Series 1

Coasts & Lakes

A practical guide to experiential tourism in Northern Ireland

nitb.com
ni2012 has changed global perceptions and created a legacy for tourism in Northern Ireland. But where do we go from here? What is the next step in our journey? Best practice points towards experiential tourism. By focusing on our strengths and natural assets, we can create truly authentic experiences and unlock stories to surprise and delight visitors. We believe in this approach and its ability to create opportunities to drive increased revenue into tourism. This publication has been designed to deliver the ideas and inspiration that can help us all to continue bringing to life the experiences we offer to our visitors. Collaboration will be the key to success – we are all unique but together we can deliver more rounded, more exciting and more inspiring experiences that visitors will spread the word about and return for more. The future success of our industry is in our hands.

Alan Clarke
Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Tourist Board

The Intelligent Perspective Series

- Intelligent Perspective overview report
  This report provides a deeper understanding of Experiential Tourism and how to do it in Northern Ireland (NI).

- The Intelligent Perspective Series
  Five practical guides covering five themes - to help you to grow your business through making use of our best assets. These guides will help you to better understand who our visitors are, what they are looking for and how to give them more of what they want.

1. Coasts and Lakes
2. Unique Outdoors
3. Living Legends
4. Creative Vibe
5. Naturally NI

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Introduction

In this fast-moving consumer marketplace we know that our tourism industry must adapt and develop to keep up with growing competition. Across the world, everyone is ‘doing tourism’ and the demands from consumers are ever rising and changing. The more you know about your customers, the better you can look after them, the more satisfied they will be, the more they will recommend you and the more money they are likely to spend with you. It really is just that simple.

Traditionally many tourism destinations and Northern Ireland (NI) too, have developed and marketed tourism as a series of products and services – a hotel room, a beach, a museum, a beautiful landscape, and so on. But we know that to truly engage with our visitors today we must shift our thinking and connect with them on a deeper, more personal level. Visitors want to feel something from the places they visit, they want to be touched by the stories of the people and actively participate in culture and community. They want to have genuine interactions and everyone in the tourism industry must open their hearts to be able to do this. We are no longer merely selling visitors a ‘product’ – we are selling them experiences of our country and we, its people, are an essential part of this product.

This is a great opportunity for NI to really rise up and grow our tourism industry. We have everything we need – wonderful landscapes, a unique and distinctive culture, friendly and genuine people, and a depth of stories, heritage and legends that other destinations can only dream of. Our time is now. This series of guides has been developed to show you how to do it.

What are the benefits of an EXPERIENTIAL approach?

- You can understand who is likely to be attracted to what you offer
- Work more closely with other providers and grow the market share for everyone
- Become better at what you do and be more appreciated for your commitment and passion
- Opportunities to learn from other businesses success
- Opportunities for you to become more profitable and for NI to become a stronger tourism destination in the future

The Intelligent Perspective Series has been developed to inspire and help everyone to offer our visitors better joined-up experiences. Our own experiential tourism journey was kicked off with the launch of the ‘Creating Experiences Toolkit’ in March 2013 and this series of guides is the next step along that road.

There are six guides in the series and they are designed to be a practical resource, full of tips and insights and sharing others’ experiences to support and learn from. There are five themed reports which show you how to do it and one ‘Overview Report’ that can tell you why. However, these individual reports don’t sit on their own. You will need to refer to all of them and mix the ideas from each, according to your particular business, geographic location and type of visitor you attract.

We hope that you enjoy the opportunities that this approach will give you and also make good use of the insights and information within these resources.
What is Experiential Tourism?

The global tourism industry has seen a distinct move away from Mass Tourism, which sold generic packages with low levels of personal involvement. Now, people want bespoke offerings that tap into their hearts and minds, giving them once-in-a-lifetime experiences that are just right for them. They care deeply how they will spend their precious time away and they want to find an experience that closely matches their needs. Moreover, with such a powerful looking and booking tool as the internet and travel review sites, potential visitors are armed with all the tools to design a tailored trip that reflects their aspirations and expectations. This is why we must shift our focus away from marketing standalone products into creating and marketing experiences. This is Experiential Tourism.

What does Experiential Tourism mean for NI?

NI is comparatively a very small country and, although there are fewer standalone signature experiences, it is literally brimming with smaller experiences that when ‘clustered’ together can pack a punch all on their own – if we choose to look at how we deliver tourism in a different way. It’s all about collaborating, not competing with each other.

Case Studies

An authentic maritime experience

Golden Hinde, London

At the Golden Hinde experience, visitors get a chance to truly experience what life was like aboard the full size reconstruction of Sir Francis Drake’s Tudor Galleon. Visitors first dress up in Tudor costume and then spend the evening learning how to be a gunner, officer or even a barber-surgeon on board the 16th-century replica ship. A stew for dinner is followed by bedtime stories, and families sleep on the gundeck between the cannons. This is a great way to immerse yourself in history and be entertained at the same time.

www.goldenhinde.com
Spotlight on this theme – Coasts and Lakes

Coasts and Lakes Assets

This theme is broad and includes all of our assets that are connected to water. We would divide these assets into two ‘classes’; Signature Assets and Supporting Assets:

• **Signature Assets:** Giant’s Causeway, Causeway Coastal Route, Mournes Coastal Route and Fermanagh Lakes

• **Supporting Assets:** Lakes, Loughs and Waterways; activities such as angling and cruising; hub towns, seaside towns and villages, coastal resorts; beaches, trails & paths (coastal, forestry, mountainous or cross country); hallmark water-based or coastal events.

Creating ‘joined-up’ experiences for visitors

There is no one theme that will on its own, appeal to one particular visitor type. Visitors want to pick and mix their experiences across all themes according to their needs. It is this individual selection that will create memorable tourism experiences.

