

Promoting Experiences



04

The graphic features a large, stylized number '04' in white, set against a background of overlapping geometric shapes. The shapes include a dark blue triangle at the top, a yellow triangle with diagonal stripes, a purple triangle with diagonal stripes, and a pink triangle with diagonal stripes. The overall design is vibrant and modern.

“OK, so you’ve developed great experiences...”

OK so you've developed great experiences, now all you have to do is let potential visitors know about them!

In the same way that the experience has been designed, marketing and promotions must be done in a way that connects with your target visitor.

There are a huge variety of channels through which you can communicate either directly or via an intermediary. Your challenge is to find the right fit and sell the experience through it. The key is to focus on those channels that will deliver you most return and this needs to be constantly evaluated. Having said that there has never been a more important time to be online.

Reaching your target customer

The different consumer segments will be motivated by different experiences and different marketing messages and each segment will be reached through different channels.

GB Market

Within the GB market for both Social Energisers and the Culturally Curious, broadcast (TV, outdoor and cinema) can be important, although in a focused and narrowcast way. Digital and social channels will be key for Social Energisers, whilst press partnership and sponsorship will play an important role for the Culturally Curious. For the Great Escapers, word of mouth, social media and online activity will be important. They may also be reached through some of the advertising aimed at the Culturally Curious. Use of PR and publicity will also be critical for this group.

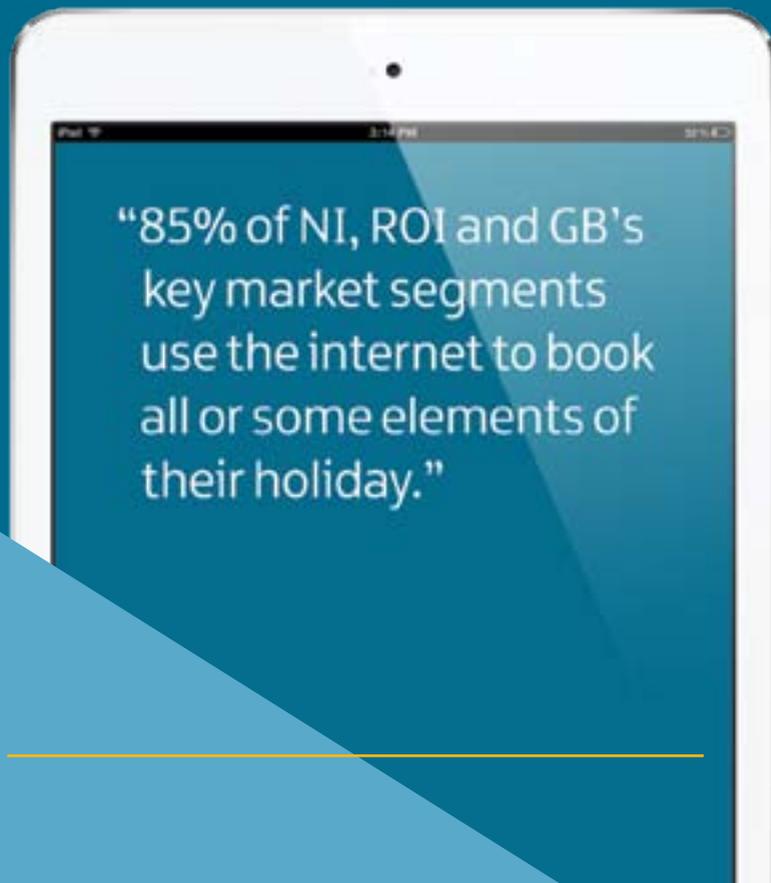
ROI Market

Within the ROI market, for the Mature Cosmopolitans and Time Together, TV is important particularly local channels and programming, although they watch different styles of programmes. Digital and Social channels will be key for the Young and Lively, whilst press and radio partnership and sponsorships will play a key role for all four segments, although again for different papers and stations, radio is particularly important for the Family segment. Although Mature Cosmopolitans are less digitally connected than other segments, deal sites such as Groupon are important for all segments.

