Path to purchase

A report of the research findings among Social Energiser, Culturally Curious and Great Escaper segments in GB, France, Germany and USA

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Summary of objectives

The brief clearly sets out the purpose of the research; we need to deliver insight into how each target segment:

- ► conducts online research when planning an overseas holiday
- ► makes purchase decisions in advance of arriving at their destination
- ► decides on the sequence, or hierarchy, in which they make their purchases

This can be summarised as:

Which … places do people go to for ideas and information?

What … materials/content do they value most (when they get there)?

When … do they use each resource and make their bookings?

Add to this:

Why … *have they chosen this destination / sought this information?*

Methodology

▶ **Qualitative phase**

  ▶ 60 in-depth telephone discussions

  ▶ Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes

  ▶ All segments and countries of interest covered

  ▶ Subject of holidays taken in the past 2 years

▶ **Quantitative phase**

  ▶ 3487 online interviews among holiday takers in each country

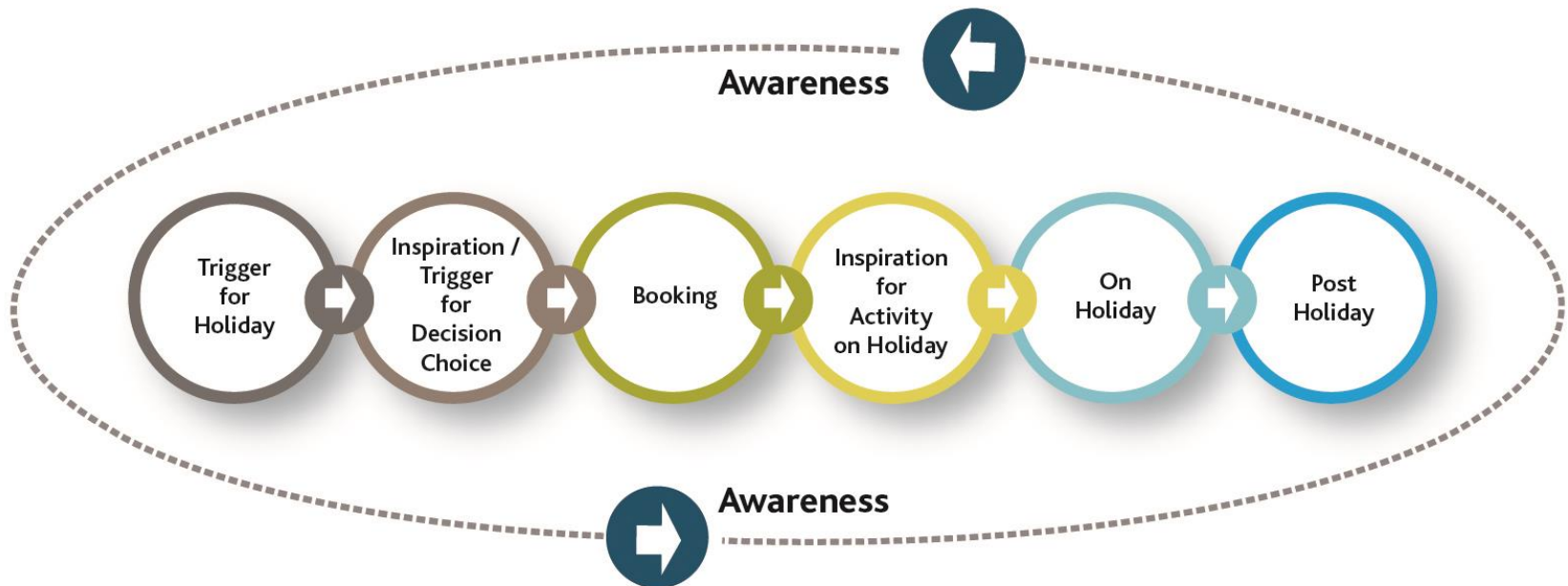 ▶ Non-GB market had to have travelled internationally in past 12 months

Respondents

🇬🇧	1,255
🇫🇷	748
🇩🇪	737
🇺🇸	747

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The Customer Journey

Awareness

▶ Most people have an idea about what destinations have to offer …

  ▶ Most destinations have an image or reputation / stand out for offering certain types of trip

▶ Awareness is in the main built up over time, and comes from numerous sources

  ▶ Word of mouth, news articles, adverts & pictures, newspaper articles, etc.