The focus of this report is to help businesses that are influenced in some way by the Coasts & Lakes theme (through proximity or otherwise) to improve their offering and ultimately attract more visitors.

We need to become:

➤ more authentic
➤ more engaging
➤ more personalised

We don’t necessarily need a big signature experience as the only way to attract our visitors. For NI, the real opportunity lies in developing many experience-led businesses across all the themes that can link together and cross sell. We need to work together to join up our products and turn them into experiences so they make more sense to a visitor. We need to view our current offering from THEIR perspective, and when we do, often we find the right sorts of experiences are on our doorstep – and are so obvious!

What are the Experience Themes?

• They group together the best experiences that NI can offer visitors.

• They are based on what we know is a good match between what a visitor wants and what we can offer.

• They all reflect the ways in which NI can stand out in the eyes of a visitor.

• They provide opportunities for NI to be ‘best in class’, i.e. to be able to really compete with other destinations.

• It is these experience themes that are uniquely ours that allow us to have a more global appeal through clustering.
**Why are our Coasts and Lakes so important?**

Relative to the size of the country, NI has a very large coastline, with a number of inland lakes and connected waterways. In addition to the range of coastal walks and climbing activities on offer, visitors can engage in all kinds of water-based activities from fishing and cruising to surfing and kayaking. The extensive Erne system of the Fermanagh Lakelands offers a range of activities and interests, both on and off the water. Our disused canals, such as the Newry and Lagan Canals, offer excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation and are popular with walkers and cyclists.

Marine tourism has also been identified as a key growth area for the future. If businesses can come together to link up coastal and lake experiences, we can start to build the profile of these fantastic assets.

*Look at the huge range of attractors across NI in the map below. Did you realise we had so many clustered around our Coasts & Lakes? Are you really making the most of them to grow your business?*

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**Spotlight on this theme – Coasts and Lakes**

Did you know how many natural attractors we have in NI?
The bits we're getting right...

NI offers the perfect beach, fishing or water sports short break – but is that how visitors see us? Our coast has shaped NI into an area of outstanding natural beauty, and a place of inspiration and leisure, abundant with marine life and water activities. And don’t forget that visitors don’t just come for one thing – depending on who they are and what motivates them, they might also like to visit some heritage sites, go for a walk or a cycle, eat in some fine restaurants or even just wander around a garden or two.

How can you tap into the USPs (unique selling points) of our Coasts and Lakes product and other supporting products to enhance your own business offering?

Top strengths – and how to tap into them!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coasts and Lakes USPs</th>
<th>How to tap into this strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> The Causeway Coastal Route is part of this theme with its spectacular drive around some of the most beautiful coastline in the country. The Giant’s Causeway, too is here and is Northern Ireland’s only UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is world-class and has the appeal to be a sole attractor for visitors.</td>
<td>Capitalise on these key attractions and build links to them. Whether you are a nearby B&amp;B, or a cafe some distance away – make sure you offer links in some way. For example, with the Giant’s Causeway – can you get involved with their promotions, offer to organise tickets for your visitors or theme on your menu? Are you telling visitors the stories behind this historic site? Are you directing visitors to take a drive along our most famous of coastlines? Don’t let them miss out!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> Our Coasts and Lakes lend themselves to a wide range of world-class outdoor activities such as surfing, coastal canoe trails, diving, trout and freshwater fishing, coasteering, cruising, jet skiing, kite buggying, windsurfing and sailing.</td>
<td>Do you see NI as a world-class activity provider? Are you telling your visitors about it? Perhaps you could link up with a local activity provider to offer a package deal. Bird-watching is a fantastic interest. Could you provide a book for walking visitors to see NI’s common birds? Or a spot sheet for children? Rathlin Island is perfect for geologists, botanists, divers, anglers or anyone with a passion for wildlife – are you providing information about this for visitors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> We have a quality product, from our award-winning beaches (such as Portstewart Strand) to our inland lakes (such as Fermanagh Lakelands) that offer unique visitor experiences. For example, NI has the largest freshwater lake (Lough Neagh) and sea inlet (Strangford Lough) in either Britain or Ireland.</td>
<td>Talk about our accreditations. For example, Portstewart’s golden sands hold the coveted blue flag award for high standards of beach management, cleanliness and water quality and Ballyronan Marina has been awarded the highly prized blue flag for four years. This is impressive! With more than 700km of rivers, lakes and canals, Fermanagh Lakelands is a water-sports enthusiast’s dream. Promote your business’ proximity and the opportunities for visitors. Strangford Lough has historical associations from Neolithic to Victorian influences – a fantastic opportunity to capture a slightly different market. Or would your visitors be interested that it’s a conservation area with abundant wildlife? Visitors love to try new things. Could you arrange for visitors to have a go at a new activity during their stay? Would an opportunity to try out hovercrafting, surfing or fishing grab their attention?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.</strong> This theme links nicely to other key assets in NI – fantastic scenery; walking and cycling by the coast; angling and cruising; food and drink; castles and local legends; local arts and crafts; wildlife etc.</td>
<td>Make sure that your visitors know of all these attractors. Visitors want to do more than one thing on a holiday – have you given enough information for them to find their favourites? For example, visitors to Strangford Lough also like to visit parks and gardens and do hiking or hillwalking – are you making it easy for them to do that? The Faldo Championship Golf Course at Lough Erne Resort provides an opportunity to mix our lakes scenery experience with golf. In fact, for many, NI is a byword for some of the best golf available in the world through the success of wonderful courses like Royal Portrush, Royal County Down etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Devon & Cornwall

If you're looking for old-fashioned seaside charm in England, Devon certainly has its fair share of visitor spots. It helps that the coastline on either side of Exeter and Plymouth enjoys more hours of sunshine than anywhere else on the British mainland.

