

# PLATFORMS FOR GROWTH

A Programme for Tourism Investment

A toolkit to help applicants create an  
Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attraction



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

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Project Ireland  
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**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority





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## How To Use This Guide

Use this toolkit as a reference guide as needed throughout the application process.

For example, you will find section 2 of this toolkit most useful at "Stage 2: The Project Idea". Although, consideration will need to be given to the commerciality of your business early in the application process, you will find the topics covered in section 3 of the toolkit of most relevance for "Stage 3: The Business Case".

## Message from Fáilte Ireland

National Tourism Development Authority

**Tourism has seen strong growth in recent years and Ireland's heritage and cultural tourism offering plays a very significant role in driving this growth. In 2018, more than 6.6 million<sup>1</sup> overseas tourists visited attractions of historic or cultural interest. This represented 70% of overseas tourists to the State.**

However, we cannot afford to be complacent as international competition is fierce as more destinations recognise the value of tourism to their economies. Add to this that tourists are more discerning than ever and seek out authentic and immersive heritage experiences, and we must respond to this demand if we are to maintain growth into the future.

If we consider what tourism may look like in 2030, we see an Irish tourism industry which is in some ways the same, but in others, very different from what we see today. Based on extensive research and experience, we foresee an industry, which is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable, helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas, and is a sector in which people aspire to work.

International research indicates a large number of underlying global factors which show that, while there will be short-term ups and downs, the underlying long-term trend will inevitably be one of strong global growth in tourism.

Fáilte Ireland plans to maximise the benefit from this global growth, by leveraging Ireland's extensive geographical and historic assets fully, and continuing to make these assets more accessible to, and enjoyable for, our visitors.

As the tourism sector continues to grow, it must do so within a framework of sustainability. This principle underpins our approach in the development and delivery of our strategy.

Fáilte Ireland will continue to ensure that all tourism initiatives in which it is involved, are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner.

Over the coming decade we will see our regional Experience Brands ('The Wild Atlantic Way', 'Ireland's Ancient East', 'Dublin' and 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands') grow in importance, a greater emphasis placed on business and convention tourism, a better spread of visitors throughout the country and the year, and more, better visitor experiences.

Today's tourists and those who will arrive in the future, want to immerse themselves and seek exciting, innovative experiences. In essence they want to 'live' the experience!

Fáilte Ireland wants to ensure that under 'Platforms for Growth', we deliver immersive and innovative experiences that not only 'wow' visitors to attractions but are commercially successful, sustainable and 'Best in Class'.

This toolkit has been created by Fáilte Ireland to assist you in developing a great visitor attraction under the 'Platforms for Growth' programme. Whether you are new to the tourism industry or already own or manage a visitor attraction, we want all applicants looking for support to make the best possible case for their projects. So, to help you do this, we have identified the key areas and our 'top tips' for you to focus on in developing your attraction.

We ask you to put yourself 'in the shoes of your visitors', to consider their needs and to create an experience that brings to life the stories and characters you want to share with them. This toolkit will also help you develop the business elements which are required to make your attraction successful - choosing the ideal business model, the right people and the most effective channels to market and sell your offer.

We have drawn on all our insights, research and other resources on the visitor, tourism and the attractions sector, to develop this toolkit. We have also included case studies to demonstrate innovative ideas adopted by some international visitor attractions.

We have made every effort to create a toolkit that is concise, factual, and includes useful tips as well as pointing to additional resources which you can access for more detailed information.

We hope you find it useful and wish you well with the development of your 'Best in Class' immersive visitor experience.

**Orla Carroll**

*Director Product Development*

<sup>1</sup>Based on Preliminary data 2018. Refer to page 28 of this toolkit for details on tourists and holidaymakers.



# The New Idea



## 1.1 We want exciting, innovative ideas

**Under the Fáilte Ireland *Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions* platform, we are looking for truly innovative and creative projects, which can be a point of differentiation, influenced by international trends and are capable of capitalising on these.**

We want to work with private and public sector partners who have assets upon which truly immersive visitor experiences can be developed. In addition, we want to work with new partners, including companies and organisations who may traditionally operate outside of the tourism sector. Such partners include those in the creative and technological industries who have the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver immersive experiences for visitors.

**We particularly want to see new ways of thinking and new ways of responding to what the visitor wants.**

To do this, it is vital to understand visitor behaviour. The global marketplace is changing at an ever-increasing rate, so you need to continually monitor evolving consumer trends. This will help you to keep the visitor at the forefront of what you do, anticipate future consumer behaviour and make decisions based on new perspectives.

# Trend Identification

## FORWARD LOOKING

Trends that are evidenced but not entirely widespread - yet



## OUTWARD LOOKING

Trends that have a broader perspective than just tourism - to get wider outlook on behaviours



## PEOPLE CENTRIC

Understanding people as people and not just consumers or tourists.



To fully understand visitor behaviour and expectations, it is important to look at the macro-trends in demographics, technology and environmental sustainability, as well as accessibility, that have implications beyond tourism, yet exert an enormous influence on the industry.

For example, if we look at global demographics, 'Millennials' and 'Gen Z' now form one of the largest cohorts of tourists. They are digital natives and have an expectation of connectedness. Trends and behaviours from other industries influence them in their expectations when travelling.

**With 45% of Ireland's holidaymakers aged under 35, you should consider how your visitor attraction delivers what they want<sup>2</sup>.**

Regardless of demographic, we are all living in an 'experience society'. As wealth gradually expands and education levels rise, consumers find basic needs more readily met. As each day, month and year passes, the nature of personal satisfaction is derived more from experiences and less by physical phenomena. Anticipating future experiences, while remembering past times, makes us happy. The satisfaction created by authenticity is not confined to any one type of tourist - all segments and demographics appreciate and are drawn to genuine experiences.

**In developing your visitor attraction, it is important to be aware of the range of visitors to attractions. Visitors come from a number of groups, the mix of which will differ depending on the attraction and its' location. The groups can be categorised as follows:**

- Overseas tourists – these include holidaymakers (including tour groups) Business Tourists and VFR (visiting friends and relations)
- Domestic and Northern Irish tourists
- Residents
- Educational groups

In future proofing tourism experiences, we also need to consider our aging tourist segment, many of whom may have mobility challenges.

To find out more about demographic cohorts and global trends, please visit [www.failteireland.ie/trends](http://www.failteireland.ie/trends)

<sup>2</sup>Fáilte Ireland Survey of Overseas Travellers 2017



## 1.2 The Immersive Experience

**While significant progress has been made in recent years to improve how our heritage and culture is presented to the visitor, we are continuously challenged to 'raise the bar' and innovate to find new ways to entertain, excite, engage and develop new experiences that surpass those which we offer today.**

Today's tourists want to connect with the place they visit, its culture and, most of all, with its people. Rather than just be passive consumers, they want to 'experience it all', to immerse themselves in, and be surprised by, unusual events and unexpected stories.

Immersion is a critical component of the experience and is essential to drive high levels of visitor satisfaction. As a visitor attraction developer, you need to consider how you can create opportunities for true immersion throughout your visitor experience which will, in turn, drive visitor satisfaction.

- An immersive experience is one that fires the imagination of the audience so that they feel completely involved.
- Visitors immerse themselves when their senses are truly engaged.

- To achieve this, you must convert the stories of your attraction into experiences through the creation of action, interaction and conversation. This drives visitor satisfaction and creates lasting memories.
- It is important to communicate how your experience will make the visitor feel, how the experience at your attraction is different and for greater impact, emphasise that the experience is unique to Ireland.

### YOUR BIG IDEA

For your immersive experience to work, you need to be clear about your **Big Idea**. What do you want people to remember about your attraction after they have left? What will they talk to each other about and tell their friends about when they return home?

Your Big Idea is your identity, your DNA, your reason for people to visit your attraction. You need to tell them very clearly what it is before they visit, repeat it at the start and during the visit and reinforce it as they leave. Use your Big Idea to choose the stories you tell and the information you give. Every element of the visitor attraction must deliver in some way on the Big Idea.

**We will explore what this means for your attraction in more detail in Section 2 of the toolkit.**

# 1.3 Ireland's Experience Brands

In developing your visitor experience, you will need to consider the location of your project and how it aligns with one of the four regional experience brands ('Wild Atlantic Way', 'Ireland's Ancient East', 'Dublin' and 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands'). These experience brands have been developed to enhance Ireland's appeal to international and domestic visitors and have at their core, the prospect of immersive experiences for the visitor.

For more information on how these experience brands are presented to the consumer, please visit [www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie). To assist you to work with the experience brand relevant to you, please visit [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie)



### Ireland's Ancient East

Take a personal journey of discovery through 5,000 years of history, and hear the people's stories that bring it to life, in a region of rich green fields and stunning natural beauty.

[www.irelandsancienteast.com](http://www.irelandsancienteast.com)



### Dublin

Dublin living thrives side by side with the natural outdoors so you can constantly jump between completely unique, different and often unexpected experiences.

[www.visitdublin.com](http://www.visitdublin.com)



### Wild Atlantic Way

Experience this coastal touring route of wild raw beauty carved by the ocean on Ireland's western seaboard, providing a breath-taking backdrop for exploration of untamed land and seascapes.

[www.wildatlanticway.com](http://www.wildatlanticway.com)



### Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

Get active at your own relaxed pace in the natural rural beauty of Ireland's central heartlands, along scenic waterways and walking trails, discovering what this under-explored region and its welcoming rural communities have to offer.

