



Digital
that
Delivers.

Test and Launch Your Bookable Experience

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Introduction

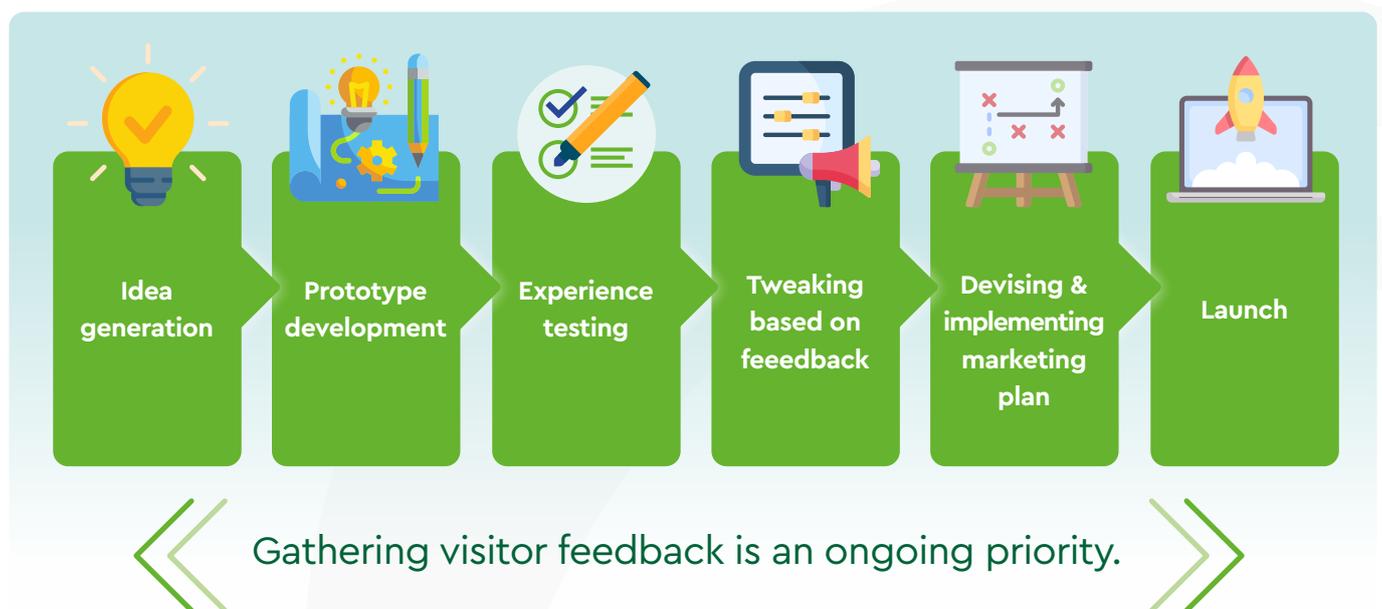
This section seeks to answer two key questions:

1. How will you know if you've developed the right visitor experience?
2. How can you test your visitor experience from a digital visibility perspective?

It gives ideas on how to test your experience before you launch it to the market – things like a local familiarisation trip or a soft launch – and then tweaking it based on feedback.

On digital visibility, the digital places where your customer researches their holiday, are outlined and there are tips on how to maximise your presence. For examples of how others do a great job in presenting experiences on their website; check out the case studies.

Experience development process



Test your experience



There's a great Japanese saying: "Measure Twice, Cut Once" – the idea being to plan carefully before you take action.

But how does this apply to developing a visitor experience? The advice is to test your experience before you launch it onto the market (be that on your website or in B2B channels).

With the ease in which today's customer can upload a photo or write a bad review about something, testing is more important than ever. The last thing you want after you've put days, weeks or even months of work into a new experience is to launch it, before you, or it, is ready, before you've ironed out the creases. Taking time to test it first will help you see if the experience 'works'; how it flows, what is it saying, how it works compared to other similar experiences and so on.

4 ways to test your experience

01. Familiarisation visit/ trial run for locals/ friends/family/other tourism businesses.	02. Soft opening.	03. Engage a subject expert or mystery shopper to provide objective feedback.	04. Ask a tour operator or trade partner that you work with for feedback.
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Organise a familiarisation visit to test the experience

- ✓ **Identify who to invite.** Whose opinion do you value? Who do you trust to give honest feedback? Draw up a list of people – maybe it's only two or three, maybe it's 10 – whatever works for you. Put them on notice – ask will they do it, when they might be available, clarify that you need honesty and objectivity, and so on. 
- ✓ **Arrange the details dates and times,** and brief guests on their role. Make sure you / your team deliver the experience exactly as you would to a group of live customers. 
- ✓ **Time for writing.** Give time as you go along, and at the end, for people to note their observations. 
- ✓ **Create a simple feedback form.** Include questions or prompts about the aspects of the experience that you want them to comment on. Things like arrival, parking, accessibility, welcome, duration, equipment, staff, the structure of the experience i.e. is there a start, a middle and an end, logistics, support services (toilets etc), ancillary service (café, gift shop), departure, and so on. 
- ✓ Conduct a **debriefing** session afterwards to capture all information. 
- ✓ Share **feedback with staff** and work out how to fix the negatives and solidify the positives. 