Cornwall has its own appeal, particularly through specialist activities that it has become famous for—such as sailing at Falmouth and the world-class natural surfing opportunities at Newquay. History and the turbulent sea meet in the fortified site of Tintagel and the rock-walled harbour of Boscastle further up the coast, which will appeal to a different crowd of visitors.

And then there's the western headlands of Lizard Point and Land's End, where some of the most dramatic views of the Atlantic’s crashing waves can be found.

Scotland

Did you know that wherever you are in Scotland, you’re never more than 65km from the sea? It's no surprise then that Scotland is a major competitor in this theme. Glacial activity created the famous indented Scottish coastline that stretches nearly 12,000km and attracts visitors from around the world.

Some 800 islands off the west and north coasts also provide unique coastal landscapes and wildlife viewing opportunities, from the cliffs of Orkney and St Kilda to the broad plains of the Uists. The sea lochs and canals in the west of Scotland provide a stark contrast to the exposed rocky shores of the open coast; and then in the east lie some of the most famous sandy beaches in the country including the much-photographed and filmed West Sands in St Andrews.

Lake District

The Lake District offers an ideal mix of stunning scenery and adventure activities—all within a vast National Park—that can pull in a wide cross-section of visitors. It has 12 of the largest lakes in England in a concentrated area and 3,500km of rights of way, which make it a walker’s paradise, filled with beautiful vantage points.

Visitors can explore the Lakes by boat, foot and bike, enjoying a host of wonderful wildlife as they go. The ancient woodlands provide the atmosphere and setting for all kinds of exciting activities, while the rocky terrain provides the perfect setting for keen rock climbers. Derwent Water, Ullswater, Coniston, Langdale, Grasmere and the Northern Lakes all make an excellent place for keen canoeists, kayakers and even cliff jumpers.

Republic of Ireland

The Wild Atlantic Way is a new ROI venture that offers visitors a fresh way to discover the west coast of Ireland. This will be the country’s first long-distance driving route, linking the Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal to Kinsale in County Cork at a distance of 2,500km.

To make the driving trip one of constant sights and new experiences, 156 discovery points have been marked out along the way—encouraging visitors to engage with local communities and extend their stay. A number of looped itineraries that further spread the attractions outside the spine are also being planned.
**Make the most of our natural beauty**

According to the NITB Visitor Attitude Survey 2011 nearly one fifth of visitors choose to take a trip to/in NI ‘to get close to nature and enjoy the natural environment’. Natural beauty is a key motivator for visitors and there is a strong desire to enjoy coasts and waterways.

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### SWOT analysis for Coasts and Lakes

#### STRENGTHS

- This theme incorporates two signature projects – Causeway Coast & Glens and Mourne Mountains.
- NI has over 200km of diverse coastline and beachfront, and extensive natural and man-made inland waterways.
- Abundant activity providers, from fishing to water sports, from coastal bike rides to horse riding.
- Beautiful sea cliffs, such as the unique Whiterocks in County Antrim.
- Fantastic surfing locations and surf schools.
- Stunning, unspoiled beaches.
- Lough Neagh with an area of 151 square miles is the largest freshwater lake in the UK.

#### WEAKNESSES

- Under-development of potential coastal products.
- Perception of decline in some seaside resorts.
- Some products / destinations not perceived as modern, vibrant or exciting.
- Value for money of attractions sometimes considered low.
- Lack of information / signage on things to do and places to eat – especially in the evenings and on Sundays / bank holidays.
- Not enough opportunity to mix with locals.
- Reliance on our domestic market visitors.
- Limitations in visitor access to Coast & Lakes products.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Better communication about what NI has to offer in terms of Coasts and Lakes.
- To use the popularity of the Giant’s Causeway and Mourne Mountains to attract visitors, wherever your business is located in NI.
- To create experiences around our key Coasts and Lakes strengths.
- Collaborate with other businesses to create better joined-up experiences.

#### THREATS

- Lack of collaboration amongst businesses to provide joined up experiences.
- Limited awareness of differentiation of NI.
- Competition from other coastal markets.
- Individual businesses not realising the important part they play in delivering the overall experience.
Who comes to visit our Coasts and Lakes?

Over the last few years there has been a variety of research studies carried out to try to better understand the profiles of our visitors: who they are, what they are looking for from a holiday in NI and what types of experiences they might like. Our key markets are NI, Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Great Britain (GB) and of these, by far the largest proportion is NI – ourselves on day trips or short breaks close to home.

But this isn’t the way it needs to be in the future. Research has shown that we have a great many assets that could equally appeal to other types of visitors if we were to focus our efforts on understanding better the types of experiences they are looking for, address some of their barriers and perceptions and make sure they have a brilliant time with us every time.

Coasts and Lakes target visitors

There are some key visitor types or segments that we need to focus our attention on in NI as these are the types of visitor who are best matched to what we have to offer. There are three main profiles for GB visitors, four for ROI and three for NI. For more information on the target segments look at the Creating Experiences Toolkit and the Intelligent Perspective Series - Overview Report.

The segments that most are attracted to this theme, Coasts and Lakes, are Mature Cosmopolitan from both ROI and NI; Family Fun from NI; Time Together from ROI and Great Escapers from GB. These names have been given to the different visitor types to help us to understand their main attributes.

Did You Know?

Two out of five visitors who visit Strangord Lough also visit the Mourne Mountains. Could we build on that number? Are we making sure visitors have the right information so we can entice them to double up on visits and increase their length of stay?

If you think you’re too small to make a difference, you’ve never been to bed with a mosquito.

