

NEW ZEALAND

BAY

OF PLENTY

TĀPOITE MOANANUIĀ TOI  
/ TOURISM BAY OF PLENTY

CONNECT TO RESIDENTS PLAN

“OUR RESIDENTS  
DO NOT LIVE IN  
OUR WORKPLACE.  
WE WORK IN  
THEIR HOMES.”

POPULAR INTERNET MEME, SOURCE UNKNOWN

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#### Bay of Plenty geography

For the purposes of this plan, we define the Bay of Plenty as the territories of Tauranga City, Western Bay of Plenty District and Whakatāne District, including from Waihi Beach to Ōhope Beach, and as far inland as the Kaimai Range, the Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tāne Conservation Park and part of Te Urewera. It excludes the town of Rotorua.

# SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi / Tourism Bay of Plenty (TBOP) serves local communities to achieve our mutual vision of becoming a sustainable, restorative and inclusive place. Our organisation regularly gives people opportunities to participate in the decisions and projects that shape the Bay of Plenty's environment, culture and society. Open collaboration has led to the creation of the region's destination development plan. To execute that plan, we once again ask for your participation.

This document is a framework that shows how TBOP will continue to consult with, engage and activate local communities. It defines community engagement and explains how we talk with — and listen to — residents. It describes how we will give them an active role in developing, improving and communicating the travel experiences available in the Bay of Plenty.

This plan also analyses current resident sentiment toward tourism and describes the engagement that went into the destination development plan. Finally, it outlines the guiding principles and actions to use when working with residents, illustrating those with some relevant case studies and benchmarks.

TBOP works to ensure that everyone has a say in the outcome. The Bay of Plenty is made up of diverse communities with different lifestyles, interests and needs. Stakeholders of this plan include city councils, cultural institutions and groups, community organisations and businesses both large and small. When planning and developing projects, TBOP consistently uses co-creation techniques and modern communication channels to ensure all these voices are heard. In this way, these voices accurately and effectively represent the community's changing values and needs.



# RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

## DEFINING RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Resident engagement lets people participate in decisions that affect their lives. It leads to destination development that balances the quality of the visitor experience with the local quality of life. Both elements are essential for the Bay of Plenty to thrive.

Engagement supports an open approach to managing risk. It provides a strong foundation for building trust with our community and it helps people understand decisions made in the development process.

Effective community engagement supports Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/ Tourism Bay of Plenty's overarching destination development plan, *Te Hā Tāpoi — The Love of Tourism*. The result will be sustained collaboration, partnerships and new ways of involving and empowering our community under this plan.

## RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Resident engagement that guides tourism development can involve a variety of activities. This continuum shows one way to understand the different types of engagement with the community, from **informing** (reflecting a low level of engagement) through **active participation** (reflecting a high level of engagement).

**Informing** takes place when a decision has already been made or when action is required. In those cases, Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/ Tourism Bay of Plenty ensures that those affected are aware of the facts.

**Consulting** takes place when a project requires some input, feedback or advice before a decision can be made.

**Active participation** takes place when Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/ Tourism Bay of Plenty collaborates with specific stakeholder groups or communities to choose and develop solutions.

All engagement processes need to **inform** and will have some level of **consultation**. However, this document focuses on the how and what of **active participation**.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/ Tourism Bay of Plenty's approach to community engagement is guided by the following principles:

**Integrity:** Engagement is transparent. It is clear in scope and purpose.

**Inclusiveness:** Engagement is accessible and balanced, capturing a full range of values and perspectives.

**Dialogue:** Engagement promotes dialogue and encourages genuine discussion. It is supported by timely and accurate information, offering a space to weigh options and develop a common understanding.

**Influence:** Engagement is reflected in outcomes. Members of the community are able to see and understand the impact of their involvement.



## ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

This approach to community engagement aims at these three objectives:

### KPIs

# 1

## PROCESS

Provide enough opportunities for our residents and communities to actively take part in the roll-out of *Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi*/Tourism Bay of Plenty's destination development plan toward outcomes that benefit our community.

# 2

## APPROPRIATENESS

Provide a strong foundation for understanding and working with our communities while promoting a shared responsibility for decisions and actions.

# 3

## AWARENESS

Develop sustained collaboration, partnerships and new ways to involve and empower the community to achieve *Tāpoi te Moana ā Toi*.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

To find out whether engagement activities were successful, we assess the community's experience and explore members' expectations for future engagement.

### METRICS

#number of actions initiated by Tourism Bay of Plenty

#number of residents actively participating

#number of people reached by actions

# RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT READINESS IN THE BAY OF PLENTY

Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty and Destination Think! engaged the local community with interviews and surveys. The results reveal resident sentiments toward tourism, the destination marketing organisation and the way that residents have been engaged up to this time.

## INTERVIEWS

These resident opinions are representative of overall sentiment from the interviews.

