



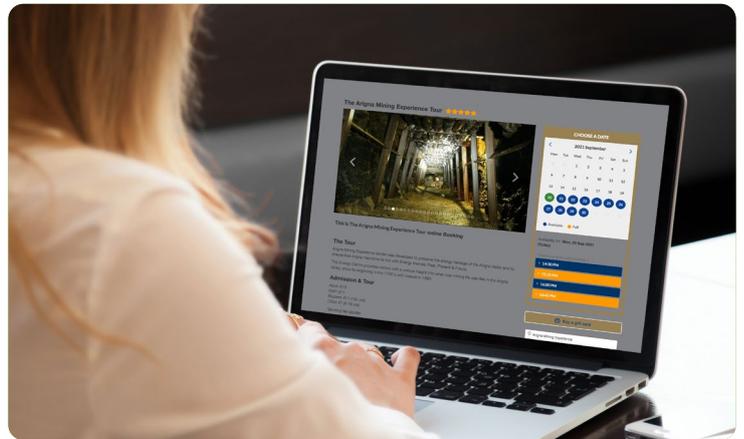
Digital  
that  
Delivers.

# Benefits of Bookable Experiences

# Benefits of bookable experiences

## Introduction

This section demonstrates the business case for developing visitor experiences – day tours, activities or attractions – that are suitable for distribution and booking online, both through your own website and through digitally connected third-party resellers.



Online bookable experiences offer multiple benefits for visitor experience providers. They can enhance your commercial offer, enable you to reach new audiences and complement your existing offers and revenue streams such as admission, food and drink, retail and fundraising. The benefits can accrue both in the short term and the longer term.

In Ireland, currently, only 13% of visitor experiences are available to book online so there are lots of opportunities to improve our online bookability.

## Benefits at a macro level

**At a macro level extending the range of visitor experiences that are available and bookable online offers several benefits including:**

- ✓ Enabling visitor experience providers to extend their trading season and thereby support greater financial sustainability.
- ✓ Supporting the wider destination in mitigating against seasonality.
- ✓ Supporting the appeal of the wider destination where the experience is located.
- ✓ Supporting the development of an evening economy that will appeal to domestic and international visitors.
- ✓ Increasing visibility for your visitor experience in the digital world, where your potential visitor is shopping and searching.

### The changing consumer and the changing distributor



We know that online is the key platform for travel research and booking. To date in Ireland, however, online bookability has mainly been evident for accommodation and at some of our larger / more popular visitor attractions. Consumer behaviours are changing and people increasingly expect that all aspects of their holiday will be bookable online.



Change is also evident in the shifting expectations and operational systems or processes among travel distributors. They are themselves adopting digital systems and distribution, while looking to move away from manual bookings and reduce the size of their operational teams.

## Short-term benefits

Benefits to visitor experience providers include the opportunity to:



- ✓ Accelerate your progress to a digital-first marketplace.
- ✓ Reach new direct audiences.
- ✓ Reach new indirect audiences through an expanded B2B reach.
- ✓ Build greater international presence by working with B2B agents and third-party channels that will showcase and amplify your brand.
- ✓ Allow for a greater level of accessibility for your visitor experience by all potential audiences; hyper-local, local, national, and international.
- ✓ Allow you to develop specific segments of focus.
- ✓ Grow visitor satisfaction.
- ✓ Diversify and create new revenue streams.
- ✓ Allow for forward business planning across sales, marketing, finance and revenue generation.
- ✓ Allow for effective and efficient operational and manpower planning.
- ✓ Allow for better cost management.
- ✓ Support your overall commercial performance.

There are also increased efficiencies of improved connectivity between visitor experience providers (the suppliers) and distributors (tour operators or OTAs) at a macro level. These efficiencies depend both on having the right systems and processes in place and on having products that are suitable for online booking and distribution.



### A quick recap on some definitions...

#### Digital-first:

Whereby any new opportunity or problem is approached on the basis that the solution will largely be digital.

#### Hyper-local:

Your immediate locality.

#### Online Travel Agent (OTA):

An online travel intermediary who sells all aspects of travel; hotels, flights, car hire, tours, attractions, activities and so on.

#### B2B (Business to Business):

Where the visitor experience provider sells their experience through a professional travel intermediary such as a tour operator or an OTA.

#### B2C (Business to Consumer):

Where the visitor experience provider sells their experiences directly to the consumer / end user.