<https://irelandshiddenheartlands.discoverireland.ie/>

# 1.4 Experiences of Others

**We have told you that we are looking for new ideas and experiences that challenge traditional thinking and boundaries.**

Here are two case studies which illustrate how some international tourism businesses are differentiating themselves in the marketplace and offering experiences that bring the visitor beyond the norm<sup>3</sup>.



## Ars Electronica

*Linz, Austria – Visitor Attraction*

**This case study demonstrates how a science, art and technology visitor attraction has created international awareness and helped transform the city of Linz in Upper Austria into a benchmark of city tourism development. This builds on the city's long history of astronomical and space discovery dating back to Johannes Kepler in the 1600s and the world-famous Johannes Kepler University Linz.**

Since 1979, "Ars Electronica" has integrated art, science and technology through different types of activities. These are:

- 'Museum of the Future' visitor attraction (with the highly innovative Deep Space 8-D immersive experience) attracting 180,000 visitors per annum.
- R&D global development programme;
- Annual Festival (attracting over 100,000 visitors) and associated festival PRIX (a global competition for innovation).

The 'Museum of the Future' houses the unique 'Deep Space – Theatre of the Future'. This is a 16m high 8D virtual reality theatre and is now the most sought-after visitor experience in Upper Austria with 'live' talks, demonstrations and a changing programme of cinematic experiences, including those co-created with NASA and Siemens Laboratories. It offers a platform to anyone who wishes to trial and share an idea, acting as a kind of 'Dragon's Den' for cyberart and science.

It was refurbished in 2015 at a cost of €1.3m, to enable Ars Electronica to remain open in the evenings, attract wider audiences and provide a venue for the generation and promotion of new ideas. "Deep Space" attracts its maximum capacity of 50,000 paying visitors per annum.

In addition, Ars Electronica is an ever-changing spectacle at night to enhance the appeal of the Donaupark and Danube promenade for visitors. It does this by allowing interaction with people outside of the building - the glass exterior of the building has embedded LED lights which acts as a dynamic 'screen'.

### Key takeaways:

- The Attraction constantly reinvents itself with its' for-profit activities helping to fund the 'not-for-profit' elements.
- The content of the core attraction is constantly refreshed by driving R&D.
- It remains relevant to audiences by pushing the boundaries of innovation and invention.
- Momentum is injected year on year through the festival and competition.

<sup>3</sup>The projects identified in these case studies are for illustrative purposes. Rather than being explicit examples of what we will fund, they are instead examples of how to build in elements of innovation and creativity into your projects.



## Memorial Art Gallery

### New York

This case study provides an example of how to use interesting and different ways to tell and refresh and even re-invent your story and engage your audience.

The Memorial Art Gallery (The MAG) in Rochester, New York, set out to attract new audiences and change people's perceptions about art museums as places they can have fun, learn to relax, as well as be challenged and inspired. To do this, the MAG commissioned training from "Museum Hack" to develop a series of themed tours to position their exhibits in a new way for the audience. Museum Hack works with museums and art galleries on their audience development. They lead unconventional tours in ancient institutions. Their tours, which have attracted more than 2,000 5 star reviews, include 'insider' stories, activities and lots of laughs.

With themes including MAG heARTthrobs, MAG Movember, and MAGic at MAG, the MAG now offers a monthly DeTOUR on the third Thursday of each month, many of which sell out. These are exclusive

themed tours focussing on the personal lives of artists, the inspiration and method to their creativity, and lesser-known facts about some of the works in the MAG collection.

#### Key takeaways:

- Think outside the box
- Be willing to invent, innovate and experiment.
- Diversify your offering to appeal to a wide audience.
- Work with others outside of the tourism sector to create new offerings.
- Constantly seek to refresh what you offer your visitor.
- Make it relevant.

# Useful Resources



To find out more about demographic cohorts and global trends, please visit [www.failteireland.ie/trends](http://www.failteireland.ie/trends)

**'Wild Atlantic Way', 'Ireland's Ancient East', 'Dublin' and 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands'**

For more information on how these brands are presented to the consumer, please visit [www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie).

To assist you to work with the experience brand relevant to you, please visit [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie)

# Connecting with Your Visitor

## Section 2





## Finding out more from your visitor

Having looked at two international examples in Section 1, and what made them successful, ask yourself if your project idea is appealing to visitors?

You will need to undertake some research to gain a better understanding of who your visitors are, what they are looking for and how your project will meet their needs. You will want to know:

- What is the market breakdown of your current visitors (if applicable)?
- What are your core international target markets?
- What is the size of these markets?
- Where is the potential for growth?
- How will the project appeal to these audiences?

- What will motivate visitors to visit your proposed attraction?

This project could involve conducting primary research or carrying out desk research to discover what other similar attractions are doing.

You can do this in a number of ways:

- Desk research
- In an existing business, gather feedback from current visitors - this can be informal questioning and observations.
- Conduct more formal research through surveys of visitors/potential visitors, either online or face-to-face.

In this section, we ask you to think objectively about your new or enhanced visitor experience, and to help you, we will give you our 'Top Tips' throughout Section 2.

If you are to successfully develop an experience that will deliver what the visitor is looking for, **you will need to put yourself 'in the shoes' of your visitors and map out their journey at your site.**

## 2.1 Who are your visitors?

Ireland's culture and heritage attractions need to develop new or enhanced experiences that will attract and exceed the expectations of today's visitors. By knowing more about your visitors, you gain insight into how to deliver a more immersive experience, sending home visitors who will recommend your attraction to others.

Regardless of which market they come from your visitors will have a diverse range of backgrounds and have different motivations and needs. Some will want to explore your attraction at their own pace and in their own way. Others are looking for an authentic and thought-provoking experience. Some visitors want to escape the stresses of their busy lives and spend quality time with their families and friends. Others are simply seeking a fun day out. Many will fit into two or more of these categories.



As well as learning about your visitors, it is also important to be aware of opportunities to add new audiences to your visitor base. You can do this by:

- Keeping yourself informed about what others are doing to attract and target new visitors to their businesses.
- Thinking about the barriers that some audiences typically face when engaging with your attraction. For example are you accessible and inclusive to a range of audiences including families with children in buggies and those with physical and intellectual disabilities?
- Consulting with people to create new ideas. You could involve your target audience in designing activities that will meet their needs and interests. For example, if you wish to target families, tailor elements of your offering to them and test it with a number of groups. This can be an excellent PR opportunity and a great way to create buy-in.

### Ask yourself

*What is my Big Idea and is this what visitors want?*

- *Who are the three important visitor types for your business, e.g. families, coach tours and overseas tourists?*
- *What are the three things that each group of visitors will want from the experience? For example;*
  - *Families will want activities they can do together, child-friendly language and active engagement.*
  - *Coach tours are likely to have a time limit and will need to accommodate up to 60 people at a time.*
  - *Non-English speaking visitors will require information in their own language. Overseas visitors in general may need explanations of history that would be familiar to Irish visitors.*

### Top Tip

**It is important that you not only think about today's visitor but also of your future visitor. Who will be visiting your attraction in the future?** Keeping abreast of trends will allow you to equip yourself with the knowledge needed to target future audiences. This will also help you to maintain a business that is commercially and environmentally sustainable and successful.



## 2.2 The Visitors Top Five

**'Fáilte Ireland's research has identified and ranked what drives satisfaction for visitors at attractions.<sup>4</sup>**

The research has identified five key areas that influence visitor satisfaction. In order of importance they are:

### 2.2.1 Storytelling

### 2.2.2 Tour with official guide

### 2.2.3 Interpretation: Presentation, Exhibits and Information Tools

### 2.2.4 Interior and Layout

### 2.2.5 Welcome and Orientation, Amenities and Staff

Before we explore these areas in detail, it may be useful to define what we mean by 'interpretation' as it is intrinsic to the delivery of your visitor experience.

Interpretation is simply a communication process that translates factual information into a form that's more understandable, meaningful and engaging.

*" Well-planned interpretation makes the experience of 'being there' richer and more relevant. It welcomes modern visitors into the rich heritage of your site and helps them appreciate its treasures. It engages visitors in activities and gives information that provokes their emotions, imagination and understanding. It sheds light on Irish culture, past and present, and provokes questions and dialogue."<sup>5</sup>*

For many people, the best interpretation is a friendly, well-trained and knowledgeable guide but interpretation can include many other types of media including print, audio, interpretation panels and technology.

<sup>4</sup>Fáilte Ireland Drivers of Satisfaction at Visitor Attractions 2018

<sup>5</sup>Excerpt from: "Sharing our Stories: Using interpretation to improve the visitors' experience at heritage sites"

## 2.2.1 STORYTELLING

**To the visitor, the story you tell and how you tell it is the most important part of your visitor attraction.**

The art and craft of storytelling can enrich the experience of a place and make it unforgettable. **The most memorable visitor experiences surprise visitors with amazing stories told in fascinating ways in extraordinary places.**

Use your Big Idea to choose the stories you tell and the information you give. Not all stories will be interesting to visitors or need to be told at the same level. Finding your story involves extracting the most important things that you want people to remember and prioritising these. It requires identifying the elements that will surprise and connect with people from across the world. A good story drives visitor satisfaction and engages the visitor on a personal level.

### What makes a good story?

Great stories begin with characters and dramas that will capture the listener's attention and imagination.