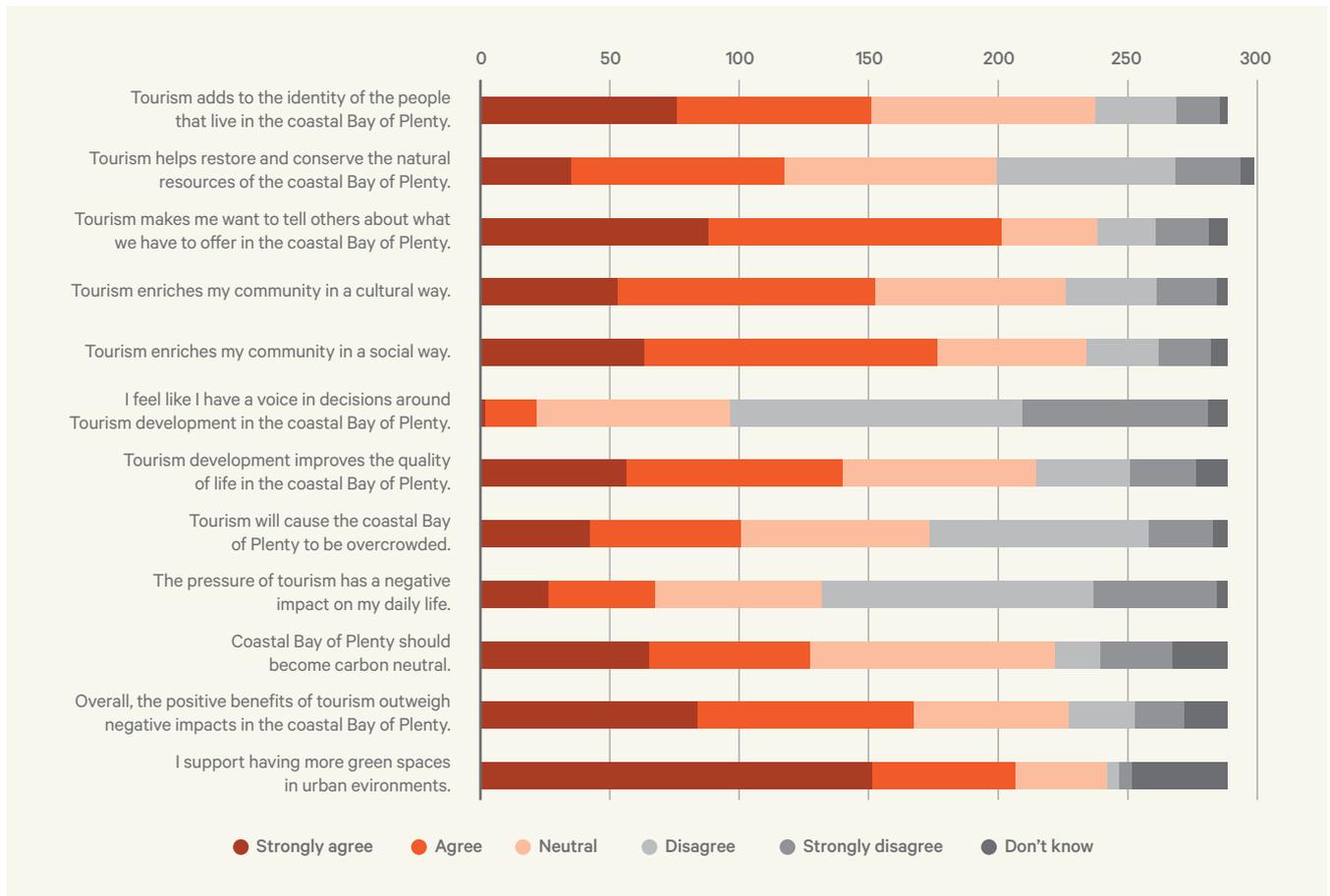
- **Tourism performance in the Bay of Plenty:**  
Fair.  
*"From average to good"*
- **Improvement needed:**  
Make this region more distinctive.  
*"Need to get people to understand that it's here and they can experience [it]"*
- **Perceptions of Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi / Tourism Bay of Plenty:**  
Promotion.  
*"I know they have a lot to do with attracting the international market. But personally, I don't know much about TBOP."*
- **Positive sentiment toward tourism:**  
Financial value.  
*"Financial benefit for tourism operators"*
- **Negative sentiment toward tourism:**  
Some residents push back.  
*"When you bring more people to the area it adds pressure."  
"Environmental impact – don't want to overrun walking tracks and have burden"*
- **Does the good outweigh the bad?:**  
Yes, definitely.  
*"It does when managed well and visitors respect [the place]."*
- **Do we need to build more capacity for tourism?:**  
It depends.  
*"Depends on what we are building and the type of visitors it would attract."*
- **The ideal visitor for the Bay of Plenty:**  
Respectful.  
*"Visitors that tend to have higher income are well aligned with the destination... don't want to overrun walking tracks"*
- **Can tourism preserve and restore the Bay of Plenty?:**  
Yes, definitely.  
*"Yes. With every tourism dollar spent it can be reinvested in improving or maintaining the destination. If TBOP and other organizations work together this can be achieved."*
- **Do you feel like you have a voice in TBOP decisions?:**  
Some say yes; others, no.  
*"Yep. Proactive at being involved and that is welcomed."  
"No. Hope that further on down the track when more development is underway that we will have a say and a part."*
- **Is the Bay of Plenty in danger of being overcrowded?:**  
Some say yes; others, no.  
*"Think it's already overcrowded with residents. If you grow too much it will be negative on the experience."  
"No. Plenty of room, very undeveloped at the moment."*
- **Should the Bay of Plenty be carbon neutral?:**  
Yes.  
*"I have my business audited to review how they are doing to become carbon neutral."  
"Yes. Really passionate about environment and making a difference."*

## SURVEY

Bay of Plenty residents shared their opinions on tourism, TBOP and resident engagement through an online survey in August 2019.

In total, 460 residents responded to the survey. This exceeded the quota of 384 responses. The data assumes a normal distribution of 50%, a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. Only 6.5% of the survey participants work in tourism, while 43.3% have little or no interaction with visitors.

## INSIGHTS



**Insight 1:** Bay of Plenty residents continue to strongly support tourism.

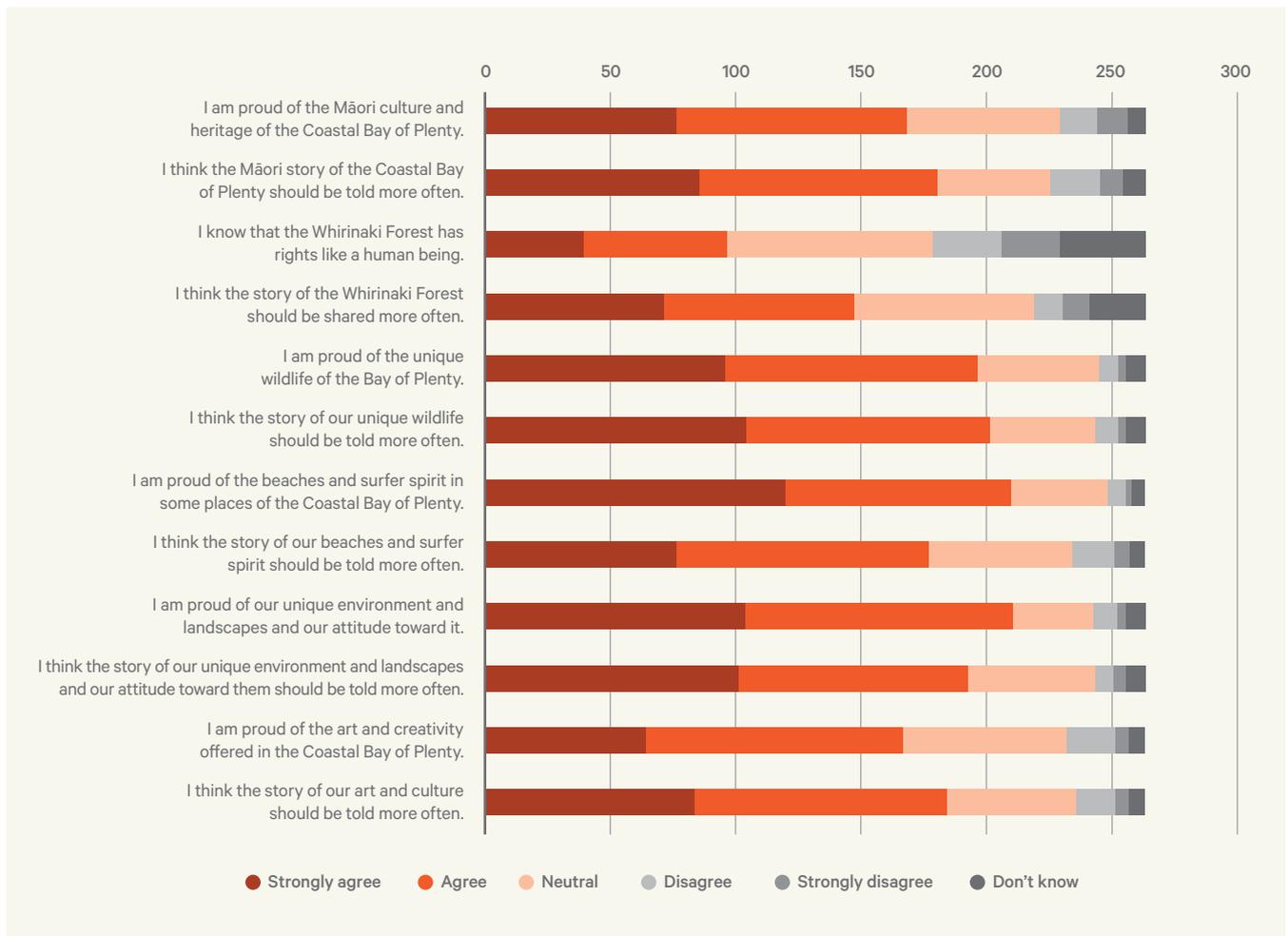
**Insight 2:** There is a growing concern about visitor pressure, which echoes the trends revealed by the Mood of the Nation survey.

