

# SEStran Ferry Toolkit

## Section 10: North Sea Marketing Concept

This document is part of iTransfer, a North Sea Region Interreg programme project, which is funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

iTransfer (Innovative Transport Solutions for Fjords, Estuaries and Rivers) aims to make ferry transport more freely accessible and sustainable, and encourage more people to travel by water. In areas in the North Sea Region (NSR) there are opportunities to replace existing vehicle routes with passenger ferries as a viable alternative. Travelling by ferry is more sustainable, easier and quicker. It can also provide lifeline services to remote communities.

For more information visit [www.itransferproject.eu](http://www.itransferproject.eu)

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### Section 10: North Sea Marketing Concept

#### 1. Overview of the iTransfer project

- 1.1. Improving water-based public transport is a key issue in the NSR (North Sea Region) to safeguard sustainable accessibility of regions which would otherwise be inaccessible or suffering from their remote location. The iTransfer partners pursue an implementation-oriented TOP approach to improve water-based accessibility by fostering development of Technology (ferries & landings), Operation (integration with public transport & set-up of ferry connections) and addressing Policy issues (tendering of ferry services & barrier-free access for disabled people) on the national and EU level.
- 1.2. North Sea local and regional authorities wish to improve their accessibility as sustainably as possible. The road system, in particular around urban and metropolitan areas such as London, is often congested. NSR has significant underused capacity for water transport on rivers and estuaries. New ferry services could offer new access for passengers and improved interconnectivity within cities, islands or inland destinations by river.
- 1.3. Regional, national and EU programmes and policies demand reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Business and tourism need greater accessibility and interconnectivity of public transport. North Sea islands, such as Terschelling and Helgoland, located in environmental protected areas, need accessibility by sustainable ferry technology. Regional Public Transport Authorities seeking improved accessibility of islands and suburbs are looking for

appropriate ferry technology which offers modern and commercially viable transport quality, combining reduced fuel consumption (or even new fuel concepts), low CO2 emissions, and less wash to protect the fauna and flora near the shore. To implement new transport concepts, more and new types of ferry landings are required because of the large North Sea tidal range. Today's landing equipment does not always meet current standards for disabled use, operability, sustainability, service orientation and interconnectivity with other public transport modes. We need to understand the passenger ferry market demand, specific passengers' requirements and needs in order to tailor solutions to compete against individual transport.

1.4. As rules in the field of passenger ferry transport have become so complex and sophisticated, European players such as local, regional and national administrations and (public) transport authorities, ferry operators and shipyards have joined forces trans-nationally in the iTransfer project to work jointly on new technology, operational concepts and policy frameworks to improve accessibility and sustainability.

1.5. iTransfer falls into the area of intervention 3.1, regional accessibility strategies of the Interreg IV B NSR programme. Focussing on ferries as sustainable means of transport to optimize access to regions where water courses offer potential for public transport, it seeks a strategy "how" to make efficient use of this potential. Recent stagnation of accessibility by ferry proves that individual partners cannot find a satisfactory solution to promote "cruise to work". By working together across different regions and sectors the project will develop a new ship design, adapt a ship for eco-fuel and build a tide proof landing, and build critical mass to show new policy options.

1.6. The AIM of iTransfer is to develop & present innovative, sustainable solutions in ferry technology, operation and policy to improve regional accessibility by water-based public transport in the NSR via a TOP approach:

- Resolve TECHNOLOGICAL issues (design of ferries and landings),
- Improve ferry OPERATION (integration of ferries with the public transport system and set-up of new ferry connections)
- Support a POLICY environment which resolves tendering problems and recommend comprehensive barrier-free access solutions.

1.7. Outputs will include installation and launch of an innovative super accessible NSR ferry-landing and a sustainable standard NSR ferry operating with liquefied natural gas (LNG).

1.8. It addresses underused water transport capacity, environmentally friendly development of regions difficult to access by road, and practical equal opportunities for disabled and elderly people. The project aims to provide studies for new connections and enable regions with little ferry experience to set up new connections.

1.9. The NSR includes a number of strong economies and is one of the most successful regions in Europe. The NSR has great potential for growth in Europe and large opportunities exist in the NSR which have to be utilised.