NI Market

Within the NI market TV is important for all three segments, particularly local TV, although they watch a different style of programme. Radio and local press are also important, although again they listen to and read different papers/stations. Time Together are more likely than the other two segments to use smart phones and are also heavy users of daily deal sites, as too are Families and Mature Cosmopolitans.

It should be noted that the internet and digital channels have changed the way in which consumer's research, plan and book holidays. Almost 9 in 10 travel purchases are influenced by digital channels, (websites, social media, peer reviews, and smartphone or tablet apps), even if the final purchase isn't made online. However around 85% of NI, ROI and GB's key market segments use the internet to book all or some elements of their holiday.



It is important that you ensure your digital channels are fully optimised to be compelling to the customer segments. Key considerations include:

- Develop content specifically to 'talk to' your key segments
- Provide prices in Euro for the Republic of Ireland market
- Make sure your website is accessible across all platforms – PC, smartphone and tablet
- Consumers are motivated by good value online deals so ensure you present a variety of value offerings
- Maintain a positive Trip Advisor rating
- Deal sites such as Groupon are particularly important to the NI and ROI consumer, optimise these where possible

Don't forget about the practicals too e.g. how will your visitor book your experience? Will you require a deposit? Can they pay in full? What's your refund policy? How will you handle compliments and complaints? Who will manage and respond to comments on social media (e.g. Trip Adviser etc)? Can people buy vouchers for gifts?

General Marketing Tips

The Holiday Shopping Journey

All consumers go through 5 key stages when planning and purchasing their holiday. It is vital that your experience is marketed effectively throughout. Many businesses make the mistake of seeing marketing as something that happens before a customer books but not after. In reality the marketing process never ends, you should be conscious of how your experience is presented to the customer at all times.

| Stage | Media | Key Points |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Dreaming/ Being Inspired | Advertising, PR, Web, Brochures. | This is the customer's first point of contact with your experience concept. The design of your marketing material in terms of both its language and imagery is vital. You need to ensure that you understand the principles of design or have someone advising you who does. |
| Planning | Web, Social, Guide Books, Exhibitions, Word of Mouth. | As the customer progresses to exploring your offering in more detail and finding out more about the place they are planning to visit you need to ensure that they can find information easily that builds their interest and moves them along the path to booking. |
| Booking | Website and Tour Operators, Search Advertising, Deal sites, Travel websites. | When the customer wants to make a purchase it is vital that they can do so easily and securely. You need to consider what other purchase access points exist apart from your own website or phone line. |
| Experiencing | CRM, Welcome, Quality, TIC, Word of Mouth. | Marketing does not cease after the sale. Looking after customers once they have booked is essential. Good quality communication in the lead up to their visit and excellent customer service while they are here will encourage return visits and good word of mouth references. |
| Sharing | Social Media, Word of Mouth. | Again, marketing does not cease after the experience is over. People have always returned after holidays and shared stories but social media has made this a massive part of your on going marketing strategy. You need to understand social media, monitor what customers are saying and provide opportunities for them to engage with you. |

The Marketing Mix

You will have to develop your marketing from an endless range of marketing possibilities including print ads, on-line ads, brochures, websites, social media, tradeshows and travel media. Some of these are free and others cost but all need to be cost-effective. The activities you choose will depend on your target market, your goals and your budget. Marketing is now all about having a two way conversation with the customer.

