Feel Florence experience app

Florence off the beaten track

(IT)

FLORENCE

366,222

Cultural heritage
for sustainable development

Challenge

The management of crowds of tourists is a key challenge in Florence. 15.9 million people visited Florence in 2019 (overnight stays) attracted by its exceptional historical, cultural and natural heritage. Most of them focus on the historic centre, which is a 5km^2 area in a city of 105km^2.

Solution

FeelFlorence is an app suggesting unusual itineraries in the city centre, in neighbourhoods and in the metropolitan area, bringing tourists closer to local experiences and avoiding over-tourism in central areas of the city.
Thanks to a real-time detection of the presences in certain areas, the app warns tourists to avoid overcrowded destinations and better organise their stay. The app is also an integrated tool gathering information, in a single database.
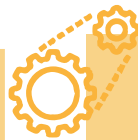
How ?

1 A 2019 pilot project fixed the IT tools and features with a range of institutional actors. The app was tested by 200 users for two months, then launched in July 2020. It is available on IOS and Android.

2 The FeelFlorence system focuses on two tools:
- a content management platform (based on the open source Drupal) where tourism offices promote new paths and experiences outside traditional tourist areas
- a mobile app and website connected to the platform, and a BigData platform monitoring people's location, so the app can warn tourists about congested areas and highlight emptier ones.

This second function is also relevant for managing flows to maintain social distancing.

3 Upcoming functionalities will include: a new algorithm 'Skip-the-crowd' to avoid congestion in the UNESCO protected area; more points of interests; social media interactivity; live chat assistance etc.

4 The app was developed by the city and metropolitan area, and then extended to the 41 local municipalities.

5 The process, as well as open data was shared with the Tuscany Region to ensure interoperability.

Budget/Financing

€435,000

- €350,000 for software development
- €50,000 for management and coordination through Silfi spa (in-house provider of smart city services)
- €35,000 for the launch and communication campaign

Funding sources:
- EU: €415,000 European Regional Development Funds (National Operational Programme on Metropolitan Cities 2014-2020, 'Metropolitan Urban Agenda' priority)
- Municipality: €20,000

Management

An inter-departmental municipal team works on the app: the economic development and tourism department, the IT department and the fundraising office (leading an action of the EU Urban Agenda on data collection and smart tourist management).
In terms of staff (none of them full-time):
- 3 people from the tourist office: project coordination
- 2 people from IT
- 2 people from the fundraising office: finance and administration
- 2 people from the tourist info point: content creation and management
- 40+ people (belonging to 40 different municipalities beyond Florence) are enabled to directly manage contents for the platform.

An agreement was signed among the main public/private stakeholders.
Citizens, tour guides and tour operators can propose new ideas and content.

Transferability

- Collect and analyse data and include official statistics with sources like real-time and big data for predictive analysis.
- Boost territorial cooperation from the start and involve different actors to share with.
- Re-use existing tools: Florence owns the software code and will share it with interested cities that have a strong technical team to support the deployment phase (software analyst, software developer, IT system engineer, database expert).

Impact

From 18 municipalities of the Florentine Homogeneous Territorial Areas at the beginning, 41 municipalities are involved today. Starting from the web, both the app and social media were launched and improved.
The constant growth of interactions, users, likes etc. has to be considered as a quantitative and qualitative indicator.
FeelFlorence site:
1,200,000 views ;
817,000 users; 859,000 sessions
(July 2020 – March 2022)
FeelFlorence app: IOS version 21,500 impressions 6,700 sessions.
Android version 5,000 users
(July 2020- March 2022)

Links

Website: www.feelflorence.it
Videos: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMunUWze4wiEAqC7eKDjxNg?view_as=subscriber
Digital brochure: https://www.feelflorence.it/it/experience-florence

Contact

Lucia De Siervo
Director of the Economic Activities
and Tourism Department, city of Florence
lucia.desiervo@comune.fi.it

Carlotta Viviani
Economic and Tourist Promotion
Office, city of Florence
carlotta.viviani@comune.fi.it

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