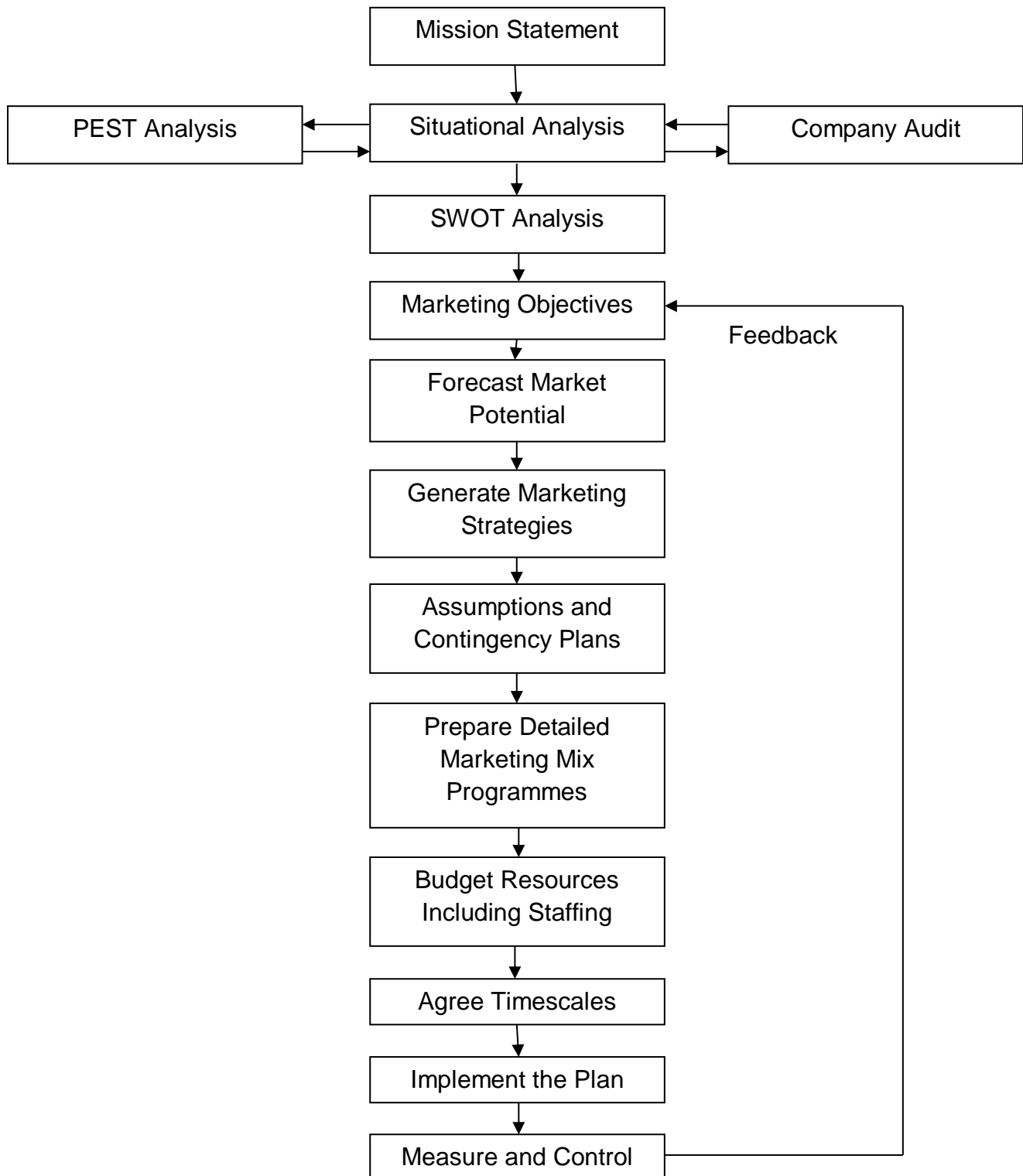
1.10. Work Package 4 of the iTransfer project looks at Viable Ferry Routes and Operations. Within this work package the project partners are tasked with the development of ferry connections. It is stated that 'Partners will identify potential for new ferry connections in the NSR and use the results to attract suitable regional and foreign operators. They will develop a ferry connection set-up tool kit and a joint marketing concept for NSR ferries to introduce ferry connections efficiently'. This paper focuses on a marketing concept for new connections and opportunities within the NSR and what processes must be considered before new services are put in place.

## 2. Marketing Overview

2.1. Marketing is defined by the Chartered Institute of Marketing as '*the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably*'. Marketing should fill a market need, and help an organisation reach its objectives. It is widely understood that marketing has an important role to play in the economy. However, some tend to focus on marketing during a down turn. This should not be the case; marketing should be a constant process which is reviewed and tailored to an organisation's needs and objectives. Marketing plans should be dynamic and adaptive.

2.2. As you will see from the following table (adapted from a table created by G Lancaster and P Reynolds, 1998) a Marketing Plan should measure its effectiveness and subsequently these results should be fed back into the plan's original objectives. This will allow the organisation to assess whether or not its marketing activities have been a success.

### 3. Strategic Marketing Planning Process



## 4. Mission Statement

4.1. A mission statement defines the purpose of an organisation, its raison d'être.

The mission statement should provide an overall guidance for the organisation and give an overview of its goals. This will provide a base for the organisations strategies; this may include, but is not limited to; the organisations objectives or goals, clients and or customers, services, values and purpose

4.2. According to Bart (1997), the commercial mission statement consists of 3 essential components:

1. Key market – who is your target client/customer?
2. Contribution – what product or service do you provide to that client?
3. Distinction – what makes your product or service unique, so that the client would choose you?

4.3. Example of a Mission Statement from CalMac Ferries

4.4. Cal Mac Background:

4.5. CalMac sails to 24 destinations off Scotland's west coast, ranging from Arran in the South, to Lewis in the north. The ships carry around five million passengers and approximately one million cars annually.

4.6. CalMac Mission Statement:

4.7. Caledonian MacBrayne will provide lifeline ferry services which are safe, reliable and affordable to the Clyde and Hebridean Islands. CalMac will operate a high quality service, focusing on customers' needs and comfort. CalMac is committed to the highest management standards and aims to be

acknowledged as the leading ferry operating company in the UK, providing value for money, supporting the economy, protecting the environment and providing a stimulating workplace for all its employees.

## 5. Situational Analysis (Environment Audit and 'PEST')

5.1. To start the process of marketing new services or products, a good understanding of the overall Marketing environment is essential. The marketing environment refers to factors and forces that affect an organisation's ability to build and maintain successful relationships with customers:

### 5.2. The Proximate Macro-environment

5.3. G Lancaster and P Reynolds (1998) state that Macro environment covers all external agencies that may influence the Marketing plan. Many will have much more of an immediate influence over activities in the North Sea compared with others. Agencies such as suppliers and distributors and competing regions are known as the proximate macro-environment, which are separate to wider external influences such as legal, cultural economic and technological impacts. The proximate macro-environment consists of people, organisations and agencies within the organisation's immediate environment.

