

Measuring the Impact of H1N1 Swine Flu on Tourism in the South East Region

Introduction

To measure the impact of the Swine Flu outbreak on the tourism industry in the South East, TSE conducted a survey of member businesses in the July 2009 edition of the e-newsletter. Tourism businesses were asked to complete an online questionnaire to report what impact H1N1 Swine Flu has had on their business and whether they have witnessed any related changes or cancellations to existing or forward bookings.

Businesses were also asked to provide details of actions taken in response to H1N1 Swine Flu and suggest what more the tourism sector could do in response to the outbreak. A selection of these anecdotal comments has been provided within this document.

Sussex Tourism Partnership and the Research and Development team at Visit Kent have also undertaken their own respective Swine Flu surveys and kindly contributed their anecdotal findings to this report.

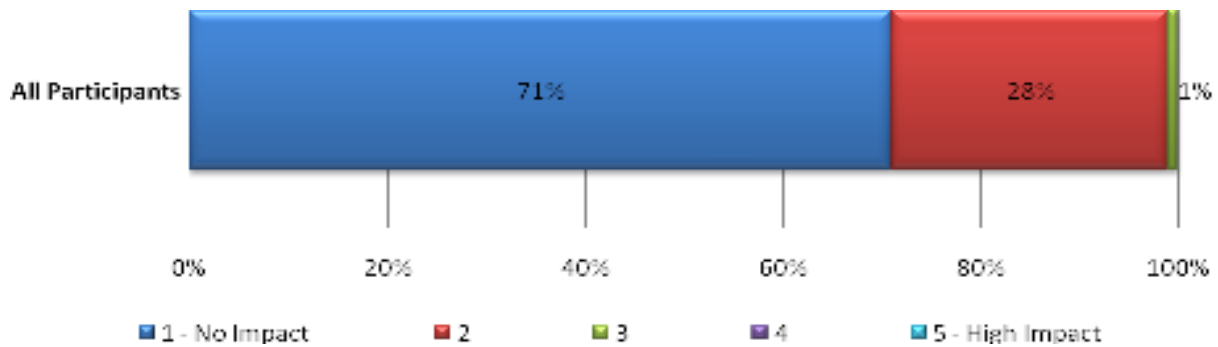
Please note that the sample was not representative of all tourism businesses, so the findings should be regarded as indicative.

Key Findings

- The vast majority of tourism businesses within the South East region have reported that swine flu has had no impact on their business (71%).
- 69% of tourism businesses in the South East region have not experienced any changes or cancellations to existing or forward bookings, while 28% have reported at least a few changes or cancellations. The additional 3% of businesses believe it is still too early to tell.

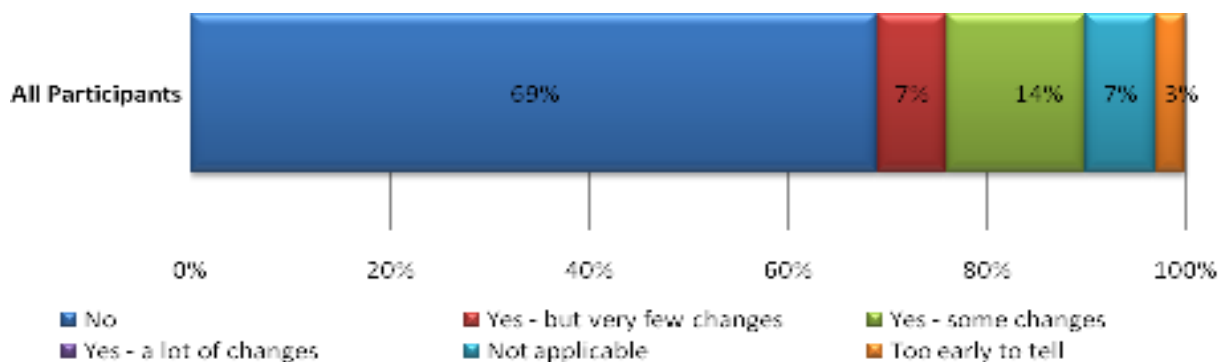
Current/Immediate Impact of H1N1 Swine Flu

The survey results indicate that swine flu has so far had no impact on 70% of tourism businesses surveyed in the South East. This is in line with the National Research carried out by VisitBritain.