▶ As this 'opinion' already exists, it means that there are very few 'blank canvas' searches being made for destinations

▶ Awareness is in effect the appeal or consideration factor

▶ But it isn't the **decision** factor

▶ The decision is made during the customer journey

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Trigger for Holiday

- ▶ This stage of the journey is very personal

- ▶ It is very linked with awareness

- ▶ It is forever being informed from online and offline sources

- ▶ The triggers change depending on lifestage / workloads / expendable income / tastes & fashions

- ▶ The destinations for each trigger change dependent of how long they have got, how much money, and who they are travelling with
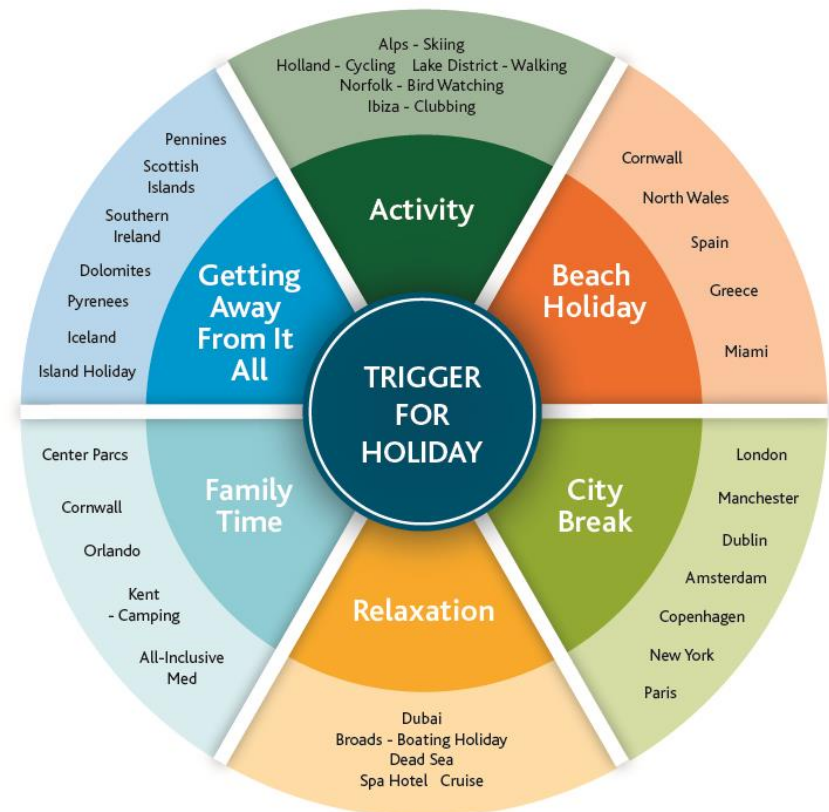
Trigger for Holiday

- ▶ Sometimes specific destinations get mentioned, other times types of breaks or companies that offer this type of holiday. Sometimes it is a combination of all of these

- ▶ This is the start of the journey that provides the destination set on which decisions are made

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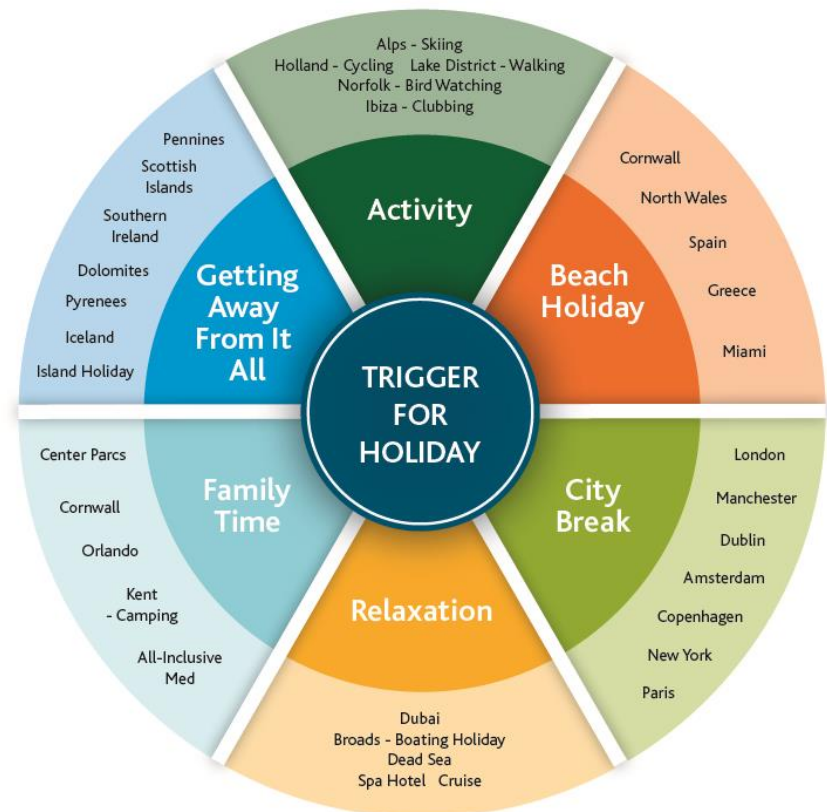
Inspiration/ trigger for destination choice