### 5.4. The Supplier Environment

5.5. These are organisations who supply the NSR with raw materials, products, services etc. The customer / supplier relationship interdependencies are critical as one depends highly on the other. The NSR should be viewed as a tool to enhance this relationship, providing some stability and security over rising costs. However, factors such as industrial disputes and the availability

of raw materials will also need to be considered. A future marketing plan or agency should account for this, and ensure that these factors should be continually monitored with contingency plans in place.

#### 5.6. The Distributor Environment

5.7. Wholesaler, distributors and various logistics intermediaries are relied upon to ensure products and passengers arrive at their final destination. To the end user, it may seem that distribution and transport routes are relatively fixed due to changes in the network occurring over a long period of time. This accumulative effect can have a detrimental effect as existing channels may deteriorate over time if they are not utilised. For example, within the NSR, direct links to continental Europe from South East Scotland have gradually been underused. This has resulted in the unfortunate decline in passenger services between the two areas.

#### 5.8. The Competitive Environment

5.9. With regards to the NSR, marketers must be aware of the potential alternatives to maritime passenger transport. For example, are there cheaper substitutes such as domestic road or air transport? As with all marketing plans, it is essential that a marketing group understand the nature of competitive industries. Identifying competitors and understanding its own benefits will strengthen the overall marketing mix.

#### 5.10. The Wider Macro-Environment

5.11. Also known as '**PEST**' factors, this refers to external factors out with the everyday activities of a business or organisation. These can easily be applied to the NSR.

- Political

- Economic
- Social (and cultural)
- Technological

5.12. Political Factors

5.13. Political and legal changes or new regulations. At the time of writing, these include:

5.14. **The Scottish Independence Referendum** - The Scottish Parliament is to hold an Independence Referendum on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. Consequences of a Scottish 'Yes' vote are a hot topic within the Country. As one would expect, there have been multiple discussions regarding Scotland's EU membership and its currency. Alistair Darling, head of the 'Better Together' campaign, has been quoted in the UK press that "voters in the rest of the UK could choose not to be in a currency union with Scotland". The pro-independence 'Yes Scotland' group maintain that a currency union would be mutually beneficial, as Scotland's exports, including North Sea oil, will have a direct impact for trade within the NSR.

5.15. **The Sulphur Directive** - The European Commission states that – Directive 1999/32/EC regulates sulphur emissions from ships by limiting the maximum sulphur content of marine fuel. This Directive was amended by Directive 2005/33/EC that designated the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the English Channel as sulphur emission control areas (SECAs) and limited the maximum sulphur content of the fuels used by ships operating in these sea areas to 1.5%. This fuel standard applies also to passenger ships operating on regular service outside SECAs. However, already at the time of adoption the SECA fuel standard was widely recognised as being insufficient to address observed environmental impacts from shipping.

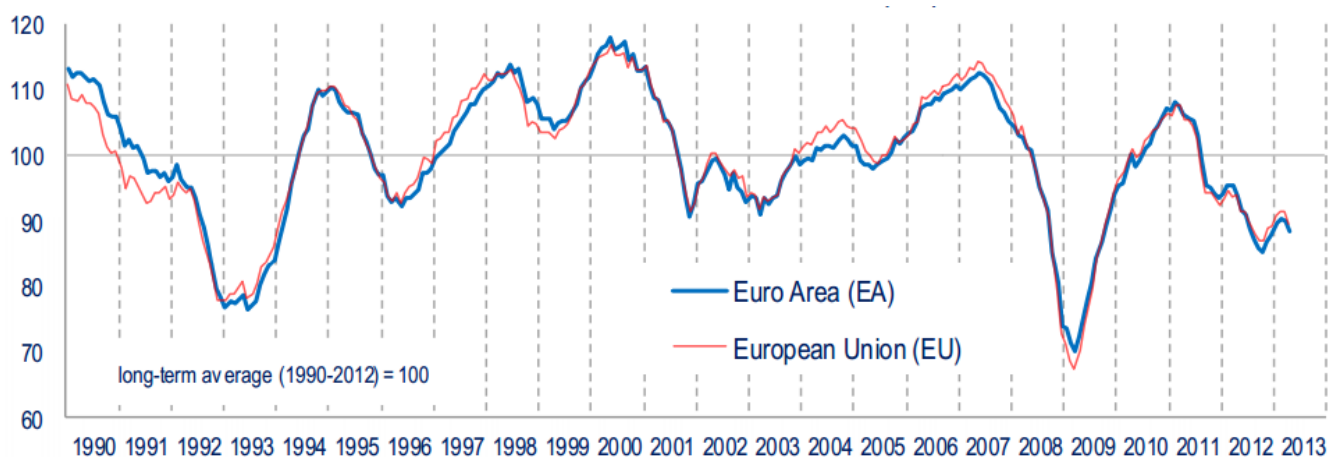
## 5.16. Economic Factors

5.17. Interest rates, exchange rates, fuel prices and consumer confidence.

At the time of writing, consideration must be made to:

5.18. **UK North Sea Oil Taxation** - As North Sea Oil extraction progresses into deeper waters, oils become much more difficult to extract. This results in a far greater cost for oil firms. As the oil from cheaper fields runs out, the UK Government has progressively extended a system of tax allowances to offset the extra costs.