**'Stories of People' and 'Stories of Place' are the most powerful for creating a great visitor experience at your attraction.**

- 'Stories of People'
- People love people so identify those **characters** who can bring your stories to life; stories about tragedy, romance, betrayal, stories that will trigger emotion and empathy in your audience.
- You need a strong cast of central and supporting characters, for example, visitors like to hear about heroes and villains.
- Dramatic **plots** and conflict also appeal to visitors – don't shy away from darker stories.
- The characters you identify to tell your story should feature prominently in your interpretation, whatever medium you use.
- 'Stories of Place' help you develop a unique sense of place. Think about how the **location** of your attraction can add more depth to your story.

### Ask yourself

- *What do you want your visitors to remember about you at the end of their experience?*
- *What stories can you tell that will help towards achieving that goal?*
- *What resources do you have (research, archives, objects, photographs, local memories) to help you tell the story?*
- *Is there an assumption of prior knowledge or does the story cater for all audiences?*
- *Does your exhibition add to your attraction's sense of place?*

### Top Tip

- Identify those who tell stories brilliantly both in Ireland and overseas and benchmark against them.
- Consider 'auditioning' different stories, or story themes as part of a test tour.
- Ensure your main story is differentiated - don't tell too many stories.



## Make Your Story an Experience

Visitors want to experience your stories and be involved. The creation of action, interaction and conversation drives visitor satisfaction and creates lasting memories.

To work out what visitors will experience when they come through your door and how they will encounter your stories during their visit or journey, you will need to consider:

- **Introduction** – Where will you engage with your visitors and raise their expectations?
- **Characters** – Where and how will visitors encounter your characters?
- **Dramatic moments** – How will you make the most of your high-points, the incidents that make your story and your attraction unforgettable?
- **Dilemmas and decisions** – How will you get people talking and participating in your story?
- **Reveals** – Where can you build in surprises that will enliven the visit and make people laugh, cry or jump?
- **Ending** – Where and how will your story and the visit end?

### Top Tip

- Make the most of your attraction: walk around your site and break your story down into incidents and match each to a place-based activity. These 'activities' can be as simple as looking at a view, unlocking a door or climbing some stairs.
- Make it multi-sensory - aim to expose visitors to evocative sights, smells, sounds and tactile experiences as much as possible. Allow the visitor to get involved and learn something new.
- Focus on the visitor's enjoyment and be imaginative. Surprise them.



Telling the story of a heritage attraction is not reciting the history or showing a timeline. It is about why this place matters and about amazing characters.



### Example:

#### Titanic Belfast

In 2016 Titanic Belfast was named the 'World's Leading Tourist Attraction' at the World Travel Awards. Titanic Experience tells the world renowned and tragic story in a powerful and emotive way, whilst tailoring the level of information to different audiences. Extending over nine interactive galleries, the story is brought to life through a variety of media and innovative interactive technologies such as a multi-dimensional exhibition with special effects, dark rides, full-scale reconstructions, audio accounts from survivors and authentic artefacts. The design of the museum building itself also serves to reflect elements of the ship's construction story, as well as Belfast's history of ship making.

#### 2.2.2 GUIDES ADD VALUE

**To the visitor, the story you tell and how you tell it, is the most important part of your visitor attraction.**

Having identified your stories, you need to think about how you will communicate them to your visitors.

**For those attractions that offered tours with guides for independent visitors, there was a take-up of the tour by 70% of visitors.<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>6</sup>Fáilte Ireland Drivers of Satisfaction at Visitor Attractions 2018

Tour guides must be entertaining, passionate and well informed. Humour and distinctive 'nuggets' contained within the tour delivery are often especially memorable.

## Ask yourself

*If you are looking to initiate a tour for the first time, ask yourself the following:*

- Do you understand the unique needs of your tour audiences - overseas, families, schools, etc. and can you tailor the tour to their needs?
- Are there busy times of year/week/day during which tours could be introduced and piloted in a phased approach?
- Do a cost benefit analysis on whether you should use volunteers or paid staff as guides. Is this appropriate to the attraction?
- Consider tour approaches that could be tested with groups to refine content and themes.

*If you already have a tour and are in the process of reviewing it, be sure to:*

- Review tour feedback from Trip Advisor and tour operators.
- Identify aspects of the tour that may not be optimal. Is there a feeling of being rushed? Is the group too large? Do interactive elements along the way cause pinch points?
- Ask yourself if your guides feel empowered to tailor the tour as they see fit? Can you retain great guides?

## Top Tip



- Consider delivering your story through well trained costumed guides. These interpreters involve visitors in the drama, transport them back in time and evoke emotion in the audience.
- Think about how to animate your attraction through appropriate events including re-enactments and living history events. These can run at peak times and provide an additional revenue stream for your attraction.

## Example:

### Victorian Memories

Costumed interpreters bring Audley End House and Gardens in the UK back to its Victorian heyday every weekend from May to September. Visitors can discover what life was like below stairs by meeting the Victorian workers in the stables, service wing, nursery and coal gallery. Visitors come face to face with Mrs Crocombe, the housekeeper, as she prepares a meal for the family, bump into the stable hands while they're grooming the horses and meet Governess Miss Dormer as she organises the children for the day.

## 2.2.3 MAKE PRESENTATIONS MEMORABLE

**Providing a range of media provides a more creative and memorable experience and appeals to different learning styles.**

Planning and producing the most appropriate media for your attraction will require time, thought and a skilled team. A satisfactory outcome will depend on your understanding of your audiences and of your story.

- Props and physical exhibits are important. Visitors like to hold and touch. This is especially important for younger audiences and those with sight challenges or hearing impairments.
- Digital is no longer new, so any use must enhance the story.
- Provide layers of information for all appetites with access to additional information if required.
- Flow and orientation are important – although visitors want to be in control, they don't want to feel they're 'doing it wrong'.



- Take time to think.
- Reflect on what you really want people to take away from the experience.
- Trial your ideas for new media with your target audience and pay attention to their feedback.

### Example:

#### Different Audiences

1. To cater for their younger audience and their need to get hands-on, York Minster in the UK, offers a range of activities to help children explore the cathedral's stories and discover fun facts. 'Little Explorer' backpacks can be borrowed for free from the welcome desks and are packed with gadgets to help young people explore the Minster including binoculars, torch, compass, map and magnifying glass.
2. The Real Mary King's Close in Edinburgh, Scotland, a visitor experience located in an historic close in the heart of city, shows how they accommodate visitors with disabilities in an historic layout. They do so in the following ways:
  - There is no admission charge for carers accompanying visitors with disabilities.
  - A copy of their tour script or e-reader is available for visitors with hearing impairment needs.
  - Visitors can view a model of the Close in their free exhibition.

Over the last 16 years, visitors to the Real Mary King's Close have grown from 60,000 to 256,000 per annum.

### Ask yourself

- *Are you providing the right level of information for all audiences?*
- *Are you catering to the needs of non-English speaking visitors?*
- *Do visitors intuitively understand the flow? Are they drawn to some experiences while bypassing others?*
- *Consider your budget. Where possible, choose a medium that you can comfortably afford so you have more options for higher quality, more innovative work.*
- *Content will need to be refreshed. Consider how your selected media will need to be updated and replaced. Can you meet the maintenance and running costs (financial and human) of your chosen medium?*

## 2.2.4 INTERIOR AND LAYOUT

Visitors value a sense of freedom, especially those that choose to self-guide. They want to digest information the way it was intended.

Confusing exterior layout or unclear direction at the start of the attraction can negatively impact the visitor experience. The layout needs to facilitate the story structure - intuitive beginning, middle and end. Clear signage around the attraction and exhibits is valued – it allows visitors to orientate themselves and feel more in control of their experience.

### Ask yourself

- How does both the start and end of the experience work? Are there queues or bottlenecks? Do independent visitors or tour groups converge?
- Does your attraction have a known optimum capacity? Do you know your pinch points?
- If required, is there an appropriate area to wait for the next tour which enables you to engage with the visitor as they wait?

### Top Tip

- 'Walk the floor' regularly, so you can talk to your visitors informally and watch what they do. This will help you understand how well your on-site experience is working. Encourage your team also to do this routinely.
- Get feedback from your guides and floor staff on whether visitors intuitively understand the flow of your attraction. Are there areas that pose a challenge, e.g. tour group timings?
- Where possible, use universally recognised icons to cater for non-English speaking visitors.



### Example:

#### Navigating History

The Mary Rose Museum, in Portsmouth's historic dockyard, displays the wreck of King Henry VIII's navy flagship in a purpose-built structure which was built around the 470-year old wreck as it lay in dry dock following its recovery from the seabed.

Visitors are invited to explore the decks of the ship and 19,000 Tudor-era artefacts, by walking through the various galleries over 3 floors: the real ship on one side, her objects on the other. The end galleries at each level then interpret the decks in more conventional museum display cases. The spaces feature low ceilings and are kept deliberately dark, with lighting directed only onto exhibits and handrails so that visitors can find their way through the galleries. In order to manage large numbers of visitors (almost 365,000 in 2017), the museum utilises an exceptional array of internal signage (e.g. directional signs, floor plans, layout maps etc), lighting techniques and print pieces to ensure visitors are well-orientated throughout their visit while simultaneously maintaining a coherent and atmospheric story about life on board the 16th century warship.