Changes or Cancellations to Existing or Forward Bookings

The vast majority of tourism businesses reported that Swine Flu had not caused any changes or cancellations to existing or forward bookings. Any changes or cancellations have affected only a small proportion of businesses (28%), while the remaining 3% believe it is too early to tell.



Actions businesses have taken in response to H1N1 Swine Flu

Anecdotal information from businesses that have had no current/immediate impact

'Made staff aware of additional measures to help protect them a la Government advice'

(Visitor Attraction)

'Revised Health and Safety planning'

(Tourism Promotional Organisation/
Regional Tourist Board)

'Increased frequency of cleaning, particularly door handles and bathrooms'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

'I've told staff not to come into work if they have flu symptoms'

(Visitor Attraction)

'More sensible about contact with visitors such as shaking hands'

(Visitor Attraction)

Anecdotal information from businesses that that rated current/immediate impact as 2 or 3 out of 5

'We have set up a task force and monitoring it closely'

(Holiday Park)

'Circulated Government advisory notes'

(Visitor Attraction)

'Set up a swine flu team, implemented pandemic training seminar for hr manager and issued communication to staff'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

'Any sign of illness within staff advised them to take time off'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

'Made staff & guests aware of procedures that need to be followed, put sanitise gels all around the hotel for everyone to use'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

What businesses believe the Tourism Sector can do in Response to H1N1 Swine Flu

Anecdotal information from businesses that have had no current/immediate impact

'Get the media to treat the subject properly and not hit it up!'

(Visitor Attraction)

'Ensure business continuity plans in place'

(Tourism Promotional Organisation/
Regional Tourist Board)

'Keep all parties informed of developments'

(Conference/Exhibition Centre)

'Ask insurance companies to cover businesses that lose out due to cancellations'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

'Offer tips to proprietors on what to do'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

Anecdotal information from businesses that that rated current/immediate impact as 2 or 3 out of 5

'More thorough sanitation options and briefings'

(Visitor Attraction)

'Just provide plenty of info to businesses as it's difficult to know how seriously to take the threat of the pandemic'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

'Think the awareness is very good'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

'Avoid the press and sit it out'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

'Think the awareness is very good'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

Further anecdotal information provided by businesses

Anecdotal information from businesses that have had no current/immediate impact

'I see no point in panicking because flu epidemics come and go'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

'Under current trends I have no reason to believe that the situation will become worse. However, if staff became ill it will have an impact'

(Visitor Attraction)

'I feel, unaffected by the swine flu outbreak, occupancy is up, forward bookings are strong and overseas visitors aplenty'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

'Our bookings are a little down on last year but that is, we feel, more due to the recession and our weather!'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

'Not had any cancellation from any one at all yet this year and received more European bookings than ever before. Had our best year ever so far'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

Anecdotal information from businesses that that rated current/immediate impact as 2 or 3 out of 5

'French visitors are being advised not to travel here if purely for tourist reasons. I lost a 2 week August booking...'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

'I see no point in panicking'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

'Long term it won't be a massive impact, only short term challenges through staff absence and a few cancellations'

(Large Accommodation Provider)

'Had a few German and French cancellations, but not that many so far'

(Tourism Promotional Organisation/
Regional Tourist Board)

'We have had no cancellations due to the swine flu. We are more likely to receive cancellations due to the weather!'

(Small Accommodation Provider)

TOURISM SOUTH EAST

Research and Market Intelligence Department

Tourism South East
40 Chamberlayne Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO50 5JH

Tel: 02380 625522

Fax: 02380 612678

Email: research@tourismse.co.uk

<http://www.industry.visitsoutheastengland.com>



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