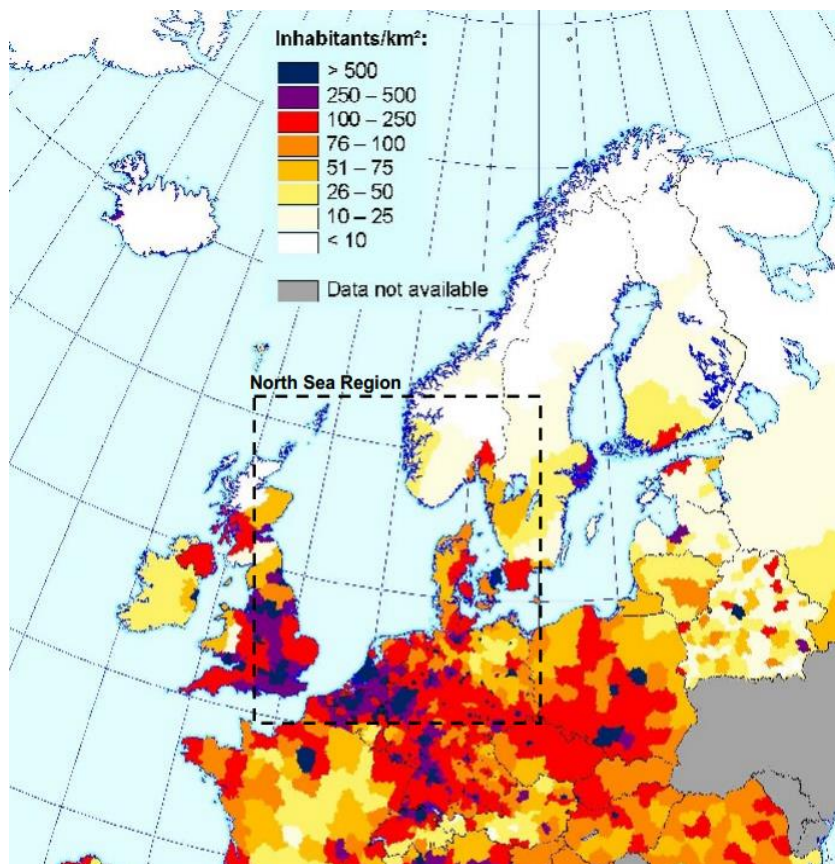
5.19. **European Consumer Confidence** - This is demonstrated in the graph below: The Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI). In Europe, the ESI's decline was broad-based across all business sectors, with services witnessing the sharpest drop, while consumer confidence went up. Among the five largest euro area economies, economic sentiment worsened significantly in Germany (-2.3), France (-2.0) and Italy (-1.9), while remaining broadly stable in the Netherlands (+0.2) and improving in Spain (+0.9). (Source: European Commission Services)



## 5.20. Social Factors

5.21. Changing attitudes and lifestyles, and the ageing population. The NSR has a very diverse and complex demographic with some of the most sparse and most densely populated areas in the EU. Most of its constituent regions are undergoing a small but steady increase in their population. This has a knock on effect on the transport system, putting extra pressure on an already highly saturated market.

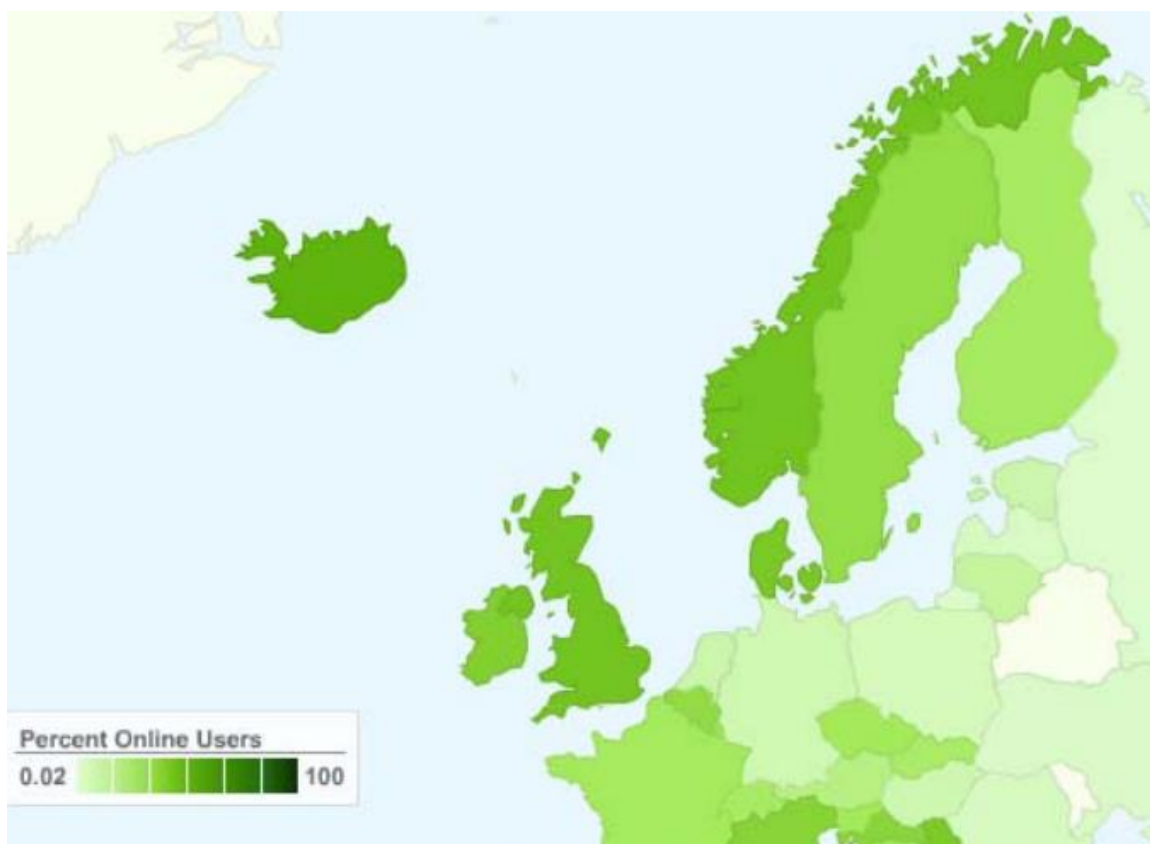
Population density (inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>) (2000)