## 2.2.5 WELCOME, ORIENTATION, AMENITIES AND STAFF

### Welcome and Orientation

You have only one chance to make a first impression. It is vital that your attraction creates a good initial impact. Within the first five minutes, the visitor should;

- feel welcome;
- know what is special about your attraction;
- know where they will go;
- know what they will do;
- know how much it will cost.
- know where the facilities and services are located (restaurant, toilets, baby-changing, etc.).

### Ask yourself

- *Is your site physically accessible? Consider visitors with limited mobility, families, etc.*
- *Does the visitor receive a strong sense of arrival with clearly presented and accurate information about opening times, charges and what's available on the day of visit?*
- *Does the visit price include experiences that are not communicated properly to the visitor? Consider better signage, maps, printed list on ticket, etc.*
- *Are there perceived hidden costs – for car park or different elements or experience? Could different charges be bundled to demonstrate added value?*

### Amenities

The appearance of exterior buildings, grounds, gardens, etc. should be appealing and well maintained. The café is an important element, particularly for those attractions located in a rural setting.

### Ask yourself

- *Are there quality on-site visitor facilities with sufficient capacity – reception, parking, toilets, etc?*
- *Do your retail, food and beverage facilities enhance the visitor experience through layout, visitor flow, quality and presentation of food, merchandise, etc?*
- *Are the amenities, grounds, landscape and equipment clean and well-maintained?*



## Staff

Remember that people warm to people. In addition to your tour guides, use your non-guiding staff well to create personal experiences.

### Ask yourself

- *Are there enough staff at all touch points?*
- *Do you make provision for staff training and development across all areas of the business? To drive visitor satisfaction, you need to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge.*
- *Are high standards of customer service consistently delivered by your staff? Do they have a genuine pride in your attraction and a strong knowledge of the product?*

### Example:

#### The Living Museum of the North

Beamish is an open-air museum telling the story of life in North East England in the 1820s, 1900s and 1940s. Visitors are transported back in time and are immersed in life as it was - a town as it would have been in the 1840s, a First World War village and a farm recreated from the eighteenth century. There are no traces of contemporary life with a notable absence of modern interpretive media. Shops in the 1940s town sell products from the 1940s, staff wear 1940s clothes and so on. The commitment to authenticity and immersion is evident across the entire experience. For example, visitors can shop for traditional items in the 1900s Town or try fish and chips from the 1900s Pit Village, a working exhibit which uses traditional cooking methods.

In the last ten years, visitor numbers at Beamish have grown from 450,000 to over 750,000 and are continuing to grow. The attraction is now undergoing a major £18 million investment programme.



## 2.3 Before and After the visit

In addition to the on-site experience, you also need to consider what you offer the visitor before they arrive at your attraction and after they leave.



### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- Can visitors find informative, motivational information about your experience when they are planning their trip? Do you communicate what's different and novel about your experience? The use of strong images to do this is important.
- How well do you know and understand your target audiences? Do you use appropriate media channels to communicate with them?
- Can visitors access relevant information from other providers in advance of visiting your site?
- Does your experience engage the senses of the visitor from when they first come into contact with your attraction?
- Do you provide a quality ticketing solution both online and offline?

### APPROACH

- At what point is the visitor oriented and how?
- Is there attractive and functional en-route and local signage directing visitors to your site and area?

### GREAT ENDING

You want your visitors to leave your attraction having had an amazing time. Create a strong ending that will leave people thinking and talking and wanting to share their experience with others. Think about how you can use the end of the visit to set up a post visit relationship.

- Are people encouraged and facilitated to share their experience through all channels, e.g. social media and other media during and post visit?
- Is there a mechanism in place to gather visitor data and feedback post-visit?
- Can you encourage testimonials/reviews from visitors about how your experience is 'must see', 'surprising' and 'beyond expectations'?

Your visitors are the best judges of your attraction and the experience it offers. You need to monitor satisfaction ratings and positive sharing of the experience post visit.

## Useful Resources



For further information on developing the visitor experience at your attraction, check out more supports at Fáilte Focus [www.failteireland.ie/pfgtoolkit](http://www.failteireland.ie/pfgtoolkit)

These include the following toolkits which include case studies and walk through exercises:

- **Sharing our Stories** - focusses on how you can make a measurable improvement to how visitors experience your heritage site.
- **Dublin's Surprising Stories Toolkit** – designed to assist existing visitor attractions in Dublin to unlock the great stories they have to offer, this is relevant for all attractions.
- **Ireland's Ancient East: a Toolkit for Storytelling Interpretation** - developed to help visitor attractions in Ireland's Ancient East to find their best stories and tell them in the best way, it is relevant for all attractions.
- **Experiences Explained** – designed to help you to understand the components that combine to deliver a memorable and immersive tourism experience.
- **A Tourism Toolkit for Irelands Built Heritage** - a resource for those who own, manage and work at Ireland's heritage sites. This toolkit will help you grow your visitor numbers by enhancing the on-site experience and promoting your site effectively.
- **A Tourism Toolkit for Irelands Cultural Attractions** - provides a step-by-step approach to those who own, manage or work within a cultural organisation to deliver an engaging experience to grow your visitors numbers and revenue.

# The “Business” of Attractions





**Your visitor attraction should not only have the visitor at the forefront of everything you do but must also be a viable business, operate effectively and be commercially focused and sustainable.**

To help you do this, we have identified some key areas to consider when you are developing your operations plan and the commercial sustainability of your tourism business.

## 3.1 Your Business Model

Your business model needs to guarantee long-term financial sustainability for your visitor attraction and be operated in a financially viable way.

A business plan provides a roadmap to achieve your vision for the future of your business as well as formulating your goals.

The first step is to have a clear overview of the project and have addressed questions such as:

- What is the proposed development?
- What is the vision? Where do you want to be a decade from now?
- What are the product and services within the attraction?

The importance of detailed research is essential, as it will ultimately make for a stronger business plan. The following questions cover some of the key areas that should be addressed in your business plan.

### Knowing Your Audience

- Who do you plan to attract and how will your attraction appeal to them? What is the likely size of the market? What groups are the target segments?

### Marketing and Selling Your Attraction

- Have you created a specific sales and marketing plan?
- How will you market your attraction to the identified target markets? What are your sales targets?
- Who will your competitors be? For each competitor, identify why they are a competitor, how they price, their opening hours, the markets they serve, the products and services they offer, their ratings on Trip Advisor etc?

### Revenue Management

- Identify your revenue streams. Develop your pricing strategy. Estimate your costs both fixed and variable. Do you know your breakeven point? Do you know your profit margins for different stock in your retail outlet? Compile financial projections per season/month and week.

### Management and Operations

- How will your visitor attraction be operated? What are your staffing requirements? Do you have the correct skillset in place?

### Visitor Numbers

- As admissions will more than likely be your primary source of revenue, you will need to consider your visitor numbers.

## Ask yourself:

- *What are your current visitor numbers (if you are an existing attraction)?*
- *What are the projected visitor numbers?*
- *What is the rationale behind these projections?*
- *Are your visitors paying or non-paying?*
- *Are your paying and/or non-paying visitors local, domestic or overseas?*
- *What is the primary purpose of visit? E.g. a looped walk on the grounds of the attraction; visitors to events such as conference/festival*



## 3.2 Credibly projecting visitor numbers

- In the course of the application process for “Platforms for Growth”, you will need to provide a credible methodology for how you have arrived at your visitor number projections over the fifteen year operational phase. It is important that your projections are realistic and deliver a return on investment. Many projects may get into difficulty during the early years of operation if they discover that their projections were overly ambitious for those early years. This is particularly significant for those businesses that are new to the marketplace.
- If you are already an operating business, you will need to analyse your current visitor numbers and provide a breakdown between the number of locals visiting your business, the number of domestic visitors (non-local) and most importantly, the number of overseas visitors.
- Whether you are a new or existing business, you will be required to benchmark your projected numbers against visitor numbers to the wider destination. In addition, it is a useful exercise to benchmark your project against other sites in the area. You can also consider other sites of a similar theme and /or offering and benchmark against those.
- You will also need to demonstrate how you will gather visitor numbers during the operational phase of the project and how you will use this data to improve and make changes to your business. Visitor numbers are most easily gathered at the point of ticket purchase or at entry level. Ticketing systems in the market now offer sophisticated mechanisms for the gathering of visitor data.
- More detail on current visitor numbers can be found across a number of our research sources.

We encourage you to visit the Fáilte Ireland website and the 'Resources' section at the end of this chapter where you will find useful resources to help you carry out your own research and develop your business plan.

## 3.3 Forecasting Demand

### KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

**Knowing your audience and targeting the right customers is key to the future success of your visitor attraction. When you are trying to forecast the demand for your attraction it is important that you first understand the markets and audiences that you are going to target and then describe within your Business Plan how you are going to target them.**

In this section we offer a snapshot of some of the statistics available to you on the Fáilte Ireland website in relation to Ireland's core, secondary and emerging markets, the holidaymakers age demographics and booking trends. However it is essential that you conduct your own research and refer to the resources provided at the end of this chapter to allow you to delve further into the markets that are relevant.