**Insight 3:** Residents feel very connected with the green soul of the Bay of Plenty and with its natural surroundings.

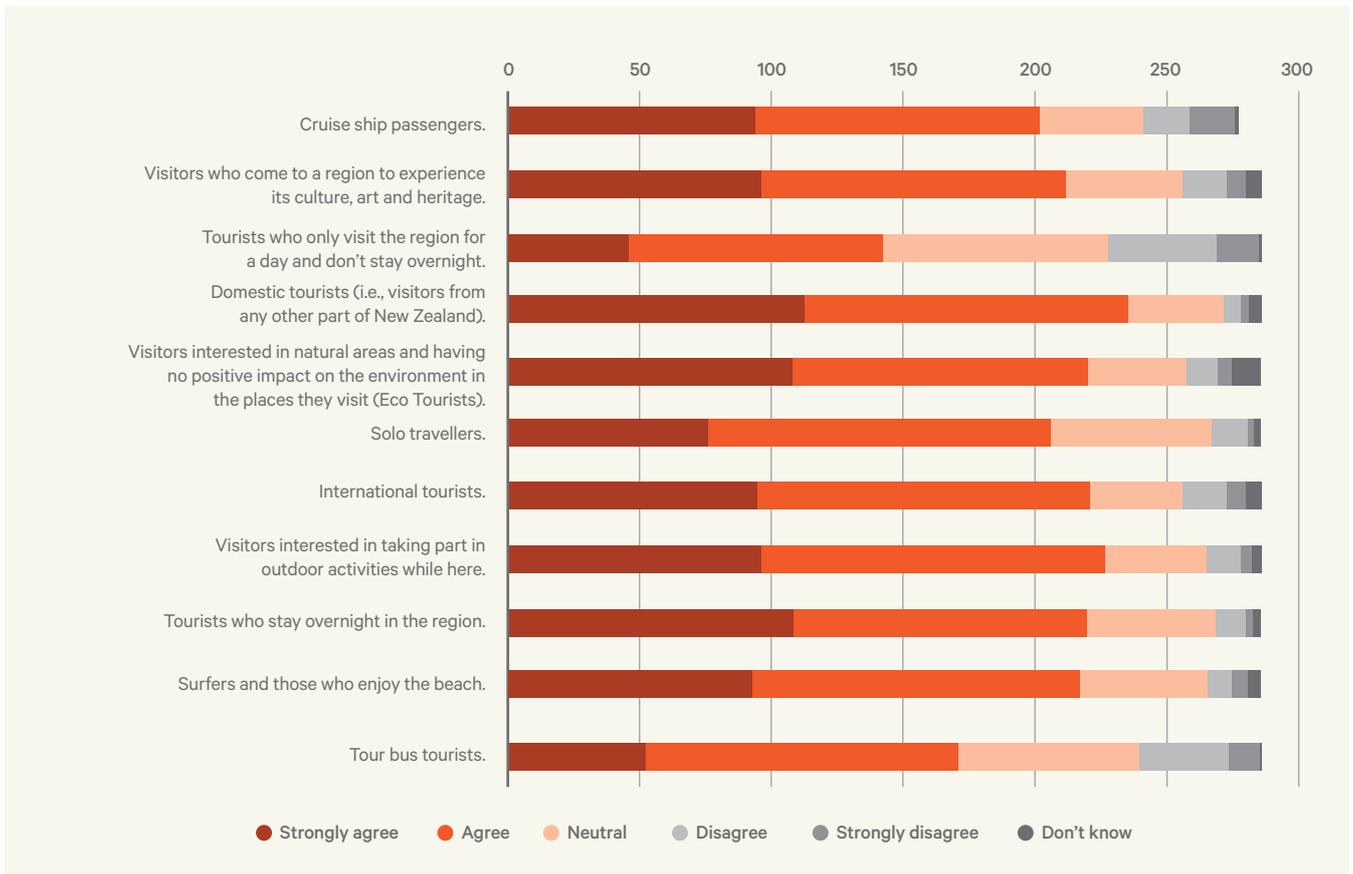
**Insight 4:** An overwhelming majority of residents feel that they have no voice in the decisions about tourism development in the Bay of Plenty.

**Insight 5:** People are proud of this region’s beaches, surfer’s spirit, art and nature, as well as the presence of the Māori and their heritage.

**Insight 6:** People do not know the specific stories that could fuel their pride of place. For example, the Whirinaki Forest is well known in the Māori community but not so well known beyond Whakatāne.



“OVERALL, RESIDENTS STILL SUPPORT TOURISM, BUT RESEARCH SHOWS A GROWING CONCERN ABOUT VISITOR PRESSURE.”



**Insight 7:** Although residents worry about visitor pressure and about preserving the Bay of Plenty’s natural wonders, they do not distinguish between different kinds of tourism. Residents are equally welcoming toward solo travellers, visitors with a heart for nature, cruise ship passengers and tourists travelling by car. Most people don’t see a difference between growth (increasing the number of visitors to provide an economic benefit) and qualitative growth (making sure that more of the right people visit the region to bring an economic and ecological benefit).