Soft opening or trial run

A soft opening or trial run is like a preview show at a theatre. In the theatre world before opening night, a show or play is staged for the public with tickets either being free or reduced in price. The idea is to give the director and crew a chance to identify problems and areas for improvement before opening night when theatre critics are invited to attend.

Adapting this practice to the world of visitor experiences, you could have a soft opening or trial run and offer a reduced admission to visitors. In the same way as the fam trip, be sure to ask for feedback, note any problems or highlights, and act on your findings before launching the experience onto the market.



Doing a test run or familiarisation trip is great but it's not enough on its own. You must take the feedback on board and tweak your experience if necessary.



If you do a test run and the outcomes are inconclusive, do it again. Don't second guess the feedback. If you're unsure, test and test again.



Testing is a great way of finding out what refinements to make for specific markets. If, for example, you are targeting a domestic and an international market, there'll probably be some differences. For further information check out our [Market Insights section](#).



Have you, your staff and your partners all trialled the experience first-hand? If not, how do you stand over it and effectively promote it?



Test your experience

Below are some tips to check if you're doing the right things online to be visible in the places where your customer searches for holiday information.

Testing how well you're doing against these tips can be an eye-opener for some operators who may have a great visitor experience on the ground, but who fall short in telling people about it.

Remember, if you make it hard for people to find information about your experience, you'll miss out on sales and bookings.

1. Google my business



Most of your customers will arrive at your website from Google. Your *Google My Business Listing* is an opportunity to showcase your company and get people to come to your website. Things to consider to help generate traffics and an overall positive picture of your experience:

- ✓ Check that company name, category, address details are correct and descriptions are compelling
- ✓ Photos. Enticing quality photos with people in them
- ✓ Google Posts
- ✓ Google Reviews
- ✓ Q&A
- ✓ Google Products
- ✓ Reviews
- ✓ Business description

2. Your website



- ✓ Is it immediately apparent from arriving at your website what service you provide?
- ✓ Is it clear from your content that your service is of high quality?
- ✓ Is it clear why your company is the best place to deliver that service to the customer?

3. Your booking flow



- ✓ Is it easy to see where the customer goes next to make a booking?
- ✓ How many steps (clicks) must a customer make to make a booking?

4. Your product page



- ✓ Are all the key components in the booking page?
- ✓ Is it online bookable?
- ✓ Is the content inspiring?
- ✓ Is there anything on the page that will distract people away from booking?

5. Tracking and tagging



Important to have Google Analytics set up so you can see statistics on site visitors, bounce rates, duration of visit on your website and so on.

6. Site speed



- ✓ A Deloitte study for Google, ***Milliseconds make Millions***, found that improving your load time by 0.1 seconds can boost conversion rates by 8%.
- ✓ Ensuring your site and product pages load quickly is essential, especially on mobile.

7. Social media

Regular engagement with your customers via social media helps position you as the best option to provide the experience for the customer.

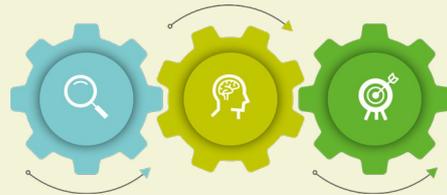


8. The consumer journey

Properly understanding the different stages of your consumer's journey is essential to the success of marketing and promoting any product. Knowing where they search for information and when they're likely to do so gives you a solid basis from which to build your marketing strategy.

The three stages in a customer journey are:

- 1. Before:** Preparation before arriving onsite
- 2. During:** Actual experience delivery
- 3. After:** Follow up and completion



And when we further break down the 'before' stage we see there are different steps from first deciding to go away through to research and booking, as shown below:

1 I want to get away

Travellers investigate where they want to go, with the types of experiences that are available in different destinations as a key consideration.

2 Time to plan

In the days and weeks before traveling, they explore deeper, searching for recommendations and starting to mentally catalogue things they may want to do.

3 Let's book

In the days before their trip, travellers might book one or two 'must do' experiences. Then they'll keep a list of other options to reference as they choose what to do while in their destination.

4 I can't wait to explore

Most experiences will be booked while travellers are in destination, as they fill their trip with the great things they discover while on vacation.

Marketing plan to launch your experience

Launching your experience requires that you communicate with your target market using a combination of tools such as:

- ✓ Online advertising
- ✓ Email newsletter
- ✓ Social media
- ✓ Press releases to local or national media
- ✓ Website
- ✓ Networking and referral/cross selling with local tourism businesses

Check out this Fáilte Ireland guide on how to use your database to deliver more bookings.