### Tourist or Holidaymaker?

- Tourists include all travellers who stay away from home for one or more nights for either holiday, visiting friends and family, business or other purposes.
- Holidaymakers are the largest subcategory of overseas tourists. They are a key focus of much of Ireland's developmental and marketing strategies as their choice of destination can be directly influenced.<sup>7</sup>



Source: Fáilte Ireland: Travel Profiles, A Snapshot of Key Markets

<sup>7</sup>Fáilte Ireland: Travel Profiles, A Snapshot of Key Markets [http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3\\_Research\\_Insights/5\\_International\\_Tourism\\_Trends/FI-110678-Travel-Profile-Key-Markets-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/5_International_Tourism_Trends/FI-110678-Travel-Profile-Key-Markets-FINAL.pdf?ext=.pdf)



## Trend in Overseas Tourism Numbers

- Ireland welcomed 9.6m overseas tourists in 2018.<sup>8</sup>
- Overseas tourism numbers are on an upward growth trend increasing by 9% in 2016, 3% in 2017 and 6% in 2018.<sup>9</sup>
- Nearly 7 in 10 (68%)<sup>10</sup> of Ireland's overseas tourists come from Ireland's four core markets; Great Britain, United States, Germany and France.
- Ireland's secondary markets include Spain and Italy and the emerging markets include China, Gulf States (GCC) and India.
- 45% of Ireland's holiday makers are under the age of 35.<sup>11</sup>

## Domestic Travel

Fáilte Ireland estimates that 9.8 million domestic trips were taken in 2018.<sup>12</sup>

59% of the adult population took a holiday in Ireland in 2018 whilst 39% of domestic holidaymakers engaged with places of cultural interest.<sup>13</sup>

### Ask yourself

- *How will you promote your attraction to the domestic audience?*
- *How will you ensure that you stand out from the crowd?*
- *How many domestic visitors come to your region each year?*
- *What are your key customer segments within the domestic market?*

For more information on Ireland's key markets [click here](#)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8,9,10,11</sup> Fáilte Ireland Preliminary Tourism Facts 2018

<http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/Preliminary-Tourism-Facts-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Fáilte Ireland, Domestic Estimates, 2018

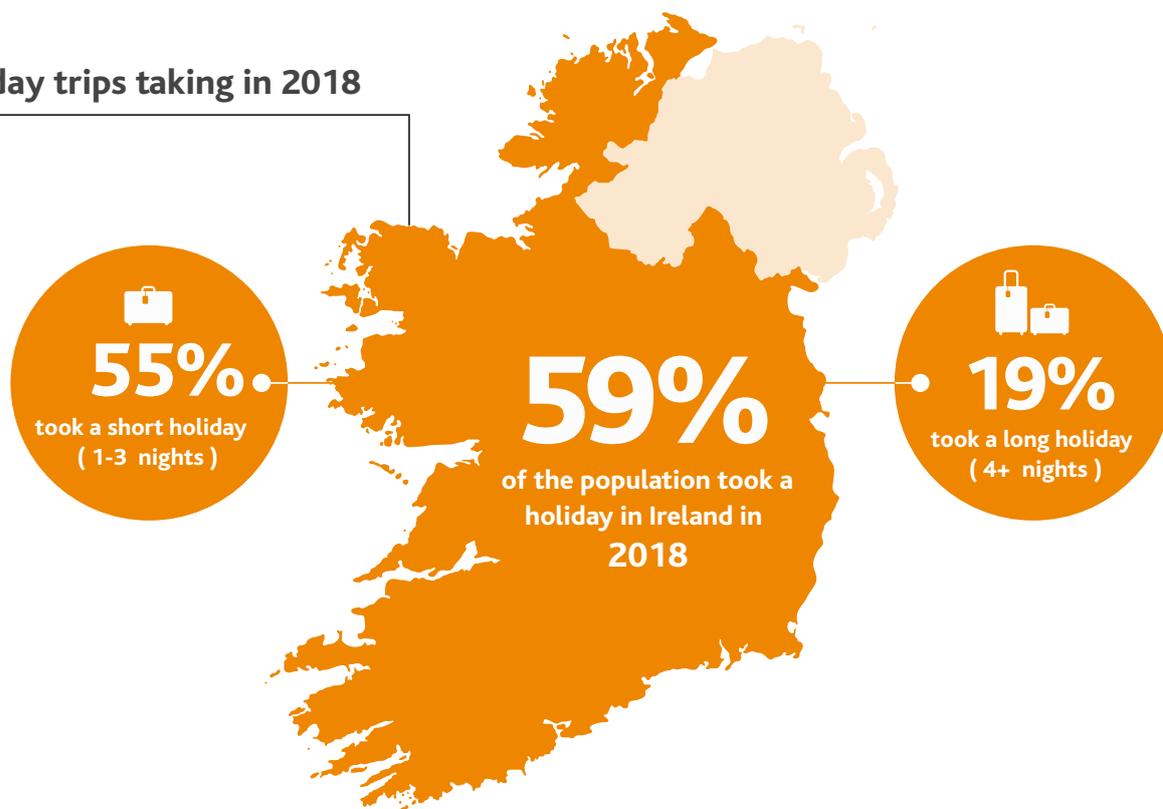
<sup>13</sup> Domestic Holiday Monitor 2018

[http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3\\_Research\\_Insights/Research\\_reports\\_infographics/Domestic-Holidays-Infographic-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/Research_reports_infographics/Domestic-Holidays-Infographic-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://failte-ireland.scoop.it/topic/what-tourists-want>

# Domestic Holiday Monitor 2018

## Holiday trips taking in 2018



## activities engaged in on holiday

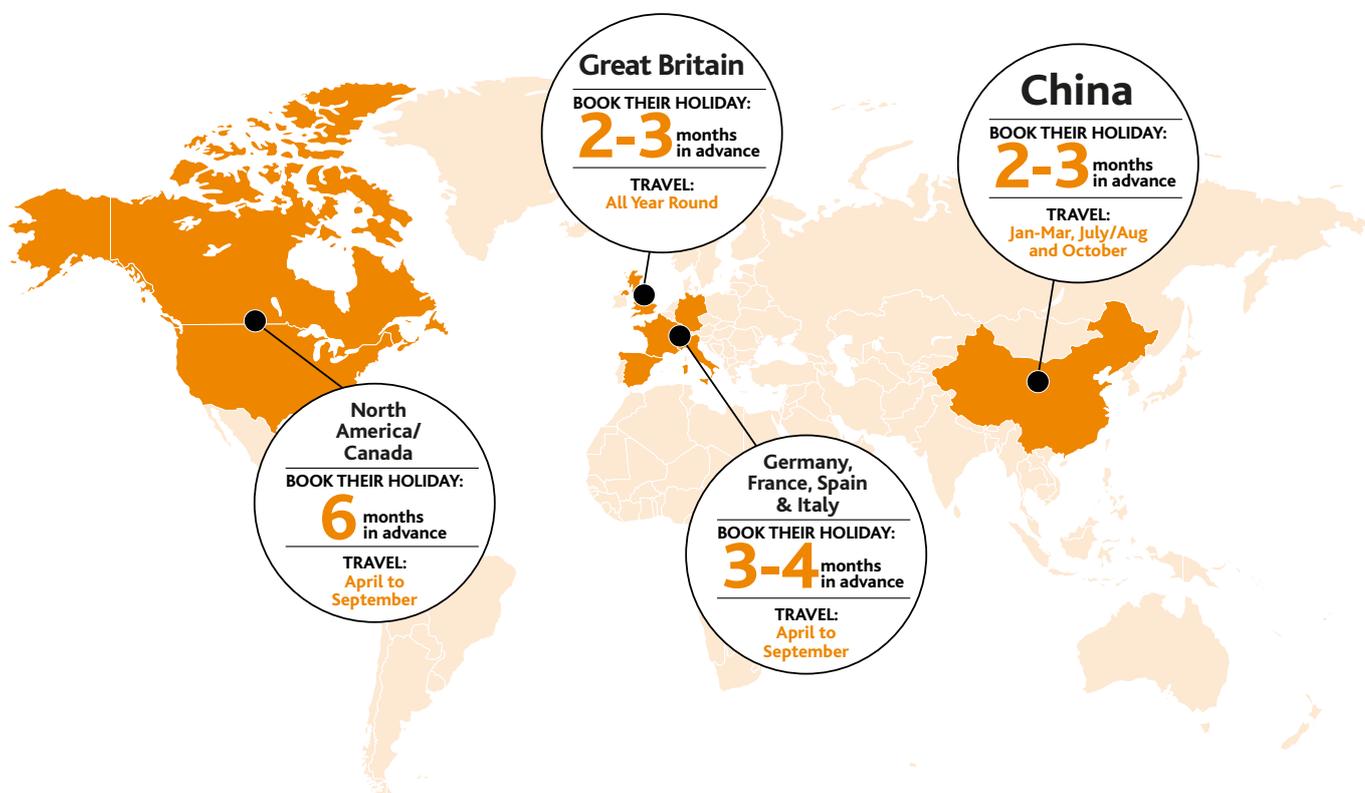


Source: Domestic Holiday Monitor 2018, Ipsos MRBI for Fáilte Ireland

## Booking Trends and Sources of Information

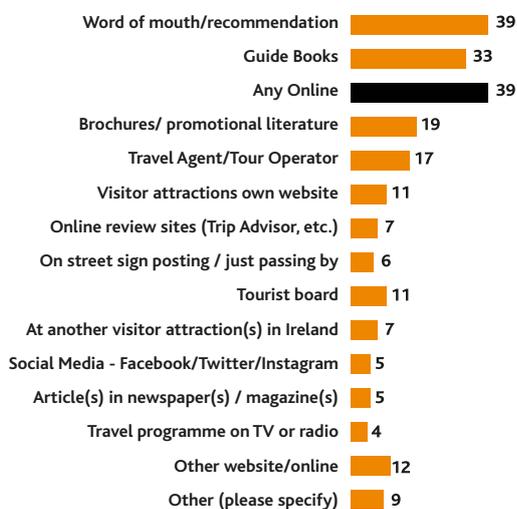
Deciding when and where to go on holiday is an elaborate process and many sources of information and influences come into play.

