med	Potential for Medium level product delivery in this quarter due to - weather, product, availability of local support
Low	Low product delivery in this quarter due to – Reliance on weather, volunteer base, product availability

Product Grid	Kent (All)	Kent Downs AONB	White Cliffs Country NDW/AONB	Folkestone & Hythe District	Canterbury NDW/ AONB	Thanet	Ashford NDW/AONB	Tun Wells	Gravesham NDW/AONB	Medway	Seasonality				
											Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec	
Golf	O		S/O	O			O								
Hidden Heritage	S	S/O	O	O/S	S/O	O	S	S	S/O	S/O					
Archaeology	O		O/G		O/G					O					
Gardens/ Gardening Courses	S/O	O		O			O	S	O						
Fossil Hunting	O		O	O/S	O	O									
Military heritage	O		S	S			O		S/O	S					

Product Grid	Kent (All)	Kent Downs AONB	White Cliffs NDW/AONB	Folkestone & Hythe District	Canterbury NDW/ AONB	Thanet	Ashford NDW/AONB	Tun Wells	Gravesham NDW/AONB	Medway	Seasonality			
											Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Wildlife	O	S	S/O	S/O	S/O	O	O	O	O	O				
Walking & Cycling	S/O	S	O/G	O/G	O/G	O	S/O	O/G	O/G	O/G				
Water sports	O	O	O	O	O	O								
Food & Drink	S	S/O	O	S/O	S	O	S/O	O	O/G	O				
Multicultural	O	G	O	O	O	O	O		S/O	O				
Foraging	O	S/O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O					
Pilgrimage	O	S/O	S/O		S/O		O		O	O				
Photography	O/G	S/O	O/G	O/G	O/G	O/G	O	O	O	O				
Agriculture		S/O	S/O	S/O	S/O	O	S	S	O					
Vineyards	S/O	O	O	O	O		S	O	O					
Theatre/ Music	O		O	S/O	S/O	S/O		S/O		O				
Creative courses	O	O	O	S/O/G	O	S/O/G	O	O	O	O				

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											Jan - Mar	Apr - June	July - Sept	Oct - Dec
Art tours	O			S/O/G		O				O				
Lux escapes	O			S/O	O		O	O						
Wellbeing	O	S/O	O	O	O	O	O	S/O	O	O				
Maritime	S/O		O	O	O				S	S				
Seafood	O		O	S/O	O	O								
Outdoor pursuits			O	O/S	O	S/O								
Events	S/O		O	S/O	S/O	S/O/G	O	O	O	S/O				
Markets	O				O		O	O	O	O				
Retro culture	O		O	O	O	S				O				
Pop Culture	O			O		O			O	O				
Screen tours	O		O	O	O/G	O/G	O			S/O				
Fishing	O		O	O	O	O								
Cooking	O	O	O	S/O	O	O	S/O	O	O	O				
Family/ small group focus			O	O	S/O	S	O	O	O	O				
Bespoke tours	S	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O				

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