### OPEN QUESTIONS

Overall, residents still support tourism, but research shows a growing concern about visitor pressure. These survey responses are representative of that trend:

*“Mass tourism, such as cruise ships, add little to the local economy, as most are taken to Rotorua tourism region for day trips. They spend nothing on local accommodation, and it’s volume, not quality, focused. Tourism BOP needs to stop resting on its laurels of cruise ship passengers and actually grow a real and sustainable tourism market.”*

*“Because access to our natural resources and spaces is significantly affected. Tourism priorities often conflict with maintenance of our way of life in our small rural community. Planning often provides for the ideas of industry over Maori aspirations for development and preservation and puts pressure on our way of life to accommodate the needs of visitors.”*

Statements like this reveal a risk for the Bay of Plenty’s tourism industry. As in many other places around the globe, tourism can become a scapegoat for many negative changes to local life, including traffic jams, longer commutes, fully booked restaurants, litter, seasonal changes, impacts of climate change, degraded infrastructure and urban planning challenges.

## CONCLUSION

### Challenges

- **Demographics:**  
The Bay of Plenty has an aging population that is also changing as new residents arrive from Auckland and beyond New Zealand. It also has a vibrant Māori community.
- **Fragmentation:**  
People do not think holistically about the tourism experience.
- **Green:**  
Bay of Plenty residents are proud of their unique environment.
- **Value of tourism:**  
Residents only see the economic benefits from tourism. They do not recognise the potential social, cultural and environmental benefits, for example.
- **Visitor pressure:**  
Some residents have started to worry about the negative impacts of visitation. However, tourism is not always the cause of destination management challenges.
- **Residents are unaware of Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty's destination management plan.**
- **Residents who have heard of TBOP do not understand what the organisation does.**

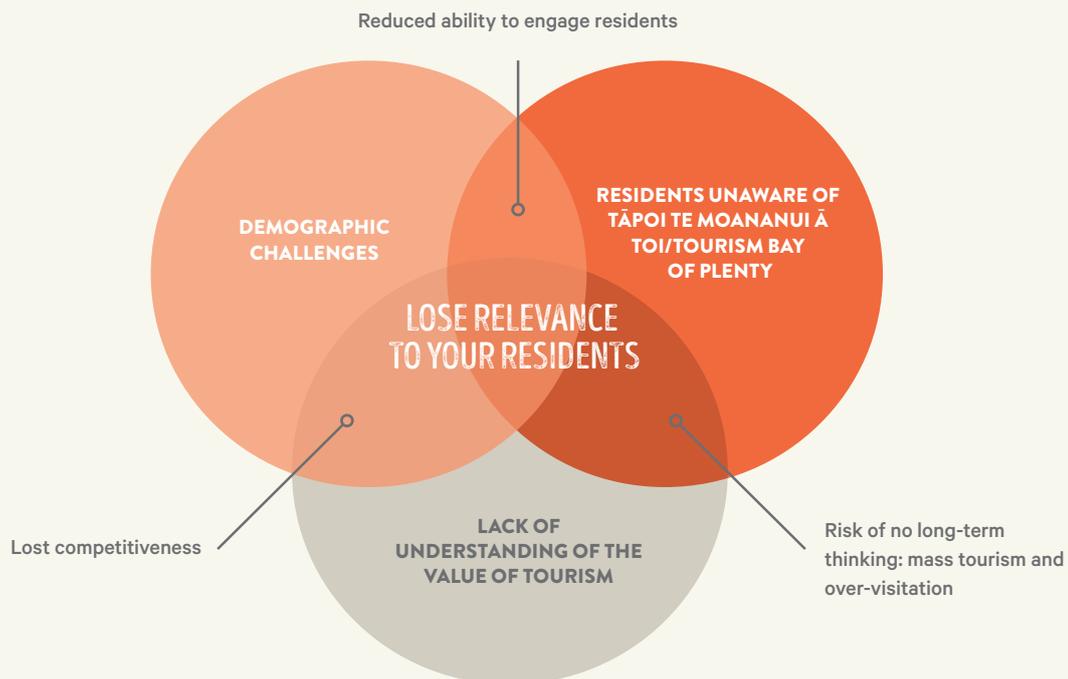
### Solutions

To remain competitive, the Bay of Plenty needs to operate much more cohesively. The local community does not speak with one voice when it comes to telling stories about or promoting this region. This has led to fragmented messaging and reveals a lack of common vision. Overall, awareness of Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty is low as well, which is a barrier to engaging residents. On a positive note, people who already know the organization generally have positive feelings about it.

To connect better with residents, TBOP must focus on working with passionate local groups that can make stories of the Bay of Plenty better known to the people who truly value this place. (This is called vertical resident engagement; see page 14 for a description.)

TBOP also needs to show visitors and residents what the Bay of Plenty stands for by creating a symbolic action. This public, visible act reflects and communicates a distinctive part of the Bay of Plenty's DNA. It requires coordination with local people. Research shows that an effective symbolic action in the Bay of Plenty would include the preservation of the green environment. An overwhelming majority of the local community fully supports this idea.

## RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT = BUSINESS IMPACT



The diagram shows the Bay of Plenty's three primary tourism challenges and the associated risks.

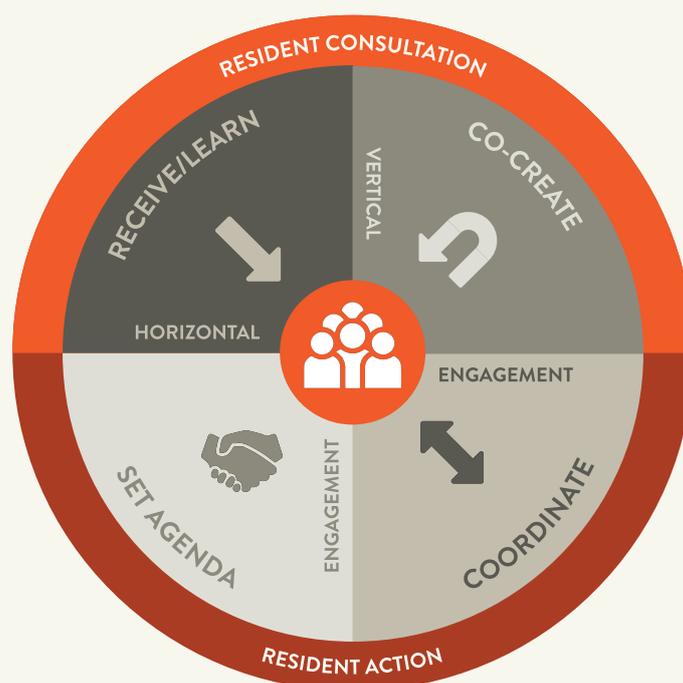
# RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT: ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

People in the Bay of Plenty have shown a desire to co-design, collaborate and take responsibility for creating change. Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty supports these community-led actions by offering a range of opportunities for residents, iwi, community groups, business people, government and industry stakeholders to share their ideas, insights and feedback on the future of tourism for this region.