Anita Roddick, Bodyshop
A practical guide to experiential tourism in Northern Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>What they like</th>
<th>Examples of how businesses could attract them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Together Couples</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>• Relaxation</td>
<td>• Use words that evoke ‘time out’, ‘luxury’, and ‘romance’ and ‘coastal escapes’ in marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>• Excellent food and wine</td>
<td>• Give recommendations for coastal scenic walks and shopping experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Enjoy natural scenery</td>
<td>• Give lots of ideas about things to do in the evening – particularly to mix with the locals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Visit local landmarks</td>
<td>• Ask if visitors are celebrating a special occasion and consider giving a surprise gift.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Check out local shopping, pubs and cafes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>• Relaxation</td>
<td>• Give your own recommendations for the best places to eat out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent breakers,</td>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>• Good quality food and drink</td>
<td>• More likely to take mid-week breaks. Are there any value-added packages you can offer to entice them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usually older market,</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Scenic drives</td>
<td>• Provide maps for guests, highlighting must-see viewpoints and other places to visit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>travelling as couple or</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Going to the theatre</td>
<td>• What can you offer to add value, without compromising price? A welcome drink? Complimentary toiletries?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two couples</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Authentic Northern Irish pubs</td>
<td>• Provide information about local pubs with a truly Northern Irish feel that are child friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Good deals</td>
<td>• These visitors want printed marketing materials to give visitors ideas – do you have this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Big local attractions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Fun</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>• Fun things to do</td>
<td>• To attract more families - think how to attract more families in your marketing materials and local information packs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families travelling with</td>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>• Things to keep children entertained</td>
<td>• Give recommendations for other local businesses that offer family experiences. How about linking with others to create a family pass for water sports?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
<td></td>
<td>• To see the kids happy</td>
<td>• Do you offer babysitting services?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Time to explore together</td>
<td>• Do you offer a family meal deal?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Assurance of safety</td>
<td>• Suggest rainy day activities that will occupy children.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• If you offer activities for children, is this spelt out in marketing materials?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Escapers</td>
<td>GB</td>
<td>• Slowing the pace of life</td>
<td>• Provide lots of info about unique and special things to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger 30+ couples,</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Getting away from it all</td>
<td>• Make a point of trying out restaurants that offer fresh, local seafood so you can make recommendations to visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often with baby or</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Authentic and beautiful places</td>
<td>• Suggest gentle activities to visitors that show off the coastal landscapes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>toddler, needing a</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Relaxation</td>
<td>• Carry brochures about nearby ancient heritage sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>break from busy lives</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Connecting with family</td>
<td>• Provide information about local pubs with a truly Northern Irish feel that are child friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Out-of-the-ordinary things to see and do</td>
<td>• Think about the added services you could offer to help guests relax.</td>
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</table>

Visitors

When using these different visitor profiles – it is important to understand that they don’t represent an individual person or personality but rather a typical ‘visitor type’ which we call a ‘segment’. It is a useful guide for us when thinking about the sorts of products and services we can offer and which types of people might be attracted to them. Once we know this – we can be better informed about who best to market to.

Can you recognise your own types of visitors?
Do they fall into a couple or more of these categories?

It is also important to understand that no one visits for just one thing. Even if visitors arrive especially to see Titanic Belfast or the Giant’s Causeway for example – they still eat, sleep, interact with locals and do a myriad of different activities that gives them this experience. It is for this reason that we need to understand the different characteristics of visitors and then match these to our five themes.
A quick taster of how easy it is to mix the five themes to create an experience for different types of visitors.

Of course people will make these sorts of connections themselves if they have enough information to do so. But as a business, there is so much that you can do to encourage and inspire visitors to create great experiential itineraries. It is good for them and good for your business. There are, of course, many different mixes people might choose - but if you are aware of what visitors tend to go for, you can have a look around for other businesses in your area to see who you could work with to offer more – by collaborating with others and offering a joined-up experience.

Margaret and James from Belfast (MATURE COSMOPOLITAN visitor segment) have come to catch a few days away together before they are committed to their grandparent duties for the summer. They centre their break in Enniskillen because they love watching wildlife (NATURALLY NI) on the waterways (COASTS AND LAKES). When they saw the deal on Groupon they jumped at the chance – four nights for the price of two. They also love to visit some of the artisan food producers to take supplies home and so a visit to Corleggy Cheese Farm and a wander around the Organic Centre is a must (NATURALLY NI). Enniskillen is a good base because there is lots of what they like to do and see nearby. In the evenings, Margaret and James also enjoy getting dressed up to go out and so are keen to see what’s on at the theatre or to find some traditional music to listen to (CREATIVE VIBE).

Expectations vs. Experience

So what are visitors expecting? Why don’t they always give us a 10/10 gold star when we ask for feedback? Does it really matter?

Well, yes it does. Because we need people to recommend the experiences we offer – whether this is through social media channels or just word of mouth. This is our most effective route to market. Think about what you would expect on a holiday yourself and also what more you would secretly be delighted by if it was offered? We need to delight our visitors every time so that they recommend us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What visitors generally want</th>
<th>What visitors often get</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have a broad range of things to do and see that gives them a rich experience.</td>
<td>Little information in the locality about what’s on and so they miss out and have a bland experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn something new.</td>
<td>Lack of available experiences because locals often don’t see how visitors would be attracted by activities that are commonplace to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet local people and feel part of local life.</td>
<td>A ‘them and ‘us mentality creating barriers to visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To eat local distinctive food.</td>
<td>Predictable international food or frozen convenience food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good service and being asked what they thought of the experience.</td>
<td>No prompting for feedback from staff which feels to a visitor like a lack of concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hassle being taken away by people understanding what experience visitors might want.</td>
<td>A lack of joined up thinking by businesses and little proactivity to ensure the visitor has a good itinerary – whether at their own business or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being appreciated as an individual no matter how long or short the visit.</td>
<td>Presumption that all visitors are locals and can fend for themselves. Many are, but we need to attract a much broader range of visitors who often need more care and direction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to attract more visitors to visit our Coasts and Lakes

Tourism markets may be ever changing but the principles remain the same. A strong quality product, excellent value, good customer service, thoughtful hospitality and a connectedness with other businesses within a destination are the core foundation for any tourism business today.

