



Fáilte Ireland

National Tourism Development Authority

# Top Tips for Engaging in OTA Campaigns

# Top Tips for Engaging in OTA Campaigns

*Informed by Fáilte Ireland meetings with a number of leading OTAs.*

Many OTAs engage in destination specific campaigns which can present interesting opportunities for Destination Ireland.

A tourism business should be aware of these campaigns as they can create revenue generation opportunities by targeting specific customer types, in designated markets during particular times of the year.



## 1. National Tourism Agencies and OTA Campaigns

It is in the interest of tourism businesses to consider engaging with OTA campaigns that are supported by the National Tourism Agencies (Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland) because:

- Such campaigns indicate that an investment by the tourism agencies has been made to support a targeted Destination Ireland campaign to drive new/incremental business to Ireland that cannot be accessed without such platforms. The agencies are investing to influence prospective customers to choose Ireland over another competitive destination
- Very often the campaigns are created to generate business when Destination Ireland most needs it e.g. during low and shoulder season months
- The campaigns are designed to target global customers that may otherwise be too expensive or inaccessible for the tourism business to reach
- Joining such a campaign may also represent an efficient use of resources (staff, time, expenditure) by the tourism business
- An Irish tourism business can thereby create important opportunities for new business for itself by participating in such campaigns

OTA campaigns that are supported by the national tourism agencies are generally advised via the OTA and/or the tourism agencies.

If your business receives an email about an OTA campaign, make sure to carefully read it to assess the benefits. As a tourism business you can simply join such a campaign via the advised OTA platform by adding your offer there.

Generally, OTA campaigns that are supported by the national tourism agencies offer great flexibility.

For example:

- The campaigns are generally set up at no additional commission charge to the business
- The business has full control over how much of a discount it offers, or what value-add package elements it wants to include in the offer and/or what restrictions it wishes to place on the offer
- The business can also choose to block out dates to not include in the campaign schedule.

**PLEASE CHECK OUT EACH CAMPAIGN FOR THE SPECIFIC DETAILS RELATING TO IT.**



## 2. Benefits of the OTA Sales Channel

As with any sales channel, a tourism business must always understand the benefits that the sales channel offers in return for the cost of sale. Some of the benefits of engaging with an OTA sales channel include the following:

- OTAs are sophisticated platforms that invest heavily in marketing to reach both domestic and international customers. By using the OTA platform, the business can thereby also reach these customers, without the full burden of such an investment had it tried to reach the customer independently of such a platform.
- OTAs have access to excellent analytics that enables them to keenly understand the travel behaviours of their customers. In this way, they can create conversion-based target-driven campaigns to access opportunities across international markets at specific times of the year, often when an Irish tourism business needs that revenue most.
- A tourism business often has huge demands on its resources (staff, time and finances). Leaning on the advantages offered by an OTA platform may represent a more efficient use of resources for many tourism businesses.
- To ensure that tourism businesses can thrive and survive long into the future, a stable revenue generation model is recommended. This model focuses on the integration of diverse sales channels (direct and indirect), markets (domestic and global) and customer types. It is important to know that OTA platforms can play a very important role within a stable revenue generation model.

## 3. Price Types for OTA Campaigns

Be aware that tourism businesses can often use one or multiple price types to target customers in global markets via OTA platforms. These include:

- Visitor ticket pricing: Full pricing or advance purchase
- Best available rate for accommodation providers: Most often on a bed and breakfast (BB) or Room Only (RO) basis
- Opaque packages: Where rates are hidden, often in secret deals
- Fenced rates: Including, for example, advance booking cut-offs or non-refundable payments
- Members only rates
- Value added promotions: e.g. free parking/ Wi-Fi
- 24/48/72-hour sale rates
- Same day promotions: Really important for late booking markets such as Great Britain
- Minimum night stay rates.

Package pricing: Refers to when a customer bundles a guest room with a flight for example. Tourism businesses should note that package pricing is on the rise.





## 4. Types of Promotional Opportunities

While each OTA platform is unique, most OTA platforms offer 4 types of promotional opportunities to grow global markets. These are:

- Campaigns
- Promotions
- Geo Targeting
- Paid Marketing

### Campaigns

This functionality can be found on the OTA platform, often under the marketing section.

This section is normally for pre-set campaigns such as a campaign supported by the national tourism agencies. In most instances, a business can simply join such a campaign via the OTA platform.

### Promotions

This functionality allows tourism businesses to join pre-established promotions or create their own promotion.

If a tourism business understands the market behaviour and opportunities in each international market that is of interest to it, the business can be well placed by creating a promotion based on that knowledge. For example, +40% of Great Britain travellers come to Ireland between the low/shoulder season months of October to March. This could be an ideal time for a business to join an OTA's pre-established promotion for this market.

### Geo Targeting

Many OTAs operate geo targeting functionality that enables a business to target a particular:

- Market
- Demographic
- Gender
- Customer type with a certain interest.

A tourism business that understands market needs, nuances and travel behaviours can create strong opportunities for itself, exactly when it needs it, via geo targeting functionality.

### Paid Marketing

Many OTAs allow for target specific global marketing opportunities if the business is willing to:

- Pay a fee or,
- Increase commissions

Before engagement, a business should always understand:

- The cost of sale for such initiatives
- The required return on investment for themselves
- The expected outcome: what potential business, markets, customers types and associated revenue generation the business aims to achieve.

**To ensure a business gets the best results from OTA campaign engagement, the business needs to take responsibility for its reputation and ensure it puts its best foot forward. The following should be noted:**

### **1. High quality images**

Excellent, professional, sharp photographs should be used to promote the business on the platform: know that beautiful imagery sells.

### **2. Sharp descriptions**

Sharp hotel descriptions, nearby points of interest and transport options are critical to ensure that customers know what makes one property unique or different from another.

### **3. Succinct copy for room types**

For accommodation provider businesses, have robust, distinct room descriptions, accessible room descriptions and room amenities. Make it easier for the traveller to make a distinction between room categories.

### **4. Price inclusions**

Please reveal the inherent value in your pricing by clearly noting all price inclusions. The customer should be clear on exactly what they receive for the price they pay. For example:

- If a meal (or meal voucher) is included in a hotel offer, state if it is in the hotel restaurant or bar and how many courses are included.
- For an experience or activity, state what the booker will get (e.g. length of time a tour takes/what spa treatment includes) and anything extra that is included.
- If a guest room or visitor experience has inclusions such as mineral water, highlight that by for example writing 'one 250 ml of Irish still water included'. Know that international markets appreciate precise measurements.

### **5. Family options**

Be aware that many multi-generational families travel to Ireland from global markets.

- Accommodation providers therefore need to open family, interconnecting and accessible rooms types on the OTA platforms. Accurate room configurations should clearly state the number of adults and children that can be accommodated in each family room type. Also clearly highlight items that are specific to the needs of children such as breakfast pricing.
- Visitor experiences also need to ensure that family ticket pricing is available for purchase and that the conditions of sale are crystal clear for both adults and children.

### **6. Guest reviews**

Strong guest reviews are an important referral tool for other potential bookers. Ensure your business keeps an eye on reviews and guest service to maximise this opportunity.

### **7. Integration of expertise on OTA platforms**

Modern OTA platforms are very sophisticated. They tend to offer functionality across multiple disciplines including marketing, pricing, reservations, revenue management, financial reporting and analytics.

Please therefore be aware of the need to integrate diverse expertise within your business to get the best return from the OTA platform and each campaign your business chooses to engage with.





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