The engagement framework described earlier — used, for example, during the co-creation of *Te Hā Tāpoi — The Love of Tourism* destination management plan — will be customised for the specific plan, strategy, policy or project being undertaken and for the specific communities and stakeholders who are affected.

Dialogue with local communities is vital, even when it is difficult. Otherwise, aspirations for tourism growth will clash with protecting the social value and history of significant sites. Cooperation educates all parties; as people gradually learn each other's perspectives, stakeholders gain a greater sense of the limits of growth, the responsibilities that fall upon everyone in the destination to protect the Bay of Plenty's natural or cultural heritage and how to sustainably deliver benefits to local people. Across the world, places have developed many successful, sustainable projects that rely on active, local buy-in and support. Local people are the heart of sustainable tourism.

## RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM



## RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT SPECTRUM

The diagram on page 11 shows the spectrum of **resident engagement** that relies on active participation. It is divided into two main categories: **resident consultation** and **resident action**.

**Resident consultation** is the most common approach to engagement. Most often, destination marketing organisations (DMOs), governments or city councils have this approach in mind when they say that they intend to work with their residents.

Consultation has two types. In one type, organisations **receive and learn** from residents in meetings, hearings, surveys, ethnographies and interviews. In the other, people **co-create** strategies, plans, tactics and solutions that allow residents to take ownership of the outcomes.

Fewer organisations enable **resident action**. Too often, residents only receive information from the organisation in charge and have little input about implementing new plans. But the best way to fully engage residents is to go beyond consultation and help people actively participate.

Two types of actions are relevant here: Residents can **set the agenda**, which means that the leading organisation(s) treat residents as equal partners in making a change. Crowdfunding, voluntary contributions, bottom-up volunteer or ambassador programmes, pledges and symbolic actions are all examples of this kind of action.

Organisations and residents can also **coordinate** actions. In tourism, typical coordinated actions include clean ups, preservation of heritage, environmental stewardship and welcoming visitors.

Beyond these four types of engagement, consultations and actions move along two axes. **Vertical engagement** describes work with specific communities or groups of people, while **horizontal engagement** refers to consultations and actions that potentially impact and include every resident.

## RESIDENT CONSULTATION IN THE BAY OF PLENTY

*Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty* has facilitated dialogue and co-ownership that has led to, among other outcomes, the co-creation of the *Te Hā Tāpoi — The Love of Tourism* destination development plan. Consultation activities have been mainly horizontal (including all residents), with some vertical consultations within the tourism industry.

*Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty* has led two types of consultation.

### RECEIVE/LEARN

- Stakeholder meetings, public meetings and roundtables
- Interviews
- A survey with 462 respondents
- Channel research and gap analysis

### CO-CREATE

- Four co-creative workshops
- Three sessions to present research results and gather feedback
- Five presentations of the final co-created plan, including one event exclusively for iwi.

More than 100 residents attended each of these three stages. Consultation will continue as *The Love of Tourism* plan is implemented. This is how *Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty* will continually educate residents about strategy and actions:

- Involve Bay of Plenty residents in further planning.
- Understand and prioritise resident attitudes toward tourism by, for example, measuring sentiment analysis and by using the Tourism Sentiment Index as a benchmark.
- Host feedback sessions for all residents who have collaborated on *The Love of Tourism* destination management plan.
- Provide roadshows, presentations and coaching about the Bay of Plenty's strategy for stakeholders, industry partners and ambassadors.
- Develop and implement the Bay of Plenty's brand storybook to create alignment.
- Train promoters and groups of volunteers for key events.
- Connect with neighbouring regions and areas across the Bay of Plenty to improve the visitor experience in each niche.

## RESIDENT ACTION PLAN

This plan outlines the necessary next steps to make *Te Hā Tāpoi — The Love of Tourism* come true. The goal is to move forward and establish the credibility of this strategy and tourism management through action. The destination management plan identifies some quick (and sometimes low-cost) wins. The region must act on these immediately to show that it is serious about sustainability, regeneration and local socio-economic development.

Here is a list of possible initiatives to foster the full scope of engagement with all residents:

## HORIZONTAL ACTIONS

### SET THE AGENDA

**Choose a symbolic action to articulate a distinct element of the Bay of Plenty's identity.**

Symbolic actions are emblematic of the strategy. They are components of the regional story and also the means of telling that story. They give substance to the messages designed for visitors and residents. Symbolic actions have intrinsic communicative power; examples include innovations, legislation, an attribute that residents share or a coordinated act that expresses the region's Place DNA™. Effective symbolic actions are suggestive, remarkable, memorable, picturesque, newsworthy, topical or poetic.

The Bay of Plenty needs to choose a purpose-based action that expresses the identity of the region (e.g. Sweden's [Call a Random Swede campaign](#), Ireland's [fiscal policy for artists](#) or Iceland's [development projects that are interrupted to protect habitat for elves](#)).

### **Engage all residents in the development of the Coastal Bay of Plenty experience.**

Build the visitor experience by centring the knowledge, values, stories, culture and activities of the entire host community. Local residents are the Bay of Plenty's stars and hosts, not background extras. Research has shown that a destination's front-line staff have a massive effect on the visitor experience; taxi drivers and hotel workers, for example, are vital greeters and local guides. They can do wonders in explaining the distinctiveness of a destination's cultural and/or natural heritage. Do not underestimate their value (e.g., [Rovaniemi, Finland](#)).

### **Help residents tell the Bay of Plenty story.**

Word of mouth has a greater impact on travel decisions than advertising and other traditional forms of tourism promotion. This means that locals have a vital role in increasing the Bay of Plenty's reputation. They do this through the stories they tell and, most importantly, through the experiences they provide to visitors. Local guides shape how this region is perceived, for example. Their impact can increase when they have the necessary training and accreditation to do the job well.

### **Embed consistent sustainability messaging into the destination's communication.**

Think beyond promotion. To reach more visitors in a meaningful way, make sure that on-site guides and interpreters also give a sustainability message. That message needs to be coordinated to avoid fragmentation and confusion. By speaking with a consistent voice, the Bay of Plenty will communicate the distinctiveness, authenticity and sense of place that are the region's key marketing assets.

### **Talk your walk.**

Make sure that this region's words match its actions. Creative ways to do this include providing regular tourism development updates via the local press, online platforms or a podcast. Tell a good story by using Shakespeare's basic formula: Act I: setup; Act II: conflict; Act III: resolution.