To encourage people to enjoy a more integrated experience in NI rather than just an individual product, we need to shift our thinking to how we see our business in the context of NI, who we are in competition with and who we should collaborate with. We know that we have a big opportunity to attract many more visitors from both ROI and GB and so we must start first to think NI; then the county or area; then locality; and then finally your own business.

Your competition is then primarily other destinations like Scotland, not a neighbouring business in your own locality who might better be a collaborator.

This is where ‘clustering’ comes into its own – small businesses with particular types of customers in common can come together to provide a richer and more joined up experience for visitors.

Build a visitor experience around the COASTS & LAKES theme

If your business is in or near Belfast, there are many attractions that tie in to the COASTS & LAKES theme, for example the Titanic Experience on the city’s doorstep. Likewise, are you based near the Newry Canal or Lagan Towpath? Did you know that many visitors like to cycle this route to take in the natural delights of NI and make stop-offs along the way? Do they know about your business and what you offer, and do you promote the cycle route to them? Could you link up with your local bike hire company to make this more accessible for visitors?

Did You Know?

85% of Republic of Ireland (ROI) residents took a short break away from home in 2011. With an average of nearly three breaks per person, that means almost 10 million short breaks are taken by the ROI adult population. We know that ROI overnight trips to NI increased by 60,000 (16%) in 2012. There is a huge opportunity for us to attract more of these visitors – so what more can you do?

Case Studies

2. Clustering in practice

Seafood lover’s paradise in Padstow, Cornwall

Padstow is a charming working fishing port. For foodies, it is a dream destination as the town excels in fresh, locally produced food and is famous for the restaurants of celebrity chefs - Rick Stein and Paul Ainsworth. Local tourism businesses are thriving on clustering their experiences around this theme and there is a wide array of restaurants, delis, fish and chip shops and seafood schools helping to boost the port’s growing reputation. For example, North Cornish Catch not only run lobster catching trips but also offers visitors the chance to become ‘a fisherman’s apprentice’ for the day. Visitors can put on the famous yellow fishermen’s oil skins and help the skipper bring in the catch to supply the local restaurants.

www.padstowlive.com
www.northcornishcatch.co.uk
How to create experiences using Coasts and Lakes

‘Clustering’ - How your business can offer an experience for NI!

So how does clustering work in practice, and how does it really have an impact? Consider this diagram: Look at how a visitor makes a decision to finally end up at your business. Then look at all the different ways you could collaborate with others to get noticed, much earlier and further up that buying process. You can do this by collaborating with others using the visitor segments as the link between you.

How a B&B can offer a food experience and positively impact NI

Case Studies

3.

Clustering in practice

Watery adventures in the Lake District

The Lake District is England’s largest National Park and home to Westwater – England’s deepest lake. Surrounding communities like Keswick and Bowness-on-Windermere thrive on the area’s successful tourism offering. Key outdoor activities have been developed around this area of natural beauty including cycling, water sports, fishing and walking, while pulling together with local accommodation and attractions.

Visitors are encouraged to take a riverside stroll or challenging hike around the lake. Coniston Boating Centre provides the perfect spot to hire a boat or kayak. But these activities are made all the more appealing by tying them in with, for example, the idea of an afternoon tea treat at places such as Brockhole Visitor Centre. It is this combination of offerings that makes the visitors’ stay all the more appealing.

www.brockhole.co.uk
Tourism in NI, like any other destination is affected by a wide range of factors ranging from national economics, consumer confidence, lifestyle trends to technology developments, and changing demographics with a new generation of visitors. So how do you keep up to date and be proactive in changing your business to react to them? In the past, it would be safe to say that we have relied heavily on our local market for tourism and so these world trends affected us less. However that is definitely in the past now and we are moving on. For our tourism industry to grow and survive we must be able to welcome many more different types of visitors from many more places and be sure that we are aware of what they are looking for from us and most importantly – be able to offer it.

### Keep your business on trend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend/factor</th>
<th>What this means</th>
<th>What more you can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visitors are value-focussed</strong></td>
<td>Visitors are more discerning and expectations are rising. They want excellent experiences but aren’t necessarily prepared to pay for them! Tend to wait to book at the last minute. People are taking shorter holidays closer to home. Discounts don’t have the highest appeal – people want to feel they have had the best value and it has been personal.</td>
<td>Are you offering incentives for local visitors to rediscover their own area? Do you offer a range of prices and flexibility to suit a visitor’s needs? What special touches do you do very well that make your business stand out? Do you promote them on your website? What added value deals are you promoting? Can you theme these every month?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time for me</strong></td>
<td>People are increasingly looking to book last minute short breaks. They want to invest in themselves and so that can also mean learning something new, having a new experience or just quiet pampering time.</td>
<td>Can you collaborate with local businesses to offer pamper treatments in house? What do you like to do to recharge your batteries? Can you recommend this same experience to visitors? Can you promote this on your website?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Case Studies