Source: [www.nordregio.se](http://www.nordregio.se)

## 5.22. Technological

5.23. Technological factors such as new materials and growing use of the internet, social media and smart phones. More and more businesses are turning to social media, and it is easy to see why. People are becoming increasingly comfortable using social media and smart phone technology. Facebook statistics show where it is most used in the NSR



Percentages of members, taken from <http://www.checkfacebook.com/>

## 5.24. **SWOT Analysis**

5.25. From the situational analysis an organisation should understand where they sit in terms of the market place. Are they in a niche situation? Or are they competing with others. Building on from the previous analysis results, a

SWOT analysis should be conducted. This will outline the organisations: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to their operations or product. For example:

5.26. Strengths

5.27. Strengths derive from the internal properties of the organisation or operator. What is the company able to offer, and what does it do best or even better than its competitors? For new services within the NSR, established operators can build on their already established brands and improve their overall corporate and social image.

5.28. Weaknesses

5.29. Weaknesses are considered as internal issues within an organisation. These are issues that can affect the performance of the business that are still within the control of the organisation. If we were to consider the NSR as an organisation, its main weaknesses would be a lack of investment in the region, (out with the North Sea Oil Industry). Over time this has resulted in some service reduction, and in some instances more remote NSR communities have become increasingly isolated. iTransfer aims to tackle the under utilisation of estuaries and ports. However, this task is becoming increasingly difficult due to a stagnant Euro Zone economy and limited consumer confidence.

5.30. Opportunities

5.31. Opportunities are thought of as external factors to the organisation in question. The NSR includes a number of strong economies and is one of the most successful regions in Europe. The NSR has great potential for growth in Europe and large opportunities exist in the NSR which have to be utilised.

The North Sea Region offers enormous variety in terms of history, culture, landscapes and cuisine – there is huge potential for growing the tourism and cruising sector based in the North Sea. The NSR has considerable resources and possibilities for innovation. Integration and networks between the north and south of the NSR are relatively underdeveloped. There is a great deal of opportunity as well as a potential for developing solutions which can be transferred to the rest of the EU. Making the most of these opportunities also requires increased cooperation, joint planning and investment, and developing crucial links.

#### 5.32. Threats

5.33. Threats are also considered as external factors to the organisation. For example, despite the increasing efficiency of maritime transport, problems can still occur. Accidents, infrastructure failure, weather, labor disputes and many other issues can create problems. It is therefore sensible to have various contingencies available, so that, for example, in the event of weather disruption or industry dispute, alternative methods of delivery are available. A spread of contingencies provides the greatest resilience and reduces exposure to risk.

## 6. Marketing Objectives

### 6.1. Measurable Results

6.2. When setting marketing objectives it is very important to ensure that these objectives are SMART; specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time specific. This approach allows an organisation to manage their marketing activities and more importantly be able to determine which have been successful.

- **Specific** – set out objectives in a way that is precise about what you are hoping to achieve
- **Measurable** – Can the outputs be measured? How do you check your levels of success?
- **Achievable** - Are these objectives achievable? Be realistic in your assumptions.
- **Realistic** - Ensure sufficient resources are available to achieve the objectives set.
- **Time specific** - When are these objectives to be achieved?

### 6.3. Forecast Market Potential

6.4. To understand future potential, marketers will analyse the organisations forecast potential. A market forecast is an integral part of market analysis. It takes into consideration future trends, numbers and client characteristics with a targeted market. Some also break this down into consumer segments, groups of consumers who have similar buying habits and lifestyles.

6.5. However, forecasting becomes much more difficult when trying to forecast new services and the potential for these new products. Many different forecast methods and models exist for calculating market potential. The type of product will determine which method shall be used. Whether forecasting market demand or market potential, using clean, accurate and relevant data is essential.

## 7. Generate Marketing Strategies

7.1. From the situational analysis and forecast research earlier in the process, marketing strategies can now be generated. Your analysis should have identified your target market, opportunities and what communications

channels to reach them on. How you are going to utilize and promote the organisations brand and services.

## 8. Assumptions and Contingency planning

8.1. From the situational analysis it may be foreseen that the marketing plan may have to be changed, depending on circumstances. Alternatives should be made available to avoid or reduce negative impacts to the organisation. Although there is no set rule as to the amount a company should set aside for contingency, it is normally recommend that 5% to 10% of the marketing fund is allocated. Depending on individual circumstances, an unexpected launch from another competitor may affect the current campaign and an alternative may need to be hastily pulled together.