### **Walk your talk.**

Make sure that this region's actions match its words. Require the same actions from both residents and visitors — without exception. (e.g., Tasmania bans residents from using plastic bottles but accommodates plastic bottles from cruise ships.)

## **COORDINATE**

### **Develop a "Bay of Plenty Buddies" platform.**

- Create a digital platform through which the Bay of Plenty residents can communicate with tourists, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and business people who visit the region. Locals could use the platform to recommend must-see events and places.
- Co-create the platform with residents through, for example, the following:
  - A public launch
  - Co-creative workshops
  - In-area visits
- The platform allows tourists to explore alternative areas, events, routes and points of interest that are based on the city's themes (e.g., Santander Buddy, [Happy Maps](#)).

### **Provide on-the-ground ambassador programs to welcome and offer assistance to business people.**

For example, [The Welcome People](#) provide direct assistance to visitors in Birmingham and other U.K. destinations.

### **Use technology to bring grassroots volunteerism and tourism together.**

See the [placemaking app STRATA](#), used to coordinate clean up of London's Victoria Business Improvement District, or [Vancouver's PlaceSpeak platform](#).

### **Work with residents to increase the shareability of Bay of Plenty experiences.**

People talk about exceptional travel experiences that meet their needs and match their passions. Here are two ways to increase word of mouth by working with residents:

- Personalise the experience by encouraging locals to meet up with visitors and share recommendations (e.g., [Big Apple Greeter](#)).
- Collaborate with locals to create experiential passports that allow people to check off and collect experiences along the way (e.g., the [Copenhagen Card](#)). Better yet, group related experiences together according to niche interests so people don't miss out (art, architecture, birdwatching, etc.). Deeper experiences lead to greater satisfaction and a stronger reputation for the niche.

### **Set up/expand a promotional ambassador program with residents. For example:**

- Local professionals (e.g., The Hague)
- Education (e.g., Bristol taxicabs)
- Eco-stewardship (e.g., [Michigan Water Stewardship](#))
- Uber tour guides (e.g., destinations that partner with Uber, including Dubai and Beirut; see also [scUber](#) in Queensland)
- Airbnb Experiences (many destinations; e.g., Aarhus, Denmark)
- Reward your residents. Consider a resident appreciation day — a beach or forest clean-up (similar to the clean-up in [White Rock, B.C.](#)) followed by refreshments or a dinner party.

## VERTICAL ACTIONS

### SET THE AGENDA

#### *Engage niche communities in the development of the Bay of Plenty experience.*

Resident involvement and coordination will be required to develop and promote selected niche experiences. To achieve the best results, manage the niches according to the following actions and priorities.

#### **Appoint an Experience Manager**

The experience manager will oversee each niche's development and promotion. This role is ideal for a skilled storyteller who is passionate about the niche and enthusiastic about the Bay of Plenty's tourism experiences. The individual must have sufficient knowledge and expertise to be seen as credible by the niche communities, as the role includes leading community working groups.

#### **Establish working groups**

The experience manager will assemble a group of community members who are involved in their niches. Ideally, these key stakeholders will represent varying levels of passion and skill. This group will review passionography research (an in-depth study of the niche) before brainstorming and acting on specific initiatives that will improve the visitor experience. As niche ambassadors, group members can identify development gaps and promotional opportunities. Led by the experience manager, the groups will serve as a link between the tourism industry, Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty and local businesses, governments, tourism stakeholders and the wider community.

#### **Build alignment among tourism operators**

As a tourism destination that aspires to a more distinct reputation, the Bay of Plenty is the setting for a compelling overarching story. Each niche and each tourism operator has a chapter of the larger story to tell; the story becomes more powerful and compelling when the community is aligned in vision and purpose. Through selected niches, tourism products combine to create memorable experiences for the visitors who desire them most. The most compelling experiences boost the Bay of Plenty's reputation through word-of-mouth recommendations. Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty will work closely with industry partners to deliver relevant, high-quality stories necessary for the success of their tourism businesses and for visitor satisfaction.

#### **Involve the Bay of Plenty's residents**

A successful visitor economy depends greatly on support from residents. Without residents, a tourism destination loses its vibrancy and its greatest potential ambassadors. It is vital to continue to give residents a voice in shaping the Bay of Plenty's development strategy and to monitor local sentiment toward tourism. Every working group must take the Bay of Plenty's residents into consideration and involve them in the planning process to ensure a net benefit for everyone.

#### **Provide adequate resources**

It is advised to allocate part of Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty's budget to the groups mentioned above, especially in cases when experience managers are not employees. Moreover, the budget could be used to reinforce small grassroots initiatives that come out of these working groups.

#### **Discuss barriers to success**

Talk to working groups about the barriers to entry that people face in the marketplace for services, products and experiences. Some solutions will require capital and can be addressed by fundraising or an investment strategy. Others will require communication or regulation. Sometimes change may be as simple as providing the skills to help someone become a guide, or by better understanding what visitors want to experience and pay for at the destination.

## WHY NICHE MARKETING?

For places like the Bay of Plenty, niche marketing is overtaking mass marketing as a cost-effective way to influence travellers while also improving visitor experiences. Word of mouth recommendations greatly shape travel decisions and perceptions of a place. When people travel somewhere that is tailored to their greatest interests, the destination improves its reputation through word of mouth. With niche marketing, passionate travellers become raving fans.

Today's travellers use the internet to connect with others who share their greatest passions. They discuss their trips and help one another plan the experiences that are most important to them. From surfing to hiking to bird watching, there is an online community for everything. Each community has its own culture, influencers, points of connection and behaviour.

When places match their strengths with the needs of specific, passionate communities, they become more differentiated and competitive. Visitors, meanwhile, will tell their friends and family about the experiences they enjoy.

## **COORDINATE**

### ***Learn about the Bay of Plenty's passionate communities to meet visitor needs in new ways.***

Create an overall experience that makes the Bay of Plenty a more memorable place.