What are the travel booking trends broken down by market?



Source: Fáilte Ireland – Trading Globally Grow Your Tourism Exports

## Any Mention National Average %



Source: Fáilte Ireland Drivers of Satisfaction at Visitor Attractions 2016/2018

According to Fáilte Ireland's research Drivers of Satisfaction 2018, when the visitor sample at attractions was asked 'where did you first hear about... (this place)', 'any online' and 'word of mouth/recommendation' both came out on top with 39%. This emphasises the importance of word of mouth and cross selling with other attractions. These elements are vital to the success of visitor attractions and contribute significantly to positive word of mouth when visitors return home.

## MARKETING AND SELLING YOUR ATTRACTION

**A key element of delivering your business plan will be the marketing, promotional and sales strategy that underpins this, with key performance indicators (KPI's) as a means to monitor success and growth.**

The development of your marketing, promotional and sales strategy, and your tactical marketing and sales plans are an opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of your customer. It gives you the opportunity to research who your customer is, their persona and how you will tell them the story of your attraction.

Your attraction needs to align with the relevant experience brand (Ireland's Ancient East, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Dublin). You need to be clear how you will promote your attraction as part of the brand covering your location and how you will leverage this to your advantage. These brands are promoted by Tourism Ireland in the overseas marketplace and by Fáilte Ireland to the domestic market. It is important that you keep up to date with ongoing activities and marketing initiatives and participate in these where you can.

For more information on each of the experience brands see section 1.2.1

For more information on how Ireland is marketed in overseas markets by Tourism Ireland please visit <https://www.tourismireland.com/>. Discover Ireland (operated by Fáilte Ireland) features comprehensive information and listings for Irish accommodation, activities, events, tourist attractions and Irish holiday special offers, visit [www.discoverireland.ie](http://www.discoverireland.ie) for more information.

### Ask yourself

- Which experience brand are you linking to?
- Is there a story or experience within that brand that you are linking to?
- How will you link to it online, offline and within the attraction?

**Here are some of the key headings and questions to consider when devising your marketing, promotional and sales strategy.**

<b>Market Analysis</b>	It is important to understand the market place, who your current and potential visitors are and what they are seeking. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many visitors come to your attraction every year?</li> <li>Has there been an increase /decrease year on year? What is the average spend per visitor?</li> <li>What are your sources of business revenue and in what areas do you see potential for growth?</li> </ul>
<b>Target Markets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are your target markets (primary and secondary)?</li> <li>Who are your key target segments? What global segments do your target markets fall into?</li> <li>What are your projected visitor numbers over the next decade?</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing Promotional Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you tell your story? What are your marketing objectives (what do you want to achieve)?</li> <li>What channels will you use to reach your objectives? (e.g. media, PR, booking engine, digital etc.)?</li> <li>What is your online and offline marketing promotional strategy? What materials will you use to support the promotional strategy? What is your business-to-business strategy (B2B)?</li> </ul>
<b>Pricing Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your retail rate? What are your competitors charging? What are your trade prices?</li> <li>Have you got a B2B strategy for tour operators/travel agents advance?</li> <li>• What is the rationale for your pricing strategy?</li> </ul>
<b>Distribution Strategy</b>	Having the right distribution channels is a critical element for success in all businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main distribution channels associated with your offering? What is your sales forecast?</li> <li>What are your direct and indirect sales channels? What is your saleable experience?</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing Budget</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much do you plan to spend each year and where?</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What members of the dedicated team/resource will be appointed to implement the marketing, promotional and sales details outlined in the plan?</li> </ul>

## Routes to Market

You can reach your customer in a number of different ways which are often referred to in the industry as **distribution channels**. Having the right distribution channels is a critical element for success in all businesses.

Key questions to consider when you are thinking about distribution channels include:

- How will customers discover your visitor attraction?
- What are the channels that customers use to research your attraction and make bookings?

The chart below highlights some examples of direct and indirect channels both online and traditional. For more information on routes to market and distribution channels visit '[Trading Globally- Grow Your Tourism Exports](#)'.<sup>15</sup>



	Direct Channels	Indirect Channels
<b>Traditional</b>	Phone and Email Enquiries	Agencies
	Walk-in Customers	In Ireland or in Market Sales Events
	Sales Missions	ITOA or Other Associations
	Trade Shows	Researcher or Representation Company
	Familiarisation Trips	Accommodation Partners/Local Referrals
	Collaborative Marketing	Day Tour Providers
		Tour Operators
	Destination Management Companies (DMC's)	
<b>Online</b>	Digital Marketing	Online Travel Agencies
	Website	Global Distribution Systems (GDS)
	Social Media	Metasearch
		Deal Aggregator sites, e.g. Travel Zoo
		Membership based (closed) travel sites, Voyages Privé

Source: Fáilte Ireland - Trading Globally Grow Your Tourism Exports

<sup>15</sup>Trading Globally Grow Your Tourism Exports  
[http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Get\\_Brexit\\_Ready/Business\\_Performance/FINAL-Trading-Globally-Grow-Your-Tourism-Exports-\(003\).pdf](http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Get_Brexit_Ready/Business_Performance/FINAL-Trading-Globally-Grow-Your-Tourism-Exports-(003).pdf)

## Your Online Presence

When holidaymakers are making a destination choice, they research and want reassurance that there is plenty to see and do.

Although holidaymakers in the main will not book an attraction before they travel (unless demand is high), it is important to have a strong online presence as they look for assurance that there are enough quality experiences to fill their days. Appealing visitor attractions will motivate travel to regions around Ireland.

### Ask yourself

- Does my website rank well on search engines?
- Can potential customers in your target markets find your website online?
- As well as your own website presence, what are others saying about you online?
- Consider how you can make your experience more visible to visitors online before they arrive, for example through third party attraction ticket sales platforms.
- Does my website meet with the guidelines on website accessibility? [Click here](#)<sup>16</sup> for more information.

## Measuring Online Presence

Fáilte Ireland research shows that your online presence is key to your tourism business and it is vital to review it regularly to make sure that you are 'visible' to your target markets.

### Ask yourself

- Are people engaging with your social media activity?
- Is your site appearing prominently in Google searches in your target markets?
- Are your online bookings performing as well as they should be?
- What is Google Analytics telling you?

It is crucial that you learn how to monitor, manage and boost your online presence across all channels.

Top Tip

Check out ["Measuring Online Presence"](#)<sup>17</sup> for more information.



<sup>16</sup> Web Content Accessibility Guidelines <http://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/new-in-21/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Brexit/Measuring-online-presence.pdf>

## Cross Selling and Working in a Cluster

Visitors will travel to an area where they perceive that there is lots to see and do and that they can easily access them as part of their itinerary. This is what makes a holiday special and stress-free. It is important to work with others in your area to develop a holistic visitor experience for 48 hours or three days.

Cross-selling is an important tool to achieve this, both for your business and locality as it can lead to visitors choosing to come to your area and your attraction, staying longer in an area and spending more. In particular, on the ground promotion is vital, as 60% of the overseas visitors surveyed at attractions only heard of the attraction they were visiting after they had arrived in Ireland<sup>18</sup>. This points to the importance of making sure that other businesses in your area, be they tourism businesses or otherwise, are familiar with your attraction and happy to recommend it to visitors.

It can also cost nothing to do - making it an even more cost-effective marketing and sales tool for your business!

### Top Tip

Work with other businesses in your area in the following ways:

- Present what they have on your website.
- Encourage your staff to suggest things to see and to do in the area.
- Develop offers sold by you that are linked to others locally.
- Link the story and theme of your attraction with other places and experiences both in your area and further afield and build on those links.
- Consider how you can work with large scale visitor attractions in your locality as these have the potential to motivate visitors to travel to your destination. For example, the Cliffs of Moher which attracts over 1.5m annual visitors now requires new licensed tour operators to visit another attraction and overnight in Co. Clare, thereby increasing visitor spend and dwell time in the area.



## 3.4 Creating Your Brand

**Branding is vitally important to all businesses. It is the essential message about your attraction that you communicate to all potential visitors. They will become aware of your brand before they decide to visit.**

It is of the utmost importance that your brand and the name of your attraction clearly represent what the experience is. They need to be created in such a way that visitors can relate to them, particularly those from overseas and who may not have English as their first language.

### Connection and Emotion

A strong brand identity can be a solid foundation for building a lasting relationship with a brand. Invest in it.

### Personality and Depth

The personification of a brand that evokes certain emotions in visitors is what builds brand equity. Visitors will buy into your brand the more you can emotionally connect with them. Your brand also encourages your visitors to further purchase in other areas of your attraction and it drives word of mouth referral business.

Your brand is not just your logo, it's the emotional experience behind your visitor attraction. In section 1.2, we asked you to think about 'Your Big Idea' and we said that you need to tell your potential visitor very clearly what your attraction is all about before they visit. This is where having a clear brand strategy comes into play.

