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*Success Stories from FP6
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Turning knowledge into profit

PROJECT SYNOPSES

EUR 23479



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ALADDIN – Destination anywhere

An innovative management system enables small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourist industry to provide travellers with a range of information and services before, during and after their trip. The same system is also designed to help tourists access information about their journeys and their destination. As far as the project partners are aware, there is currently no other mobile system on the market that combines business-to-business and business-to-consumer applications.

The prototype system was successfully tested in a range of scenarios in three European locations. Meanwhile, the SMEs involved in ALADDIN are already benefitting from the knowledge generated by the project on the tourist industry and the needs of travellers, and the technology developed puts them at the forefront of their respective sectors.

Tourism: vital for Europe, vital for many SMEs

Tourism brings in around EUR 3 billion to the European economy every year, and it generates some 20 million jobs directly and indirectly.

Many of the companies operating in the tourism and travel sector are SMEs, including incoming tour operators, tourist offices, restaurants, museums and other tourist attractions as well as conference organisers. Between them, these businesses need to provide a diverse array of services to a single customer, the traveller, in a cost-effective yet attractive way.

Incoming tourist agencies in particular have to carry out a wide range of tasks, including optimising tour transfer set-ups, designing tailored trips and handling changes to flights and hotels. These jobs are made all the more difficult by the growing trend towards last-minute bookings and changes. For these SMEs, it is becoming ever more difficult to compete with large international companies that simply have more resources at the destination.

Meanwhile, the widespread use of smartphones and handheld computers is opening up an as yet untapped market for mobile leisure and business services. However, the wide range of device types on the market means that few SMEs can afford to break into this new mobile market.

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The ALADDIN project set out to develop a mobile destination system that would provide incoming tour operators with both a mobile workspace and a mobile content and service management system, and create a platform for SMEs at the destination to advertise their services to tourists with ease.

The project brought together 11 partners in 6 countries, including travel agencies, specialists in software for the travel industry, a provider of online advertising services, a specialist in multilingual content and a regional tourist association as well as research organisations.



Saint Stephen's Basilica in Budapest.

A modern system for the modern traveller

The project partners successfully developed a prototype system, at the heart of which is the Professional Mobile Workspace (PMW). Through this, tour guides at the destination can provide a range of services to travellers, interact electronically with their back office and access information on arrivals, flights and accommodation, for example.

Meanwhile, SMEs at the destination, such as restaurants, event organisers and tourist attractions can use the platform as a marketing channel to offer services and provide information to travellers in an attractive and accessible manner.

Twinned with the professional workspace is the 'Mobile Travel Environment' (MTE), which is designed for travellers. In the MTE, travellers can set up a profile so that they receive information of interest about their destination. The application, which can be accessed via the Internet and mobile phones, also allows the traveller to search for points of interest in the destination and check out any special offers. In addition to this, the system has a map facility; if the phone also has a global positioning system (GPS) function, automatic positioning can be triggered.

The prototype system underwent extensive testing in three locations: Wildschönau (Austria), Budapest (Hungary) and Stockholm (Sweden). During these trials, participants acting as tourists were asked to set up a profile, find and book a place on a guided tour, find a tourist attraction, navigate their way to certain locations, find and reserve a table in a restaurant and check details of a return flight.

Meanwhile, people working in the tourist industry checked out the professional workspace of the system. Among other things, they were asked to check the data of an arriving group of travellers, manage an ad hoc change, obtain information on a tourist attraction and find out about travel options for getting there, send a text message to group members telling them when and where to meet, and make a complaint about a hotel room.

The testers rated the performance of the system highly, and described the functions offered as desirable and helpful. According to the testers, the most important points concerning the information provided by the system are its overall quality and whether or not it is up to date.

Business benefits

Even though the ALADDIN system is still in the prototype stage, the project has brought about a number of benefits for the partners. For the technological SMEs in the project, the tools and software developed by ALADDIN will help them to stay at the forefront of new developments in their areas (mobile business, tour operator software, etc.)

For the SMEs that plan to use the service once it is commercialised, the system will help them to offer a better, more personalised service to customers and make life easier for tour guides.

All SMEs have benefited from an increased understanding of the potential of mobile devices as a tool for both tour guide and traveller.

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