- Improve wayfinding (e.g., fruit and horticultural products).
- Optimise touch points throughout the customer journey (e.g., Mauao (Mount Maunganui)).
- Make road signs more visible and let them tell a story (eg., São Paolo, Berlin).
- Use the Tiaki Promise to help visitors understand the unique relationship between the city and nature. Make the call to action even more compelling (eg., [Palau](#)).
- Encourage the community to speak well of the Bay of Plenty with the goal of mirroring the positive reputation of New Zealand and yet being perceived as a large, distinct region.
- Support visual elements that improve the visitor experience for each of the niches (e.g., street signage, street art, little street libraries, surfer's shops, etc.).
- Meet international best practice scores for walkability and accessibility (e.g., [Global Liveability Index](#)).
- Encourage tourism businesses that act responsibly. When offering visitors a choice of accommodation, transportation, food and drink, guided tours or workshops, give preference to businesses that train local people, respect and restore nature, invest in socio-economic development and/or education or use sustainable local products and services. This will give businesses an incentive to be sustainable — a bottom-line advantage over their less responsible competitors. (e.g., Colombia's [Biohotel](#), eco-lodges in Botswana, [Free Spirit Spheres](#) on Vancouver Island and [Soelcat 12](#) in the Seoul harbour).
- Promote [Biosphere Tourism certification](#) (or similar initiatives) and reward residents, operators and businesses that proactively manage their ecological impact (e.g., [Fuerte Group Hotels](#), the microbility trend in major cities and [Nautilus Lanzarote apartments](#)).
- Celebrate experiences that focus on holistic and regenerative thinking (e.g., beehive tourism in Slovenia, spirits of the forests of Estonia and the garden-to-plate concept in Austria).
- Partner with existing transformative ecotourism networks to gain international exposure (e.g., [Good Thinking Outdoors](#)).

Create more learning opportunities for visitors.

- Promote more Māori experiences in visible locations throughout the region (e.g., public and street art, street banners, etc.).
- Invest in the optimisation of existing experiences (e.g., Whirinaki Te-Pua-a-Tāne Conservation Park, the [Kiwi Wandering Trail](#) and the restorative kiwi bird program).
- Educate visitors about important Māori values and concepts (e.g., mana).

Create an auxiliary product that reinforces the Bay of Plenty's DNA.

- The auxiliary product tells the overarching story of the Bay of Plenty. It can take many forms — from tours to photography displayed in hotels to augmented reality experiences (e.g., Moscow's [HISTARS app](#) or a partnership with [Google Lens](#)).

Create visual markers in public spaces to express the themes and values for which the Bay of Plenty should be known. For example:

- A beacon when entering the fruit region
- A landmark for the surfer's spirit near the beaches
- A Māori experience to serve as a visitor centre

Develop itineraries that highlight notable Bay of Plenty residents — past and present. For example:

- Wairaka (the smallest dinosaur on the planet)
- The origin story of the kiwifruit and those who first grew it in New Zealand

Partner with digital platforms and business transport providers to align them with the Bay of Plenty's story and its niches. For example:

- Zoomy
- Ola
- Uber
- Taxi companies

### ***Share local stories and identities.***

Build a team of local experts, within each working group and across the region, who can guide visitors within their niches.

- Have the experts provide tours or help visitors plan their itineraries.
- Encourage visitors to share reviews on TripAdvisor and in specific forums.

### ***Encourage the storytelling about the entire Bay of Plenty.***

- Although different, neighbouring areas in the Bay of Plenty are not competitors. Many neighbourhoods share the same visitor profile and will benefit from cross-references and cross-promotion (e.g., Brooklyn, NY promotes northern Queens).
- Establish or use your working groups as content creator clubs (e.g., Eindhoven and British Columbia).

CASE STUDIES

# ENGAGING RESIDENTS IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

# THE AVEBURY RESIDENTS' PACK



Residents of the town of Avebury, U.K. felt disconnected from the area's new status as a UNESCO World Heritage site. In response to growing tensions, UNESCO worked to identify local values, help disparate stakeholders understand one another and create a sense of shared stewardship for the location.

Avebury's Neolithic stone circle is a sister site to the nearby and more famous Stonehenge. Both sites were added to the World Heritage List in 1986, but unlike Stonehenge, Avebury's henge weaves through homes and roads. Visitors who are interested in the stone circle must also visit the town. Diverse groups of stakeholders use the site for many reasons; for example, pagans and druids visit for its spiritual significance, while archaeologists and other scientists visit to study prehistoric culture.

The process of adding Avebury to UNESCO's list involved little community engagement. As a result, Avebury residents felt a lack of ownership of the project. The designation was perceived as an imposition of high-minded ideals rather than a valued partnership chosen by local people. A lack of buy-in caused tensions with residents as visitation increased. Complaints included parking congestion and poor visitor etiquette. Seeing this challenge, UNESCO began to seek collaboration.

Through an open and flexible process, residents and stakeholders from many groups participated by sharing their stories, perspectives and goals. By gathering disparate points of view, UNESCO dispelled the idea that the UN's rigid bureaucracy saw no value in others' ideas and opinions. The outcome was a popular publication called the Residents' Pack, which included a book and pamphlets that describe many viewpoints about the significance of the site, presenting them all with equal weight.

The collaboration process and the Residents' Pack increased buy-in from residents and also improved visitor experiences. UNESCO learned that the best results happen when all voices have a chance to be heard.

# THE EYE ON THE REEF



To contribute to long-term conservation and strategic management of the Great Barrier Reef, tourism operators have partnered with researchers to monitor the reef's health by collecting vital data.

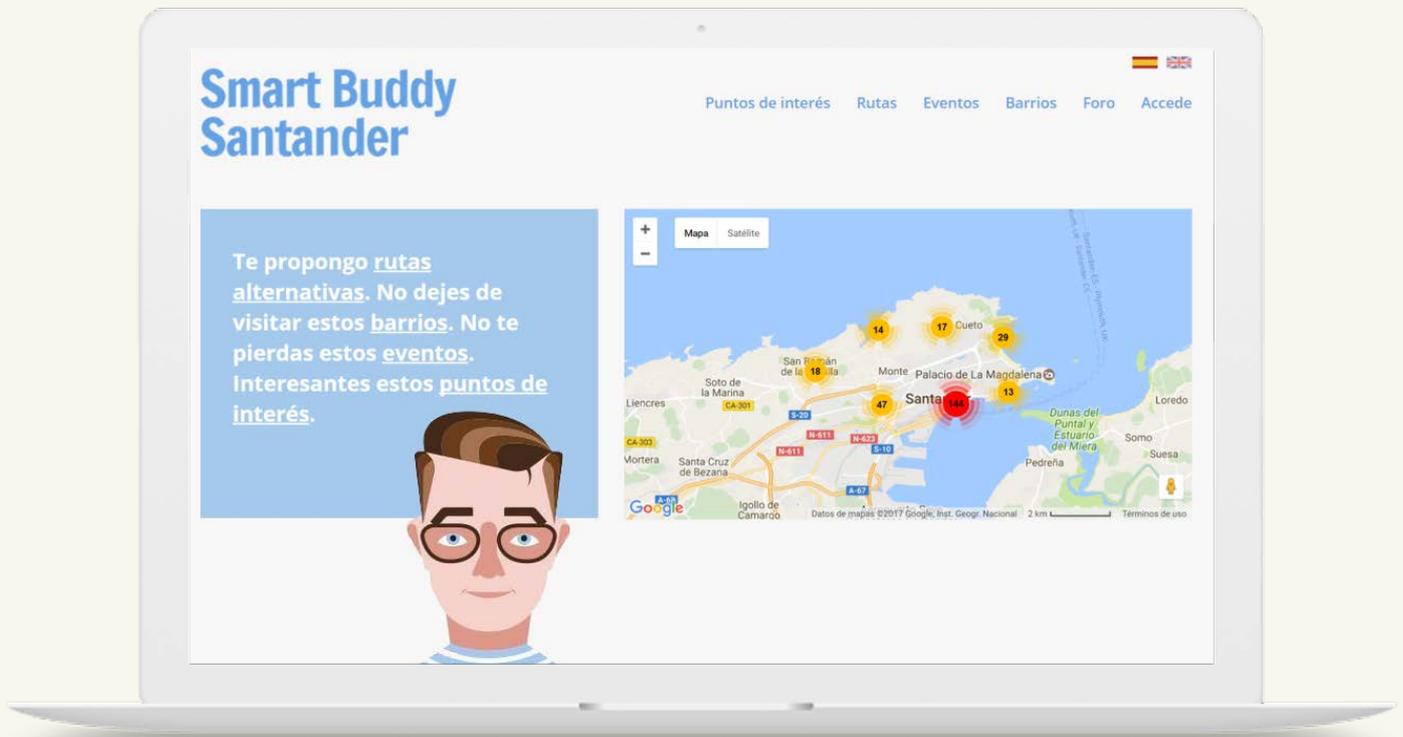
When poorly managed, tourism threatens the survival of delicate coral reefs. Activities like diving, snorkelling and sailing can harm coral directly, leaving behind waste and pollution. About two million people visit the coastline along the Great Barrier Reef each year, bringing great potential for harm in the absence of a responsible tourism strategy.