## 9. Marketing Mix Programmes

### 9.1. Getting the Correct Marketing Mix

9.2. A 'Marketing Mix' is a combination of several elements of a marketing plan. This includes the four marketing mix elements, which are known as "the four P's". These are; product, price, place and promotion. By coordinating these basic elements to suit their needs, organisations are able to formulate a marketing strategy for the products or services that they offer.



Marketing Mix table taken from [www.marketingplan.net](http://www.marketingplan.net)

### 9.3. Product

9.4. This is an item or service that satisfies customers' needs. In the case of the NSR, products can be broken into two categories, tangible and intangible products. Tangible products are items that can be held by consumer, like food or retail items. Intangible products are service based like, tourism or logistics.

### 9.5. Price

9.6. Quite simply the price a customer pays for the product. This also decides how much profit a company will make. This will have an impact on any marketing strategy and will determine demand. Any marketing strategy will have to understand what customers are willing to pay for a product and what

will complement the overall marketing mix. Perceived value of a product (tangible or intangible) and competition will have to be taken into consideration if the NSR is to thrive.

#### 9.7. Promotion

9.8. These are the communication channels and methods that a marketer will need to use, for example: Public relations, advertising (both above and below the line\*), direct selling and sales promotion. \*Above-the-line advertising: Paid for media e.g. TV, radio, internet and print advertising. Below-the-line advertising: Public relations, reviews, point-of-sale items and editorial columns.

#### 9.9. Place

9.10. This refers to providing a product at a place that is convenient to the consumer. Within the iTransfer project new ferry services could offer new access for passengers and improved interconnectivity within cities, islands or inland destinations by river. The NSR and its resources make an important contribution to jobs and growth in the countries surrounding it. The region provides consumables such as food and energy; it also provides vital transport links. Especially to those in island communities and to areas that attract high levels of tourism. The iTransfer project acknowledges that the NSR and its resources must be utilised responsibly. This will ensure that all activities are undertaken in a way that will achieve sustainable economic growth for the economy and the communities linked by the North Sea.

9.11. Over time, further items have been added to marketing mixes, these have included additional elements such as: People, process and physical evidence. By adding these considerations, marketers have been able to create a more in depth marketing mix.

- **People** - those who may consume the product. This has element been used to show a targeted demographic within the population and what communications channels they would respond to. It can also refer to employees within an organisation.
- **Processes** – a chain of defined systems that will enable an organisation to offer a consistent service that suits its customers.
- **Physical evidence** - the customer-facing appearance of a service that can affect how consumers see business.

9.12. Some organisations prefer to use only the four original elements in their marketing mix while others may prefer to look at additional elements. This really depends on the type of organisation and their goals, which determine the elements of the marketing mix and its complexity. In the case of marketing the NSR, the number and scope of targeted groups is so extensive that various mixes may be required for each individual target group. For a wider overarching framework for marketing the NSR, it is recommended that a broader marketing mix be used.

## 10. Budget and Agreeing Timescales

10.1. Budgets obviously depend on the resources available to the organisation in question. Plans and objectives set out by the marketing plan are generally assessed by measurable results. Marketing strategies are commonly developed as multi-year plans, with an agreed tactical outline detailing specific actions to be accomplished in the current year. Agreed timings set by the plan will vary by company size, by industry, and region.

Once this has been fully approved by the organisation, the implementation stage can begin.

## 11. Measure, Control and Feedback

- 11.1. How the campaign is to be measured should be defined by your SMART marketing objectives. This should be conducted at set intervals to understand the marketing plans effectiveness should circumstances change. If the plan is not meeting its interim goals, this will give the organisation an indication that it must change its tactics accordingly. This is where the feedback loop within the strategic marketing planning process fits in.

## 12. **Maid of the Forth Case Study**



### 12.1. **Background**

12.2. Maid of the Forth is a family run business and was established in 1982. They run daily trips to Inchcolm Island departing from the Hawes Pier in South Queensferry on the Firth of the Forth. There are also evening cruises on offer with live music.

12.3. The Maid of the Forth also has close ties with the North Berwick Sea Bird Centre and the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds). This has been key in promoting their sea life sightseeing tours to both enthusiasts and general visitors. The 'Seafari' is one of their main offerings from the North Berwick Seabird Centre.

12.4. New investment in East Lothian will help improve the low tide landing at the North Berwick harbour, opening potential for improved ferry services. As part of the iTransfer Project, Maid of the Forth will also pilot emissions reducing technology including a trial of biodiesel mixing and fuel efficiency measures.

### 12.5. **Situation Analysis**

12.6. Maid of the Forth trips run daily from South Queens Ferry and North Berwick on the Firth of the Forth in the South East of Scotland. The Firth of Forth is the estuary of Scotland's River Forth, where it flows into the North Sea, between Fife to the north, and West Lothian, the City of Edinburgh and East Lothian to the south.

12.7. Maid of the Forth's main competitor is Forth Boat Tours who operates from the same locations in North Berwick and Hawes Pier at South

Queensferry. They also offer similar services to Maid of the Forth, including live music tours and private party hire. Forth Tours claim to be the cheapest tours from North Berwick Harbour. However, they operate on a first come first serve basis and do not offer an online booking system.

12.8. North Berwick is a seaside town in East Lothian, and is situated on the south shore of the Firth of Forth, approximately 25 miles east north east of Edinburgh. Its sandy bays and links to nearby Golf courses make this a popular tourist destination.

