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that
Delivers.

What Makes Your Experience Bookable?

Requirements for B2C
Direct Online Bookings

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Introduction

The main sales channels for customers booking a priced experience online are:

- 1. B2C direct online bookings:** the customer (the end user) books directly via an online sales channel such as your own brand website.
- 2. B2B bookings:** the customer (the end user) books the experience indirectly via a professional travel partner such as an online travel agent (OTA), a tour operator, an online reseller or an online aggregator (whereby availability and prices for experiences are collated in one place so that the lowest price point is clear).
- 3. Referral bookings:** the experience provider receives bookings via partnerships with local, national or global organisations. Examples here could be a partnership between you and an accommodation provider who recommends the available experiences to their guests. Depending on the agreement, partnerships may be based on a zero-charge fee, a commissionable based fee (a percentage of the retail price), or a discount-based fee (a fixed discount off the retail price).



This section explores online B2C direct online bookings in detail.

Requirements for B2C direct online bookings

Your website is one of your main platforms for direct online bookings from your customer or end user. So, what are the considerations if you want to maximise B2C online bookings?

- 1 Effective online communications** A hand holding a megaphone with sound waves emanating from it, symbolizing effective communication.
- 2 Clear display of prices** Three circular price tags (€, £, \$) with a hand pointing to one of them, symbolizing clarity in pricing.
- 3 Retail price point** A green flag with a white checkmark and a euro symbol, symbolizing the best price point.
- 4 Reliable and consistent availability** A calendar showing the number 30, symbolizing reliability and consistency.
- 5 Limited capacity and unlimited capacity** A smartphone next to a calendar, symbolizing the balance between limited and unlimited capacity.
- 6 Individual bookings** A red button with the text 'BOOK NOW' and a checkmark, symbolizing individual bookings.
- 7 Terms and conditions** A clipboard with a checklist and a pencil, symbolizing terms and conditions.
- 8 Covid-19 specific terms** A stylized pink virus cell, symbolizing specific requirements related to COVID-19.
- 9 A well-trained team** Three stylized human figures, symbolizing a trained and experienced team.

1. Effective online communications

Good online communication between you and your customer has the following characteristics:



- ✓ It is clear, compelling and succinct.
- ✓ It helps the customer to quickly decide if the experience is a match for their requirements.
- ✓ It motivates the customer to make the booking without delay, as they are satisfied that there is no need for additional research.
- ✓ It inspires trust.
- ✓ It uses the triple approach of text, imagery and video.
- ✓ It includes practical details such as
 - Duration (e.g., 2 hours or unlimited time).
 - Transport details, car parking, driving times.
 - Accessibility for wheelchair users
 - Fitness levels needed.
 - Clothing or equipment requirements.

- ✓ Text should be concise and compelling.
- ✓ Images should be high quality and carefully chosen.
- ✓ Videos should be short and of high quality.

2. Clear display of available experiences and associated price points

Imagine if the customer is presented with:



- ✓ Multiple experiences: e.g., 5/10/15 experiences.
- ✓ Multiple combinations at diverse price points: e.g., a boating experience with and without a picnic lunch; with and without the option to visit a private castle; with and without the ability to include merchandise, such as a hat or jacket etc.
- ✓ Additional diverse price points depending on the customer type (e.g., adult, senior citizen, student, family, and children price options).

The outcome is likely to lead to customer confusion – which in turn is highly likely to dissuade a customer from booking. To maximise online bookings, an experience provider must therefore:

- ✓ Clearly plan the experiences and associated price points for sale.
- ✓ Ensure that the presentation of the shortlisted experiences can be clearly and swiftly understood by customers to maximise online booking conversions.

3. Retail price point

The customer should be able to clearly see and understand the retail price point for each experience. They should not need to make further enquiries or research.



If the price has any inclusions – refreshments, equipment or gifts – these should also be noted so that the full value of the offering can be seen and understood.

Lots of great tips about how to commercialise your bookable experience with the right price.

4. Reliable and consistent availability

The customer must be able to clearly determine when the experience is available or unavailable for booking.



Availability should be:

- ✓ Visible.
- ✓ Reliable.
- ✓ In real time.