- ▶ **80% of the respondents stated they had decided on their destination**
  - – A further 20% were considering multiple destinations (considering on average 2.62 other destinations on top of the one they eventually went to)
  - – Those that went on a countryside/rural holiday considered the most destinations before deciding (2.89)
- ▶ **92% use the internet to search for information about destinations**
  - – French & US respondents tend to have slightly more reliance on offline sources as do 'Social Energisers'
- ▶ **Generic searches undertaken … often starting with 'Google'**
- ▶ **Images are an important hook / have a strong influence**
- ▶ **After that, consumers looking for a blend of emotional and practical information at this stage**
- ▶ **Highest levels of trust in;**
  - – Consumer Reviews / Booking Sites / Attraction / Activity Sites / Tourist Board Sites
- ▶ **Lowest levels of trust in**
  - – Travel Journalists / Bloggers

Google — 82%

tripadvisor® — 42%

Expedia — 27%

BOOKING.COM — 25%

Hotels.com® Wake Up Happy — 20%

lastminute.com — 17%

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Bookings

- Emotional information looks at enjoy-ability …
  - … and helps to rule destinations 'in'
- Practical information sought covers travel and accommodation costs to determine perceived VFM …
  - … and this type of information more likely to rule destinations 'out'
- Majority of bookings (generally 70%+) are done online
  - Of those booking offline, Germans and US consumers have a higher propensity compared to other nationalities
- Accommodation and Flights are the first elements to be booked before departure
- Majority prefer not to pre book any activity before they travel
  - Preferring to leave options open
- That said, will pre-book if necessary e.g. to guarantee tickets etc.
- Few recalled or understood who the e-bookings are made with … they tend just to follow a Google search trail

Inspiration for Activities on Holiday

► 90% look for this information *before* they travel but *after* they have booked

► Tend to be looking for ideas / inspiration
  – Places to go / things to do

► Nearer they get to departure date the more likely it is that they will seek out practical / factual information
  – Weather forecast / places to eat

► This includes more practical information that they need for attractions /activities that they want to do when they are there
  – Opening times / how to get there, etc.

► Information about events will often have been sourced before this stage

► Online is the key method of searching
  – High level of trust in attraction / activity sites / tourist board sites / user reviews
  – Low level of trust in bloggers

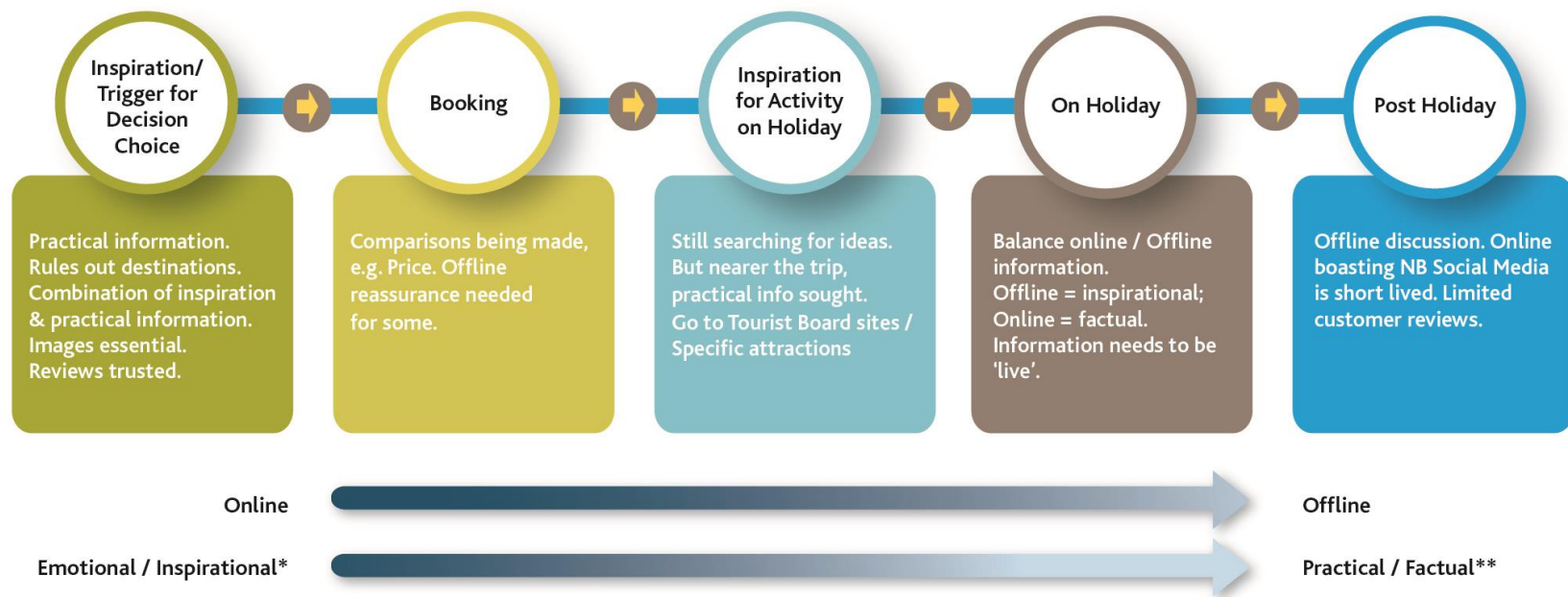► **Majority see this as one of the most enjoyable parts of the customer journey**