12.9. The Bass Rock, situated north of North Berwick, is another popular tourist attraction for the area. It is home to one of Britain's largest colonies of the North Atlantic Gannet. The colony is now estimated at 150,000 birds, which return each year to breed.



12.10. The Maid of the Forth's menu of current services is as follows:

12.11. Sight Seeing Tours

12.12. 90 minute boat tours, taking in sights of the Forth Bridges and Inchcolm Island. Additional option to visit Inchcolm Island on the longer sailings.

12.13. Jazz and Folk Cruises

12.14. Three hour evening cruises with live music. These have been running for over 25 years and still prove to be very popular

12.15. Private Charter

12.16. One of the vessels is available for private charter. This is sold mainly for private party functions, club outings and corporate events.

12.17. Seafari Cruise

12.18. 1 hour Bass Rock boat trip from North Berwick. The new 57-seat, custom-built catamaran leaves North Berwick Harbour and heads out to Craighleith, home to the Centre's SOS Puffin project, and then out to the world-famous Bass Rock.



### 13. Seafari May – Isle of May Free Range Trip (Case Study Focus)

13.1. A four hour RIB trip passing the Bass Rock to this National Nature Reserve departing from North Berwick harbour.

13.2. Bass Rock Landing from North Berwick and Dunbar

13.3. Depart from North Berwick or Dunbar and head to the Bass Rock, the largest single island gannet colony in the world (over 150,000 gannets). Passengers have at least three hours on the Rock and the full trip takes around five and a half hours.

13.4. Isle of May Photographic trip

13.5. The Isle of May is a National Nature Reserve owned and managed by Scottish Natural Heritage, home to the oldest Scottish bird observatory, and for over 30 years the island has been an internationally important seabird research station. The island is home to the largest east coast puffin colony in Britain and during breeding season the sheer cliffs and stacks are alive with wide range of seabirds including: guillemot, razorbill and kittiwakes. This is marketed as an excellent opportunity for photographers.

13.6. However, in this instance the case study will mainly focus on the new catamaran service from North Berwick. As part of a standard Marketing Plan, further information would be supplied in this section regarding sales and segmentation of the market. However, due to confidentiality and commercial sensitivity, this type of detailed information will not be included within this case study.

## 14. PEST Analysis

<p><b>POLITICAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The harbour at North Berwick is currently owned by East Lothian Council and run by the Berwick Harbour Trust Association</li> <li>• East Lothian Council is part of SEStran and has elected Councillor Members on the SEStran Board. Strong Councillor support has been demonstrated at previous Board meetings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ECONOMICAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient yet limited staff resource</li> <li>• Economic recovery for the UK has been slow to improve</li> <li>• There has been significant investment into a new custom built high speed catamaran, with sailings from North Berwick to the Bass Rock.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOCIAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an active community and Trust Association at the harbour</li> <li>• Active social media presence</li> <li>• Sea Bird Centre and RSPB links</li> <li>• Active conservation movement surrounding Sea Birds, especially with the popularity of the Gannet population on the Bass Rock</li> <li>• Conservationists consider the Bass Rock as a prime wildlife habitat. Described by Sir David Attenborough as “one of the wildlife wonders of the World”</li> </ul>	<p><b>TECHNOLOGICAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 Vessels of varying size and speed</li> <li>• North Berwick Harbour currently supports half a dozen fishing commercial boats.</li> <li>• Facebook Page (around 1090 followers)</li> <li>• Twitter page (around 200 followers)</li> <li>• Deals on Groupon have been made</li> <li>• Online payment and booking system</li> <li>• Association with the Seabird Centre’s 2013 Certificate of Excellence from Tripadvisor.com</li> </ul>

## 15. SWOT Analysis

<p><b>STRENGTHS (Internal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well established company</li> <li>• Family owned</li> <li>• Booking system established</li> <li>• Active social media presence</li> <li>• Variety of vessels</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES (Internal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SME organisation with efficient but limited resources</li> <li>• Due to commercial sensitivity further no further items will be added here. These would be added at the discretion of the operator in question.</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES (External)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sea Bird Centre and RSPB link</li> <li>• Potential upgrade of the Harbour for services in North Berwick</li> <li>• Improving awareness of the service</li> <li>• The rise of the 'Staycation' due to the economic downturn</li> <li>• Opportunity to survey existing passengers on how they heard about the services provided and how satisfied they are with them.</li> <li>• Location - Close proximity to Edinburgh and Transport Links. 15 minute walk from North Berwick train station.</li> <li>• Association with the Seabird Centre's 2013 Certificate of Excellence from Tripadvisor.com</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS (External)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar services available on the Forth e.g. The Forth Boat Tours</li> <li>• Operating from both Hawes Pier in South Queensferry and North Berwick. The Forth Belle offers a similar service provision to the Maid of the Forth.</li> <li>• Severe weather conditions and tidal</li> <li>• Damage to North Berwick Harbour</li> <li>• Similar services offered by an alternative operator</li> </ul>

## 16. Marketing Objective Examples

16.1. To be added at the discretion of the operator. However, these could include:

- Identify, understand and target markets more efficiently – Conduct customer surveys on existing services. With a target of XX visitors completing the survey by (insert date).
- Raise awareness and profile of new catamaran service. – Increase passenger numbers by X% by (insert date).
- Develop and improve services/products – From passenger surveys, monitor satisfaction levels. With a target to improve customer satisfaction by X% by (insert date).
- Increase social media followers by X% by (insert date).