#### Time for Me

With views across the Lake District, a Michelin starred restaurant and indulgent health spa, Holbeck Ghyll is a multi-award winning country retreat. As well as offering the highest levels of comfort and service, it also offers guests a range of experiences. For example, by linking with a local mountain guide, they offer ‘Walking Weekends’ which combine fine local produce with spectacular walks. Another example, the ‘Best Things in Life’ package, includes a helicopter transfer, a private butler, a seven course Michelin starred feast and the use of a Lamborghini and a speedboat for tours around the area. What can you package together to offer your visitors a real ‘escape’?

www.holbeckghyll.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend/factor</th>
<th>What this means</th>
<th>What more you can do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technological innovations are reshaping the industry</strong></td>
<td>Visitors are becoming increasingly savvy about searching things to do whilst on holiday. Posting feedback on social networking sites or review sites is easy and can be done in seconds - reaching thousands. Visitors are looking for personal, tailored booking experiences.</td>
<td>Are you monitoring and responding to feedback about you on Travel Review sites? Do you offer free Wi-Fi or can direct a visitor to where it is available close by? How can technology help enhance your service or offering? Do you follow up with visitors afterwards with tailored, personalised offers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authenticity</strong></td>
<td>Visitors want to experience everything that NI can offer - interacting with locals, tasting local food, being in the natural environment and absorbing the local stories. People are more focused on the purpose of the trip and how it will make them feel rather than just on scenery and climate.</td>
<td>Do you provide information about the best of your local experiences? People love personal recommendations. Can you play music, tell stories or even sing? Do you have a passion for cooking, gardening, bird watching or old cars? Do you know one malt whiskey from another? How can you share what you know with visitors? Could you collaborate with other local providers to offer a themed package to jointly promote to visitors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Provenance &amp; Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>Business that adopt sustainable practices stand to gain a competitive edge on those who don’t. Visitors will be looking for recommendations and advice about sampling local dishes. People are willing to pay a premium for local provenance in food and other local products.</td>
<td>Could you find a ‘point of difference’ on ‘being green’ and reward visitors on their sustainable efforts? How about £5 for visitors arriving by bike? Do you make the most of your local produce? Do you know where to source it? Does your staff know enough about local food? Can you provide additional training and encouragement? Could you make recommendations to visitors about local suppliers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Case Studies**

### 5. Technological Innovations

The Train of Le Massif de Charlevoix in Canada took its maiden journey when an abandoned train line was redeveloped to link the Quebec City and Charlevoix regions.

While aboard the Train, passengers are treated to a first-class travel experience. The interiors of the cars have been refurbished to offer the utmost in travel comfort. Each car has a kitchen serving local delicacies created by a regional icon chef. Then there are the unforgettable views – the natural coastal and mountain landscapes that the tracks pass by are awe-inspiring.

The Train’s team uses state of the art technology to present information in an exciting way, such as a multimedia iPad and a GPS-activated entertainment system that plays video content in relation to where travellers are on the journey.

Technology can be intimidating, but when used to its fullest can really enhance the visitor experience.

www.lemassif.com/en/train

### 7. Provenance & Sustainability

The Captain’s Galley in Scrabster, Caithness, in Scotland is a restaurant based in a renovated 19th century ice house. There are around 20 species of fish on the menu each week and up to 10 a night, all bought that day from fishermen. The owner’s environmental policy is strictly to offer only fresh, local and seasonal Scottish fish, and this is outlined on the menu. If visitors want to accompany him on his morning trip to the fish market, he is delighted to be able to offer his insider’s knowledge. Guests can choose their own fish from the ice-packed crates and then walk back through the docks to the restaurant to learn how to cook it.

www.captainsgalley.co.uk

### 6. Authenticity

Border Collies have been bred to work sheep in the Lake District since the 1700s. This unique experience allows visitors in the Lake District the chance to learn about the area’s cultural history by receiving instruction from a local expert on the challenge of sheepdog handling, with the aim of completing a small course at the end.

This is a great example of immersing visitors in a historical experience, rather than just handing a leaflet of information. Visitors love to learn something new, especially if it is presented in an authentic way.

www.lakedistrictsheepdogexperience.co.uk
Creating an ‘end-to-end’ experience

To create the best experience you need to maintain a high level of service for visitors at all stages of the buying lifecycle:

- **Dreaming/being inspired**
- **Planning**
- **Booking**
- **Experiencing**
- **Sharing**

**Dreaming/being inspired**
Tourism is a fast-paced, ever-changing industry and the internet and social media mean instant information. For NI to grab a share of the market and stay at the forefront of minds, information must be accessible.

With 94% of all visitors to NI booking their trip independently (NI Visitor Attitude Survey 2011) there is an increasing demand for online information and we need to be ready to deliver that.

In terms of your online presence, don’t sell the destination – sell the story. Most internet users have made the decision in principle to visit, but you can ‘close the deal’ with stories.

Paint vivid pictures of your local landscapes, living legends and exciting activities, and send the message that the unforgettable can happen.

**Planning**
According to the Visitor Attitude Survey 2011, visitors from outside NI base trip planning on personal recommendations (43%) and a significant number rely on Travel Review sites (14%). If we offer great experiences and encourage visitors to share those experiences, it will have a big impact. Travel review sites are a key tool for businesses to communicate with visitors, celebrating good reviews and responding to constructive criticism.

**Booking**
Like all others stages of the buying process, visitors want to be able to make a booking with the minimum of hassle. It has been proven that many more visitors will book if they are able to do it for themselves online and have enough information to know the choice they are making is the one they want. And they will increasingly use travel review sites to gather this information.

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**How to work with Travel Review Sites**

- **Don't panic about reviews.** The reality is that around 88% of online reviews are positive. When it’s all about how you react and respond.

  - If you respond professionally and show that you care about your guests’ comment, it may make a new visitor more likely to book with you. **Will a bad review put others off?** An authentic review site will almost always include some form of ‘bad’ review. If the majority of your reviews are positive, people will see through any unfair comments. Your review profile will build an overall ‘feel’ for the business, which is why it’s important to encourage visitors to leave feedback and build your presence.