The challenge was to develop a management strategy that would invite tourism operators to help protect the reef and avoid further damage. The goals included educating tourism businesses about conservation while also collecting data in support of long-term, strategic planning. Ultimately, tourism operations, conservation efforts and scientific research would need to coordinate and merge into a united effort to conserve marine life at the Great Barrier Reef.

To solve this challenge, the *Eye on the Reef — Tourism Weekly Monitoring Programme* was born. Tourism operators were trained to monitor specific reef sites throughout the year and relay data to scientists. The three-step training program was made as convenient as possible for participants; it consisted of an online component, nearby workshops and a single day of in-water training. By making regular observations, operators improved their knowledge of reef conservation. Improved awareness also raised the quality of guided tourism experiences. Operators collected the data scientists needed, which also impacted tourism management; the tourism industry gained a better instinct for product design and capacity on the reef.

The *Eye on the Reef* program shows the positive role that tourism stakeholders can play in destination management that leads to regeneration. Under the right conditions, they can become champions of environmental stewardship.

# SANTÁNDER'S SMART BUDDY SYSTEM



“The objective of Smart Buddy was to involve neighbours in the tourism management of their city – by showing venues that are often not displayed on tourism city maps or other internet platforms to foster the economic development of these less touristy areas.” – [Organicity](#)

The Spanish city of Santander faces a problem that is common to many places: how to disperse visitors across the destination. Many visitors only spend time at Santander’s city centre, its famous Magdalena Palace or its beaches. Without trusted recommendations, people are unlikely to explore other locations. The net result is that economic development is contained to a few areas, while visitors miss out on more meaningful experiences.

To address this problem, [Organicity](#) and [City Makers](#) developed an experimental program called Smart Buddy with funding from the European Commission. Smart Buddy crowdsources recommendations from locals across the city and maps them out for visitors. This hyper-local, TripAdvisor-style platform connects visitors and residents. Tourists can use the service to easily explore alternate areas that have been vetted by locals.

Collaboration with Santander residents is at the core of this project. The Smart Buddy development process included citizen participation workshops at the outset. Developers hosted many neighbourhood meetings to test the platform with real users. Additional feedback from tourism students helped the designers improve Smart Buddy even further. The platform was launched at a civic meeting that involved many of Santander’s neighbourhood associations.

The platform provided visitors with almost 200 points of interest and 10 travel routes that were a result of the public participation meetings. It also allowed the local tourism office to create new maps that will help visitors explore more of the city and spread the economic impact of tourism to new areas. The Smart Buddy system also holds potential for other destinations or niche tourism experiences to crowdsource recommendations from residents.

# CONCLUSION

Local concern about visitor pressure is increasing. To mitigate this, research and analysis have shown the importance of helping residents understand the value of regenerative tourism and ecotourism. This will also help the Bay of Plenty gain a more distinctive image.

The resident engagement plan provides Tāpoi Te Moananui ā Toi/Tourism Bay of Plenty with a list of all the actions necessary for the destination management plan to be successful — both vertical actions (working with groups of people who are passionate about certain themes) and horizontal actions (working with all residents).

As resources and budget are limited, TBOP will prioritise the following actions over the next two years:

## INFORMING

### ENSURE AN INVOLVED AND INFORMED LOCAL MARKET

- Educate residents about what there is to do and see in the region, following the priorities (themes) as described in the destination management plan.
  - Increase tourism's presence in local media (including newspapers, blogs, etc.).
  - Create an infographic to summarize the destination management plan. Make it available to every operator and resident in physical and digital formats.
- Launch the *Te Hā Tāpoi — The Love of Tourism* plan to the public (e.g., through a roadshow, ongoing presentations on demand, evaluation sessions, etc.).
- Provide periodic press releases on the progress of Te Hā Tāpoi.

## CONSULTING

### GAIN SOCIAL LICENCE

- Build alignment across the Bay of Plenty and among operators by creating a Bay of Plenty card or pass.
- Measure resident satisfaction on a regular basis through a survey that complements the Mood of the Nation index.
- Enhance the overall Bay of Plenty experience by measuring sentiment with the Tourism Sentiment Index.
- Start with thematic working groups or passion groups.
- Set up focus groups and hearings as required for new projects.

## ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

### BOOST CIVIC PRIDE

- Curate one crowdsourced channel (e.g., Instagram) where residents can photos about stories that fit the Bay of Plenty themes. Motivate residents by rewarding them (e.g., through physical publication).
- Create a Tourism with Purpose plan that activates the energy of the community, explains the value of tourism and highlights the significance of regenerative tourism for the Bay of Plenty. Distill from this plan:
  - A symbolic action or campaign that expresses residents' love for their unique green environment. This love is deeply rooted in Māori history.
  - A local ambassador initiative based on that symbolic action.

“WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US IS THAT THE WORLD UNDERSTANDS THAT THE CHALLENGES FOR TOURISM IN THE BAY OF PLENTY CONCERN NOT ONLY RESIDENTS OF THE REGION BUT HUMANITY.”

KRISTIN DUNNE, CEO AT TOURISM BAY OF PLENTY