## 17. Forecast Market Potential

17.1. This should be apparent through a customer questionnaire to determine when, why and how people decide to travel to North Berwick. A variety of alternative forecast models should be researched. Collaborative working with the Seabird Centre and Tourist board should help to identify these methods. Feedback can also be collected from Tripadvisor.co.uk and other online, where visitors have already left detailed comments regarding service and the likelihood of recommendations / return visits.

## 18. Generate Marketing Strategies

18.1. From the SWOT analysis, it is apparent that the new service should take advantage of the increase in 'Staycations' and North Berwick's close

proximity to Edinburgh. Identifying and promoting along the transport links that are available to customers would be an ideal place to begin. There is a direct and frequent rail service from Edinburgh. It's a scenic 30 minute journey through countryside and coastline (another selling point to visitors), and the Seabird Centre is only a 15 minute walk from North Berwick train station.

18.2. Building on the already well-established brand will work to the Maid of the Forth's advantage. The company, throughout its marketing activities, must maintain the reputation of its brand. Social media can assist in this and should be viewed as an important marketing tool for Maid of the Forth. For example, Twitter can provide real-time information regarding sailings and events. Maid of the Forth can build capacity in this area by working in partnership with other organisations that use social media in the area. Ideally focusing on links with the RSPB and the North Berwick Seabird Centre. By building on social media activity, this can develop customer interaction. Maid of the Forth could promote a dedicated 'hashtag' (#) for everyone tweeting about their experiences. Hashtags provide a means of grouping such messages, since anyone can search for the hashtag and get the set of messages that contain it. For example #seafari or #bassrock could be placed on promotional material both on and offline. With the recent addition of hashtags to Facebook, this should be linked to both social media accounts.

18.3. Links with local events should be considered. The Maid of the Forth already participates in the Fringe by the Sea event in early August. The North Berwick events diary should be a guide to additional promotional activities.

## 19. Assumptions and Contingency plans

19.1. Here are some of the top risks to consider during the marketing campaign:

- Negative feedback from passengers (both on and offline)
- Technical Faults to booking systems/ back office/ or vessels
- Severe weather
- Environmental threats. Especially those effecting local sea life.
- Competitor services

19.2. A contingency budget covers unexpected costs that may not have been anticipated. There are many things that may be outside of control, such as market factors and buyer demand. For example, are supplier costs likely to change over the next 12 months? These are not necessarily things that can be accurately predicted.

19.3. Although there is no set rule as to the amount a company should set aside for contingency, it is normally recommend that 5% to 10% of the marketing fund is set aside. Depending on individual circumstances, an unexpected launch from another competitor may affect the current campaign and an alternative may need to be hastily pulled together.

## 20. Marketing Mix

<p><b>Product (s)</b></p> <p><u>Tangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail items such as refreshments and souvenirs</li> </ul> <p><u>Intangible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduled Sailings</li> <li>• Private hire</li> <li>• Specialised events and tours</li> </ul>	<p><b>Place</b></p> <p>This has already been confirmed. As mentioned previously, the harbours close proximity to transport links is extremely advantageous. In addition to this It must be considered how services are pre-booked. For example, ensuring that the online booking system is functional or that telephones are answered promptly and efficiently.</p>
<p><b>Price</b></p> <p>Costs of individual services and items will need to be assessed by the company to ensure that it is suitable for its level within the market place. No matter how good a product is, many consumers will only pay a certain amount. Similarly, if the cost of the service is too low, the integrity of the Maid of the Forth Brand could be compromised. If this was the case, some customers could consider the service not to be of a high standard. The term 'you get what you pay for' is a good example of customer perception.</p>	<p><b>Promotion</b></p> <p><u>'Above the line' promotion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid for advertising such as:</li> <li>• Promotional leaflet distribution</li> <li>• Online advertising</li> <li>• Sponsorship of local events</li> </ul> <p><u>'Below the line' promotion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Editorial both on and offline</li> <li>• Public relations activities such as press releases of new services</li> <li>• Launch/ public open days</li> <li>• Learning tours for local schools</li> </ul> <p>All elements of the promotion must be well presented to enhance the already well-established Maid of the Forth Brand</p>

## 21. Budget including staffing

- 21.1. Budgets, staffing and timescales would have to be decided at the discretion of the organisation.

## 22. Timescales

- 22.1. In this instance, it could be recommended that the preparation of this marketing plan take 6 months before the open of the service season. Incremental checkpoint stages before the launch of the season should be in place.

## 23. Implementation, Measure and Control

- 23.1. How the campaign is to be measured should be defined by your SMART marketing objectives. The type of suggested Marketing objectives have been outlined under the 'Marketing Objective Examples' heading.

- Identify, understand and target markets more efficiently – Conduct customer surveys on existing services. With a target of XX visitors completing the survey by (insert date).
- Raise awareness and profile of new catamaran service. – Increase passenger numbers by X% by (insert date).
- Develop and improve services/products – From passenger surveys, monitor satisfaction levels. With a target to improve customer satisfaction by X% by (insert date).
- Increase social media followers by X% by (insert date).

- 23.2. As mentioned under the 'Timescales' heading, this should be conducted at set intervals to understand the marketing plans effectiveness

should circumstances change. If the plan is not meeting its interim goals, this will give the Maid of the Forth an indication that it must change its tactics accordingly. That is where the feedback loop within the strategic marketing planning process fits in.

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