- **You can't please everyone all of the time.** Everyone has different expectations, so what may be good value to one person might not be to someone else. So don’t worry if you aren’t getting five out of five in every review – but do ensure you’re offering the best service for your key markets.

**The more reviews, the merrier.** Reviews drive interest and increase visitor confidence in your business. Also, adverts with reviews, even negative ones, will appear higher up in Travel Review Sites search results pages. So keep asking for feedback!

---

**Number of reviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase in enquiries</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>150%</td>
<td>246%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Graph showing the relationship between number of reviews and increase in inquiries]
Experiencing
The key is to make everything as easy as possible for your visitor to have a memorable time. They are looking for the warm NI welcome and authentic experiences and the best thing we can do is help that flow easily for them.

• **Provide the right information**
For example, recommend visitors to the Lough Erne Canoe Trail. It is a waterproof guide that makes it easy to explore Fermanagh’s lakes by canoe. It’s suitable for a wide range of abilities, and 85% of those who have experienced the trail said it enhanced their experience of the area. It can be ordered free of charge on CanoeNI.com, and contains key information such as campsites, toilets, fresh water, points of interest. Could you have products like this ready and available for visitors?

• **Tell them about conveniences**
There is currently a new project to offer free Wi-Fi in Portrush, to help revitalise the high street and maximise the evening economy. Additional funding means it will be extended to cover beaches and other recreational areas, providing excellent coverage across the whole resort. This is just the sort of thing that visitors would want to know about, and for some, could be a very strong asset.

• **Keep them up-to-date with new attractions**
Tell your visitors about recent improvements and upgrades – it may pique their interest for a return visit. The Mourne Coastal Route work has been completed, including pathway upgrades, new picnic furniture, enhanced signage and access to quality viewpoints. The route now highlights local stories to engage the visitor and enhance the experience. Would this appeal to your visitors?

Sharing
Encouraging visitors to talk about their holiday is a fantastic – and free – marketing opportunity. The opinions of satisfied visitors will carry a lot more weight than any PR or advertising campaign.

For example, Carnfunnock Country Park on the Causeway Coastal Route has created a new free iPhone and android app. It offers information pre-visit about opening hours and so on, the ability to add their events to your own calendar, and, importantly, an opportunity to upload photos of a fun day out. Visitors can enjoy sharing their own experiences and at the same time are selling the destination to others.

Can you encourage your visitors to talk about their experiences with you on Facebook, Twitter and other social media?

**Did You Know?**
Mussendun Temple, on the cliffs above Downhill Beach, is one of the most photographed buildings in NI. Have you told your visitors about this beautiful vantage spot? Could you encourage them to share their own scenic pictures?
Using the NI themes to build your business

Research shows that our potential visitors are not likely to come to NI on the strength of a single experience theme. Also – there is no one type of visitor profile who fits just one segment. But this is where the relatively small size of NI is to our advantage. We have the opportunity to group several of the themes together in a single visit to offer our visitors a rich and rewarding experience of the best that NI has to offer, matched to the most motivating reasons that a particular visitor has for visiting. For more tips on which segments prefer which of our five themes download ‘Creating Experiences Toolkit’ from www.nitb.com/experience. This publication is packed with great information and tools on how to mix themes and tailor these to visitor segments.

So there is not an exact science to how you start to create experiences around the products you offer, but there are some core principles:

• Which types of visitors do you currently attract? List each of the different segments on page 9. You can’t be all things to all people so make sure you just make a note of the segments that book with you the most.

• Look at the themes that these segments are attracted to the most. Does your business fall into this theme? Can you recognise it?

• Now look at the other themes that your top segments also are attracted to. Can you also offer products and services within this theme, too? If not – who could you collaborate with so that you can? Make a list of where your visitors could find these sorts of things to do and see so that you can tell them.

How to offer your visitors a better experience and grow your business at the same time

You can use this type of ‘workbook’ to identify what YOUR next steps are to offer a better experience. Look at the workbook example below.

### Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your business</th>
<th>List the segments you currently attract?</th>
<th>What themes does your business fall under?</th>
<th>What other themes could you offer?</th>
<th>How?</th>
<th>What do you need to do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guest house in Ballycastle</td>
<td>Mature Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>Coasts and Lakes</td>
<td>Naturally NI</td>
<td>Offer discounts to local gardens</td>
<td>Meet garden centre owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Fun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unique outdoors</td>
<td>Do joint package with hiking/biking company</td>
<td>Discuss joint promotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Escapers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Living legends</td>
<td>Collaborate with local history tour</td>
<td>Negociate a preferential rate for guests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to create experiences using Coasts and Lakes
Here are two examples, an accommodation provider and a café. This is the thinking behind creating their ‘TO DO’ list. Can you start to identify yours following the same process?

**EXAMPLE - Accommodation provider**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic facts - Liam and Susan run a B&amp;B in Ballyronan</th>
<th>Create a better experience tailored to this segment and also attract new customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognise the Family Fun segments from both ROI and NI as being their primary visitors. They know that their visitors like to cycle in and around Lough Neagh. Visitors just find them – they never promote themselves so they are not sure how people find them. They don’t have a website. They don’t generally ask where people go after they leave in the morning. They don’t think to ask what people thought of their stay or what more they wanted. Most people tell them they have had a nice time when they say goodbye. They often have low occupancy rates and need to grow their business - particularly for the shoulder season.</td>
<td>Find a restaurant that has the famous Lough Neagh Eels on the menu and start to recommend to guests. Develop a range of local restaurants that you would recommend to visitors. Know all that there is to do in the area and offer to arrange outings for guests. Provide recipe cards of 10 ways to cook an eel. Tell families about Seamus Heaney (described as one of Ireland’s most internationally significant poets and suggest they visit his home town Bellaghy Bawn.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘TO DO’ list

- There are two other segments that this B&B could be attracting – (Great Escapers and Mature Cosmopolitans).
- Invest in a website.
- Do a social media course and start to engage for feedback and reviews.
- Ask for feedback - ask what more you could do.
- Find a variety of local providers to collaborate with to offer more.
- Promote a wider range of offers and links.