<sup>18</sup> Fáilte Ireland Drivers of Satisfaction at Visitor Attractions 2018

## Brand Purpose

### Ask yourself

- *What is your brand purpose? Who are you? Why do you exist as a brand?*
- *What is your brand personality? How does it speak and behave?*
- *Brand perception - What do visitors already think about your brand?*
- *What is your unique selling point? How is your attraction different from other competing brands in the market?*
- *Have you identified your target market? How are you going to attract potential visitors in this market?*
- *Why should visitors be drawn to your attraction by your brand?*
- *Does your brand and attraction name accurately reflect what the experience is? Is it clear, especially to overseas visitors?*

## Brand Identity

Your brand identity is how you physically bring your brand to life through your logo, colour tone, imagery, signage and so on.

### Ask yourself

- *What is your brand identity? Have you created a brand logo? Does it connect to your brand purpose? Have you created a brand tagline?*
- *Brand messaging - Where is your brand identity going to be visible inside and outside your attraction?*
- *Have you walked the space and identified key locations for branding within your attraction?*
- *What sort of online presence will you have? Does your brand identity online match the physical experience visitors are coming to see?*



## 3.5 Revenue Management

There are three main ways for an attraction to generate revenue (for most attractions it's in this order of importance)- 1) ticket sales, 2) retail and 3) food and beverage. The proportion of revenue won't be the same for all attractions, due to size and location in particular, but an over reliance on just one of these will put pressure on the sustainability of the business and even the visitor experience. Here we provide you with tips on what to consider to grow your revenue streams.

## Pricing your offer

The Attractions Drivers of Satisfaction research shows that at visitor attractions, **easy transactions** and **value for money** stand out as being drivers of visitor satisfaction. Visitors don't like hidden costs and unexpected multiple pay points aggravate them.

All visitor attractions are fundamentally retail businesses at their core. From the moment your visitors decide to research your attraction, you are selling to them. All attractions will initially sell an admissions ticket to the visitors upon arrival, many will additionally sell food, beverage and retail merchandise.

To encourage your visitors to participate and spend in each area, all price points and profit margins should be carefully considered. Understand that you are potentially expecting your visitor to purchase three different products, therefore your attraction must have a compelling offer at every touch point.

## Is the Price Right?



### Ask yourself

- *Do you know who the nearest direct and indirect competitors are and what their prices are?*
- *Calculate the fixed and variable costs of providing the product or service and ensure that these are covered in the price charged, e.g. if an audio headset is provided as part of a tour, the cost of this must be included. This will allow you to work out a break even point per unit sold.*
- *What level(s) of discount can you afford to give to tour operators? Does the discounted price still cover costs and leave a profit?*
- *What offers or adjustments to your prices can you make in the low and shoulder season or at quieter times of the week to drive business and footfall to your attraction?*

### Top Tip

**When creating price points, you should:**

- Establish your profit margin by deducting your cost of sales from your retail price points.
- Calculate the price inclusive of VAT to understand how the consumer sees and values it.
- Think about other avenues of generating footfall through pricing activities and how you can upsell, e.g. 'Children under 12 free', or half price for quiet early week mornings.
- Set revenue targets across the business areas (e.g. entry fees and retail sales) by season/month and monitor them on an ongoing basis to ensure strategic actions can be taken to encourage additional spend.



## Developing your Pricing Strategy

Deciding on your pricing strategy is obviously one of the most important decisions you will make when developing your revenue model.

- Prepare a **sales forecast**. Without an idea of how many units you are likely to sell, it is impossible to have an effective pricing strategy.
- Define the menu of rates that you need to have. Keep in mind the target customers (e.g. families, individuals, overseas, domestic) and how these customers book with your attraction. You will need to consider if you need a pricing structure for Public, Online Travel Agents (OTA's), Business to Business (B2B) Tour Operator, Group Rates.
- **Define your highest price rate for the public**. Be aware that your public price may be used as a benchmark for other channels that may require discounts. For example, a tour operator might require a 25% discount off your public price. Therefore, it is important to know your cost of sales so that you cover all costs and still make a profit with discounted prices.
- Keep your **pricing structure as simple as possible**, the less rates and combinations you have the better, but ensure you cater for your main customer groups.
- **Stay on your toes**. Prices can seldom be fixed for long. Your costs, customers and competitors can change, so you will have to adjust your prices to keep up with the market forces and demand.
- Build up your minimum price using cost-plus pricing first. This involves adding a mark-up percentage to costs of providing the product or service. Then establish if this is reasonable and assess against the value given. Adjust the price if necessary.
- Align your pricing strategy with the objectives of your business plan. For example, if your business plan is to increase sales volume by 25% within twelve months, your pricing strategy will need to be highly competitive to achieve this.

## Ticket Price and Capacity

### Ask yourself

- *How will your business collect performance data on an ongoing basis in relation to visitor numbers, origin, timing of visit, purchase patterns and seasonal conditions, so that a full operational profile can be built and analysed over time?*
- *Do you need dynamic pricing to control and manage visitor flows and optimise capacity? This is when you vary the price to reflect changing market conditions, for example do you offer a lower admission rate at off peak times of the day in order to manage the visitor flow?*
- *What actions will you put in place to drive sales and revenue in terms of promotions and offers?*
- *What decision-making and reviewing processes will your business have in place to make use of customer and business data and allow the refinement of pricing and optimisation of capacity?*

### Top Tip

- Carry out a regular review of business performance to identify areas where better price and capacity optimisation can be achieved.
- Implement a quality Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Point of Sale (POS) systems to allow capture of visitor data and revenue. Ensure that these are linked to booking engines, including your own website. Ensure that all staff are trained fully in the use of CRM and POS systems which will aid accurate data capture.
- Test and refine pricing models on a regular basis and assess the impact on business performance.
- Ask for customer feedback on proposed pricing and optimisation actions.



## YOUR FOOD AND RETAIL OFFERING

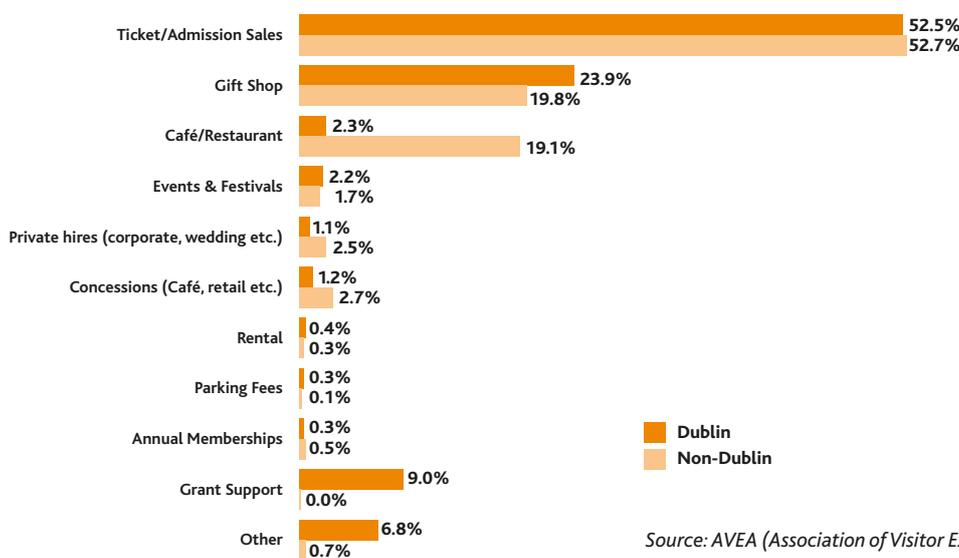
### Food and retail as a source of revenue

Fáilte Ireland research found that 50% of visitors use café facilities at attractions with 56% using the retail facilities<sup>19</sup>.

The Association of Visitor Experiences & Attractions (AVEA) carried out research with its members in 2018 (across 59 visitor attractions) and found that in relation to the distribution of revenue by source that there are some differences between visitor attractions in Dublin and those in other locations. The research found that food and beverage sales were much more important as a revenue source for visitor attractions outside of Dublin.

In Dublin, and other urban destinations, there is an ample supply of alternatives to the cafés at visitor attractions.

### Distribution of Revenue by source



Source: AVEA (Association of Visitor Experiences & Attractions) Survey of Membership Business, 2018.

### Your Retail Offering

**Retail exists in your attraction to allow visitors take away a memento or reminder of their time spent at the venue. It is the second most important revenue stream in your attraction and visitors are typically purchasing either for themselves or for gifting when they return home.**

Your retail offer should be treated as a separate business, with its own profit and loss with resources and time allocated to develop this area of your business. It is likely that it may take a minimum of 12-18 months to get it functioning at a reasonable level.

Once you have established the offer, it needs to be constantly monitored, reviewed and refreshed. If it is to grow, do not under-estimate what is required to create and grow a successful retail offer in your attraction.

#### Retail Checklist:

- Have you budgeted to create a retail shop within your attraction? There are key investments required up-front to prepare your retail space:
- Budget for shop fit-out and lighting, initial stock purchasing and EPOS system.
- Where are you locating your shop within your attraction? How are visitors going to enter and exit through the attraction to get to your shop? What size is your shop going to be? Why? Are you positioning your shop in a location that allows you to expand the physical footprint in the future?
- Have you planned storage space for stock? Is it easy to get to and from your shop?
- What type of product are you going to sell? Why are visitors going to buy it? How are you going to source this product? You need to start planning product 12 months ahead of opening your shop.