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On Holiday

▸ 94% are still gathering information when on holiday
  – 55% of info sought is practical/functional

▸ 83% use a web-enable device, but use is limited to when access to the internet is free.
  – At this stage online sources used more for factual purposes

▸ In fact offline sources are as important, if not more important
  – Clear shift away from on-line info sources to people and paper
  – Human sources and paper sources used more than online devices

▸ Holidaymakers want to speak to people when gathering info on holiday, e.g., accommodation staff, locals, TIOs.

▸ Paper info sources also used extensively - good uptake of maps, leaflets, posters, etc.

▸ When taking to people, holidaymakers are still looking for inspiration.

▸ On holidays there are highest levels of trust in:
  – Locals, attraction/activity suppliers, tourist boards, and accommodation providers.

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Post Holiday

- ▶ 92% share their holiday experience with others
- ▶ This is mainly done in person, telling friends and family about their trip
- ▶ There is some online activity also
  - Around a third use social media to share information
- ▶ 1 in 5 go online and leave a review … this is despite the fact that the majority indicate that they value this type of feedback and it has a strong influence on destination choice!
- ▶ These are typically written by those who have had either a very good or very poor experience
- ▶ Social-media post-holiday afterglow is very short lived
  - But it does raise awareness!

Path to Purchase Overview

Inspiration/Trigger for Decision Choice

Practical information. Rules out destinations. Combination of inspiration & practical information. Images essential. Reviews trusted.

Booking

Comparisons being made, e.g. Price. Offline reassurance needed for some.

Inspiration for Activity on Holiday

Still searching for ideas. But nearer the trip, practical info sought. Go to Tourist Board sites / Specific attractions

On Holiday

Balance online / Offline information. Offline = inspirational; Online = factual. Information needs to be 'live'.

Post Holiday

Offline discussion. Online boasting NB Social Media is short lived. Limited customer reviews.

Online ➝ Offline

Emotional / Inspirational* ➝ Practical / Factual**

* Inspiration can be quite practical / factual e.g. TOP 10 'MUST SEE' ACTIVITIES   ** Practical information used to RULE OUT destinations as well as ruling them in

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Implications

▶ Learnings

- Ireland trades in a digital world and Ireland is not world class
- Evocative imagery & 'hero' product stories key to visitors destination selection
- Activities & attractions explored before travel and are an important reassurance to visitor that they have chosen the right destination
- Visitors use social channels whilst here but only where Free WiFi exists
- Paper, TIOs, other tourists, locals all influence in holiday purchases. Practical info is key.
- Only the very happy/upset post reviews
- Flights, accommodation & car hire are booked before travelling. Hotel destination messaging is key influencer to the booking decision.
- Activities & attractions explored before travel but only booked if scarce or big savings on offer
- Relative strength of distribution channels/players varies by market. Tourism Industry needs to excel on distribution and stay alert to changing market
- 'Front of house' staff critical for both service and sales, telesales skills critical for closing direct sales; and they can cross sell other local providers.

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