

USE-IT Maps for Young Travelers.

Impact study 2013 and follow up in 2017

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USE-IT is a non-profit organization that produces free city maps for young travelers in Europe. The maps are made by locals, non-commercial and kept up-to-date by the use-it network. In order to refine this product and explore future options of the project, USE-IT asked us to evaluate the reach and use of the maps among their target audiences.

In co-operation with the Leuven University ASTOR group (Association for Tourism Research), Expeditions carried out evaluation research to chart the impact of USE-IT maps on the travel behavior of its users. Over a period of twelve months between 2012 and 2013, USE-IT volunteers gathered data in USE-IT cities and towns all over Europe.



In a quick-win exploratory phase, input for the creation of an international survey was collected from users and stakeholders. Thanks to the efforts of employees and volunteers of youth hostels distributing the maps, 2.404 USE-IT users filled out the definitive version. Additionally, we gathered qualitative data through in-depth interviews; focus groups with users and stakeholders such as hostel staff and restaurant/bar owners, and through participant observation in hostels and popular meeting places of young travelers.

Results revealed USE-IT maps generate high satisfaction among users as well as stakeholders, cost-effectiveness from the viewpoint of destination promotion, and a positive impact on sustainable development of local tourism. As such, the impact analysis and reports became useful important tools for USE-IT representatives in European cities to convince their local governments to support and fund the development of new USE-IT maps.

A summary of the conclusions of this research as well as a report of a follow-up research performed in 2017 is freely accessible on:

https://www.use-it.travel/_files/inlineuploads/survey_2017.pdf

Adore the Ghent festival ('Gentse Feesten'). Each year, in the second half of July, real life just stops in Ghent. Everybody stops working and the city turns into a giant playground: free concerts everywhere.

Try and learn the Ghent 'R'. It's not easy: ask some locals for help. You'll sound like a frog for a few hours before you master the most important consonant in the Ghent alphabet, which would be 'schaamliik'