<sup>19</sup>Fáilte Ireland Drivers of Satisfaction at Visitor Attractions 2018

[http://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3\\_Research\\_Insights/4\\_Visitor\\_Insights/Visitor-Attraction-Experience-Research-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf](http://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/3_Research_Insights/4_Visitor_Insights/Visitor-Attraction-Experience-Research-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf)

- Do you know how much profit margin you need to make on every product that you sell?
- Ticket sales, Retail Sales and Food and Beverage are your three key revenue streams. Are you allocating staff head-count accordingly? Have you put a training plan in place for your staff?
- Have you established key price points for product that fit with your visitor profile?
- Does your retail offer connect to the overall brand? Are you going to stock local produce that is relevant to your area?
- Do your suppliers use sustainable and eco-friendly ingredients and are they using sustainable production and packaging in their supply? When you present the product for sale is this part of the story you tell?
- Have you considered what you expect a visitor to spend in your attraction in total?
- Have you created incentives to stimulate ancillary spend in retail/gifts e.g. 5% off for larger groups?

## Your Food Offering

**In 2018, food and drink consumption accounted for 35% of total revenue from visitors to Ireland, equating to over €2.2bn. Food and drink are an essential and growing part of the overall visitor experience in the country. From the tourist's perspective, the food and beverages offered at visitor attractions is a core part of the entire experience and should be viewed as a critical revenue driver and not ancillary to the visit. Research points towards visitors wanting fresh, locally sourced, seasonal food that is good value, as a key driver of satisfaction. Proven benefits for attractions that invest in their onsite café/restaurant to provide a high-quality local offering are:**

- Increased conversions, a higher number of visitors who choose to eat in the onsite café/restaurant.
- Increase in local and domestic trade choosing to eat in the café/restaurant – this will be particularly beneficial during the off-season.
- An enhanced food experience will lead to an increase in the average spend per person / per party.
- Increased visitor satisfaction ratings for the entire visitor attraction experience.

## 3.6 Operating Models and Business Expertise

**Having the right structures and people in place to run the business is critical to success. It's important from the outset to think about how your company/ business will be set up, the governance structures required and the day to day management and operation of the attraction.**

### OPERATIONS PLAN

**Your operations plan is an integral part of your business plan. When you are completing the operations plan you need to consider the following questions:**

Who will be responsible for the following?

- The overall management and day-to-day operations of the visitor attraction.
- Booking systems/policy/process/responsibility.
- Various operational functions e.g. maintenance, visitor management, finances, marketing, human resources, customer service etc.
- Quality control in relation to the visitor experience and product.

You should also decide on:

- The proposed opening hours, including seasonal variations and weekends, evenings, public holidays, etc.
- The staffing requirements to ensure that the attraction is fully-staffed at all times.
- Will there be a requirement for community/volunteer engagement at the attraction, and if so, is there a plan in place for running this?

For more information on Fáilte Ireland's Food and Drink Strategy 2018 - 2023 [click here](#)<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup><http://www.failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/FI-Food-Strategy-Documents.pdf>

## Ask yourself

- Do you have key performance indicators in place to monitor targets?
- How do your booking and ticketing systems (online and offline) support the capture and monitoring of visitor data to inform marketing and sales plans as follows?
  - ❖ Capture and report on visitor mix by market, segment and referral source.
  - ❖ Visitor volumes by season, time of day etc.
  - ❖ Visitor ancillary/total spend by market or segment.
- Have you calculated your operating costs per day? For example, do you know your costs for opening for an additional hour/day, public holiday versus a standard working day?
- Who will look after quality control?
- How will your attraction manage purchasing and contracting?
- Can you seek to buy locally to ensure value and reduce carbon footprint?

It is important that the business model builds upon existing partnerships that support the attraction and to involve key stakeholders in the ongoing management and running of the attraction.

### Top Tip

Create an organisational chart to give you a clear idea of who is responsible for each area of the business. It will also help you highlight gaps that you need to address. A strong business person at the helm with experience in either setting up and/ or growing a business is key.



## MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE AND RESOURCING

As well as having a great business, marketing, promotional and sales plan you also need to make sure that you have the right people in place to run your attraction. The number of staff and the skill sets required will obviously depend on the size of your visitor attraction.

In reviewing your resources and skillsets, consider the following:

- Do you have the right skill sets and key partnerships within your business required to drive your economic performance and grow your visitor and revenue numbers?
- Does your organisation have clear operational goals?
- Do staff have clear roles and responsibilities?
- Do you need to up-skill existing staff or volunteers or recruit new people? If you are setting up a volunteer programme, identify what skillsets are required and create an induction plan.

Skills/Competencies typically involve the following areas:

### Business Management

- Operation Management (All areas)
- Visitor Management
- Human Resources (knowledge of employment law and correct legal structures)
- Sales and Marketing
- Revenue Management
- Finance
- Curating Skills (if relevant)

### Customer Engagement

- People Management
- Customer Relations
- Customer Service
- Communication
- Interpretation/Guiding

Very rarely will one person have all the skills required to run a successful business so making sure you build a strong team with business leadership and have enough people to dedicate the time to the task required is also key.

## VISITOR MANAGEMENT AND SITE MAINTENANCE

**When developing your attraction, you need to consider your visitor management practices and how you will maintain your site. Some questions to consider are:**

- How will you maintain your site? This requires both financial and human resources.
- Are you or another body required to conduct annual maintenance inspections of your site?
- How will you maintain interpretation at your attraction, e.g. interpretive panels, content delivered through technology, tour guiding scripts, etc. It is important that you think about the resources required to refresh your content so that it remains relevant and engaging for visitors, especially for repeat visitors.
- How can you make your attraction more environmentally sustainable by increasing positive impacts?
- How will your business monitor and work to reduce costs for energy, waste and water?
- Keep yourself informed about potential issues that may arise around visitor orientation, capacity and pinch points.

## Useful Resources

For further information on developing your operations plan and the commercial sustainability of your business please consult the following documents which are available to download via the following links

**Business Performance & Competitiveness**  
[www.failteireland.ie/internationalsales](http://www.failteireland.ie/internationalsales)

**Tactical Pricing and Contracting**  
 Sales - <http://www.failteireland.ie/Sales.aspx>

- Trading Globally
- Measuring Your Online Presence
- Understand Routes to Market
- Tactical Pricing and Contracting

**Market Diversification**  
<http://failteireland.ie/market-diversification>

- 'Targeting Key Markets'
- 'Insider Tips and Insights - Needs and Nuances of International Markets' which builds on the real needs of the markets you want to target and/or increase.
- 'Winning New Sales' which has lots to help you build the Demand Plan.

**GB & NI Market Retention and Opportunities**  
<http://failteireland.ie/GB-Market-Retention>

**Visit Fáilte Focus**  
[www.failteireland.ie/pfgtoolkit](http://www.failteireland.ie/pfgtoolkit)

- **Tourism Facts 2018**  
<http://www.failteireland.ie/Failtelreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/Preliminary-Tourism-Facts-2018.pdf?ext=.pdf>
- **Travel Profiles**  
 A Snapshot of Key Markets:  
<https://failte-ireland.scoop.it/topic/what-tourists-want>
- **Food Offering**  
 Fáilte Ireland Food and Drink Strategy 2018- 2023  
<http://www.failteireland.ie/Failtelreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/FI-Food-Strategy-Document.pdf>

### Sustainability and Accessibility

For more information on developing your business to be sustainable and accessible, please visit the following websites:

Business Supports [www.SEAI.ie](http://www.SEAI.ie)

Sustainable Business practices [www.epa.ie/begreen/](http://www.epa.ie/begreen/)

European Disability Act 2019  
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202>

Web Accessibility Guidelines  
<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/new-in-21/>





## 4. Your Checklist....

Here are some of the key points which will help you develop **YOUR world-class visitor attraction**.

### Understand and Connect with your Visitor

- Know your visitor and what they want.
- Put yourself in the shoes of your visitor.
- Create an experience that brings to life the stories and characters you want to share with them.
- Entertain the visitor and engage their senses through immersive experiences, events, animation and personalised tours.
- Tailor your experience to different audiences.
- Ensure exhibitions, amenities, grounds, landscape and equipment are all well-maintained.
- Re-invest in your attraction. Keep it refreshed through innovation and ongoing research.
- Benchmark what you offer against similar businesses both in Ireland and overseas.
- Think beyond the conventional. Be imaginative.

*We hope you have found this toolkit insightful and wish you well with the development of your business as a best in class immersive visitor attraction.*

### The Business of Attractions

- Know how to project your visitor numbers.
- Know your audience, measure your online presence and identify your routes to market.
- Develop your marketing, sales & branding strategy.
- Leverage all potential revenue streams particularly ticket sales, retail and food and beverage.
- Get your pricing right.
- Choose the right operating model for your attraction.
- Ensure there is expertise in the organisation to set up and/ or grow the business.
- Identify clear operational goals, roles and responsibilities.
- Recruit customer-focused and highly motivated staff who will consistently deliver high standards of customer service.
- Offer great local food, drink and relevant retail appropriate to your market and offering.
- Decide. Plan. Execute.

This publication has been prepared to provide guidance only. The examples of other visitor attractions are provided for illustrative purposes only and would not necessarily qualify for funding under the Scheme.

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