For date and/or time specific experiences, use an online booking calendar.



Some of our international visitors like to book well in advance.

Even if your experience is seasonal, it needs to be bookable at all times throughout the year.

Consider this; your customer is doing their holiday planning in December, but you don't open until February. If you don't display your availability (i.e., from February on) and your experience isn't bookable in December, you'll most likely lose the booking. Make sure you make it easy for the customer to book and buy – at a time that suits them.



3 good reasons to display your availability

1. To enable the purchase of available/unsold experiences.
2. To remove the risk of over-booking for unavailable experiences.
3. Even if your experience is seasonal, make sure the customer can actually book it at any time of the year.



Displaying your availability helps to maximise booking opportunities, to avoid disappointing the customer and to raise the profile of your experience.

5. Limited capacity and unlimited capacity

All bookable experiences are subject to capacities – either limited or unlimited. You must be clear on which category applies to you.



- ✓ **Limited capacity:** where you have a capped capacity, with no potential to exceed this.
- ✓ **Unlimited capacity:** experiences that have a very high capacity with low risk of exceeding this capacity.

6. Individual bookings

For most visitor experience providers, direct B2C online bookings will come from individuals or small multiples of individuals.



So, it's essential that you offer individual bookings as a priority, rather than just selling experiences intended for larger groups and being subject to minimum booking numbers.

B2C bookings come from individuals, from couples, from small groups of friends or from small family groups like a multi-generational family of grandparents, parents and children.



If growing B2C bookings is important to you, don't let the customer think or feel that your experience is only suitable for large groups.

Example of limited capacity

A guided boat tour with a maximum on board capacity of 10 people. In this case, date and time specific booking options are likely to be required as the customer must reserve a pre-booked space.

Example of unlimited capacity

A self-guided tour of a 300-acre garden that can be booked at any time during opening hours with no restrictions on duration of visit. In this case, you can more easily sell experiences on a free sale basis, whereby a high-level of supply is made available for online sale with no, or a low level of restrictions.



7. Terms and conditions

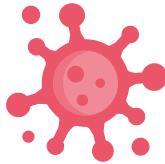
Terms and conditions include items such as:

- ✓ **Payment:** Reserve now pay later or a deposit or full pre-payment.
- ✓ **Cancellation:** Do you allow for change of date? What is your refund policy: zero, partial or full refunds?

Who needs to understand T&Cs?
You, your staff and your customer

8. Covid-19 specific terms

In light of Covid-19 and in line with government policies, your terms must include guidance around safety, hygiene and requirements.



9. A well-trained team

To win customers, generate positive word of mouth and repeat online bookings, it's essential that your team is trained to provide excellent customer service both offline and online. Poor service leads to booking cancellations and lost sales.



Sometimes a customer will use a combination of online and offline methods when booking. For example, they might make an online booking but then follow up with a query via telephone or email, or they might look at your website for information, but then send you an email.



No one likes bad customer service, whether it's face to face, by phone, by email or on your website. On your website, a customer will quickly form an impression about you based on how easy they can find information and make a booking. If the process is not simple to use, you probably won't get the booking.



As a rule, customers expect a reply on the day or maximum within 24 hours.



Delivering on the promise

So, what about the experience at the point of delivery?

After they've made their online booking, the customer must be engaged and delighted during the live experience. This is crucial for generating the positive feedback that leads to repeat customers and word of mouth bookings.

Make sure you and your team are well trained to deliver an excellent experience. The customer in front of you today is your potential sales person or champion tomorrow!



Every online sales channel has its own review platform where customer feedback is visible to others. Reviews are very influential on both B2C bookings (e.g. your own brand website) and B2B bookings (e.g. online travel agent, tour operator, online reseller, online aggregator). If you deliver on your promise, you'll get good reviews, if you don't, you won't!



For experience providers engaging in multiple sales channels such as online B2C direct bookings, B2B bookings and referral bookings, it's vital to understand if the experience has limited or unlimited capacity. This understanding can help ensure that you

- a) maximise all potential sales opportunities.
- b) avoid creating customer dissatisfaction by exceeding what is available for sale.