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| Online | The internet is the first place many potential visitors look for information and is also a great medium for conversations. |
| Online advertising | Online ads can have the same effect in raising awareness as other types of display adverts, such as magazines and newspapers. It allows you to target your market specifically by passion or geography and is easier to track than traditional print ads. |
| Email marketing | Invite customers to connect to you and build up the opportunity to build a relationship with them. E-mail marketing is a cost effective trackable means of encouraging new and repeat visitations – but make sure you have people's permission to include them in your database. |
| Social media | With the number of social networks doubling every year it is easier than ever for people to share photos, information and reviews about their travel experiences. Suddenly there are millions of brand ambassadors – or detractors. Are people talking about your experiences? If so, what are they saying? |
| Advertising | Traditional media such as magazines and newspapers remain critical for building the awareness you need. What is your target market reading, watching or listening to? |
| Media Relations | An article in a high profile magazine or newspaper, or a mention by a hot blogger can raise your profile considerably. Editorial coverage is considered more credible than advertising. Consider what story ideas you can pitch about your experience to local media, travel writers or bloggers. NITB and TIL regularly pitch story ideas and bring media to NI. Can you get involved by providing stories and or supporting press familiarisation trips and press promotions? |
| Consumer Shows | Provide an opportunity to interact with and gather information and insights from potential visitors. Which shows would your target markets attend. Can you partner with others or NITB and / or TIL to attend? |
| Travel Trade | This includes tour operators and travel agents and is a great way to match to potential visitors, particularly in long-haul markets. |

Positioning your experience – the importance of the USP

Once you have identified the type of people that you are targeting and how you hope to reach them you then have to create a compelling message for your audience that persuades them of the benefits of booking.

It is important to consider this from your consumer's point of view. The overall benefit for the customer includes the experiences they have in your community while they are there – dining, entertainment, sightseeing, meeting locals, shopping, etc. Your product enhancement efforts need to include what you can do to improve these experiences for your customers as well.

What is your 'unique selling proposition'? Within your communications focus on the emotions, feelings and sensations the visitors will have on their journey and the stories they will learn, inviting them to connect with Northern Ireland's people, culture and geography through personal exploration. In-order to be able to compete within a global market these should be 'best in class' experiences.

And just to complicate matters, don't forget that different types of customers have different sets of benefits in mind and are seeking out different experiences. You need to design quality products and experiences for each of the key market segments you are targeting.

Promoting your experience

There are a number of ways you can promote your products and services from digital, advertising, direct selling, collateral, promotions and publicity to name a few. As previously stated all your communications should be consumer centric. Therefore you should develop a communication plan for each segment that focuses on reaching potential consumers where they are most likely to be and engaging with them in ways that should drive conversion.

Capture ATTENTION – attract the reader’s attention and then pique their curiosity enough to read further

Generate INTEREST – move the reader from curiosity to real interest.

Develop a DESIRE for the product or experience.

Issue a Call to ACTION – invite the reader to respond and give instructions on how to do so.

Using Images

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| Is the image a true reflection of the experience? | Is it the correct resolution? |
| Do photos show people engaged in something? | Do you have permission to use it? |
| Do they evoke feelings connected with the NI brand? | Do the people in the photos reflect your target segments accurately? |
| Does the image feel authentic? | Do the images reflect your best assets? |

Using Language

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| Do your descriptions reflect your unique selling proposition? | Is the tone of your text warm, friendly and relaxed? |
| Is your language focused on how the visitor will feel? | Are you being conversational rather than formal? |
| Is your language accurate, brief and lively without being exaggerated? | Do you issue a “call to action” – the thing you want the customer to do? |

On-line

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| <p>Is your website good enough? How do customers get to it? Is it updated regularly? Can it be used as a route to purchase?</p> | <p>Do you have a presence on social media platforms? Who in your organisation is monitoring this? Do you understand how to get the best out of it? Find out what people are saying about you and get involved.</p> |
| <p>Do you understand search engine optimisation? What types of words will your target customers use to find the holiday they are looking for? Try it yourself? How do you rate? How can you rate higher?</p> | <p>Can visitors to your website connect to you through e-mail and build a relationship? Are you building a database of contacts? Do you have people's permission or buy-in?</p> |