## Long term benefits

Long term benefits will accrue both to individual visitor experience providers as well as to the wider destination in terms of seasonality and regionality.

To enable sustainable tourism and to mitigate the harmful effects of over-tourism, many destinations are adopting Destination Management as part of their National and Local Strategic plans. Fáilte Ireland's strategic approach is that of balancing regionality and seasonality.



Developing visitor experiences for online booking and for digitally connected distribution means that visitor experience providers can interact with their local destination planning network in a meaningful way.

A wider range of attractive and bookable experiences creates compelling reasons for more people to visit the destination and increases its attractiveness and sustainability.

“Developing visitor experiences for online booking and for digitally connected distribution means that visitor experience providers can interact with their local destination planning network in a meaningful way.”

Driving sales in the shoulder or low season can help to meet fixed costs challenges.



## Digital transformation – your experience needs to be where the buyer is!

A McKinsey survey has found that during the pandemic, consumers moved dramatically toward online channels.

Companies and industries have responded. This move toward greater digital engagement by the consumer is expected to last, so from a business perspective it makes sense that visitor experience providers position their product digitally. This is where their potential visitor searches and shops.

In developing bookable experiences, you can plan forward and create a sustainable business model for the future. Visitor experiences that are bookable online will enhance the existing core product available and provide for additional income opportunities.

Creating experiences that are a good fit for the visitor and are at a price point that will generate sales in the required volume, helps safeguard your financial viability and sustainability.



“The pandemic has dramatically increased the speed at which digital is fundamentally changing business.”

Source: McKinsey

## Alignment of product and segment

By creating one or more unique bookable visitor experiences, you can align your experience with the specific visitor segments that are interested and motivated by what you do.

Creating a strong link between your experience and your target segments also allows you to target segments that may offer more value. Examples include:

- ✓ Cultivating a local market for repeat visits with a suite of themed bookable experiences.
- ✓ Targeting visitor segments that have time flexibility with an off-peak experience.
- ✓ Targeting visitor segments that display a greater ancillary spend.



The flexibility that working from home offers means that many potential visitors are looking closer to home for experiences. Keeping a focus on your hyper-local and your local market can support the effectiveness of your marketing spend.

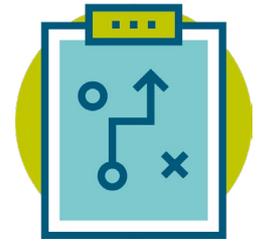




## Diversification of revenue for your business

**Diversification of revenue is critically important to enable financial sustainability.**

Creating a unique product offering or a suite of bookable experiences will support visitor experience providers to achieve growth and profitability.



## Growing visitor loyalty and building word of mouth referral

**There is a healthy market demand for experiences that are culturally immersive.**

In developing a range of new bookable experiences to appeal to this market, you will grow visitor loyalty and encourage positive word of mouth referral. Doing so will contribute to sales and profitability.



## Important points to note

**As we've seen, the benefits of developing bookable experiences are significant.**

But it is important to be realistic. Developing the right bookable experience requires work and time. Then, once it is in the market, it will take time to grow. Factor in too that if you're selling through tour operators, contracting will be done at least one year in advance.

But the long-term benefits are worth it.

The main outlay for many visitor experience providers will be time and staff resources. Others may need new equipment, new photography, new video material, copywriting, and so on. There's also the opportunity cost; what you might earn in the time it takes you to make your experiences bookable online.

But the cost of not doing so will be much, much higher in the long term. For most visitor attractions the return on investment of time and resources won't be immediate. The impact of having a better range of experiences to sell online, coupled with the more efficient use of resources through online bookability (to consumers and through OTAs) can be transformational.





## Efficiency benefits

The explicit benefits of having the right sort of bookable experience include a whole raft of efficiencies and the use of resources, both human and financial.

- ✓ Online booking and digitally-connected distribution are significantly more efficient than more manual or operationally-demanding approaches such as back office bookings. This is true whether your bookable experience is sold directly to consumers (B2C), sold through distributors (B2B), or sold in both channels.
- ✓ Relatively small adjustments to visitor experiences to make them more suitable for online booking and distribution, can have a significant impact on overall profitability.
- ✓ By making your experience bookable online you also get a strong forward read of visitor flows, giving you the ability to manage variable cost lines and staff rosters in a more efficient way.