**EXAMPLE - Café**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic facts - Mary runs a busy café in Enniskillen</th>
<th>Create a better experience tailored to this segment and also attract new customers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognise the Mature Cosmopolitan segments from both ROI and NI as being their primary visitors. Often her tables are also full of locals who she knows most of by first name! Mary knows she is the most popular café in her area because people always compliment her on her baking and also pies. She likes to buy all her fruit, veg and meat supplies locally and she makes all her pies from fresh. Mary wins many awards at the local country shows for her produce.</td>
<td>Make sure that you tell visitors all the stories about your cooking – write labels on everything to tell people where the ingredients have come from. If possible collaborate with local markets and suppliers to see if you can develop an experience around a ‘field to plate’ theme. Provide information on where visitors can learn to cook locally – e.g. Belle Isle Cookery School? Consider developing 10 branded recipe cards and having these freely available. Also give to local accommodation providers. Does your area host a food festival? Can you join with other suppliers to start one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘TO DO’ list

- Develop a website and consider starting a blog - tell all the stories.
- Visitors will also love to come to interact with all your locals over a cup of tea so start some events!
- Collaborate with other providers to add a food element to the experiences they offer.
Getting back to basics

FIVE ways to get NI (and your business) on visitors’ wish lists!

1. **Offer great value**
The first step for every business is to ensure that they are offering the best in terms of product, service and value. First impressions last, so it’s important to look at things with new eyes and ensure you are offering a quality product and the highest level of service. According to the ABTA Travel Trends Report 2012, 71% of UK consumers believe that getting good value for money (but not necessarily the lowest price) is important when booking a holiday.

2. **Tell stories!**
NI is packed with local myths and legends, and that’s just the sort of thing that will capture the imaginations of visitors. Businesses can share the best-kept secrets of their area as a way of making visitors feel special and to give them stories to share when they go home. Talk about historical figures, interesting old pubs, and quirky buildings - everything that is unique to the area.

3. **Listen to your visitors**
At the core of every business ethos should be listening to customer feedback and doing something with the information that is given. Think of this like ‘free consultancy’. Ask what your visitors are looking to do while they are in the area and make ‘best of’ recommendations based on your own experiences. Anything businesses can do to make life easier for visitors will improve their experience and encourage repeat visits.

4. **Make it truly NI**
Visitors aren’t looking for generic. They want an experience in NI that they can’t get anywhere else. Engage with visitors and recommend the best of NI, whether that is a world-class attraction or a unique local café. Every type of business has its place. Give them memories, and even mementos, to encourage them to come back.

5. **Learn from others/ keep evolving**
Don’t forget to look at what others are doing, whether in NI or further afield, and consider what might work for your business. To pack a bigger punch, collaborate with other local businesses to develop and improve the visitor experience. Collectively, you can achieve more.

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**Case Studies**

**Bringing the RRS Discovery to life**

One hundred years ago, RRS Discovery, the first ice-breaker ship made specifically for scientific research, set sail on a polar expedition commanded by Robert Falcon Scott. Now beautifully restored, visitors can wander around the deck, check out the cramped officers’ cabins, dine in the wardroom and see the inhospitable conditions of the engine room. The accompanying museum is atmospheric, informative and full of intriguing artefacts. Visitors are taken back to Antarctica and told stories of the voyage through audio visual shows, computer-based media and actual artefacts.

[www.rrsdiscovery.com](http://www.rrsdiscovery.com)
Keeping it ‘real’ in New Zealand

In New Zealand, Fiordland Wilderness Experiences have been offering kayak experiences to visitors for over 20 years. Their message is that they bring alive the true nature of the stunning landscape that they call home. They want to enhance visitors’ understanding of adventure and wilderness, enabling them to have a genuine ‘kiwi experience’ – with fun along the way! Key elements that have contributed to their success have been:

• Professional Guiding - by local Maori guides to preserve authenticity.

• Interpretation of the flora & fauna delivered in a unique style – knowing that people don’t just come for one activity alone and the experience needs to cater to a broad range of interests.

• Storytelling – visitors hear stories of the living landscapes, the people, and the traditions, giving them unforgettable memories.

• Some catering is provided. Organic and indigenous Maori food options are available.

• Cultural Maori Activity – visitors are all encouraged to weave or carve something to take home; an unforgettable souvenir of the experience.

Authentic experiences are extremely powerful. Don’t underestimate what you have on your doorstep. How can you turn what you have into an experience for your visitors?

www.seakayakfiordland.co.nz
www.realjourneys.co.nz/en/experiences

Revitalising Littlehampton’s seafront

The East Beach Café has been referred to as the ‘ideal blueprint’ for coastal cafes. It was completed in 2007 and has since won more than 20 national and international awards for its unique design – inspired by a piece of driftwood, its exterior is made from a giant jigsaw of rusted steel.

Management is committed to sustainable fishing, and serves locally-sourced produce wherever possible. They also have great daily fish specials to make the most of what the day boats bring in.

The Café has become the focal point of tourism in Littlehampton, reversing 120 years of decline. It now links in with and signposts visitors to tourist activities and accommodation providers in the area. It is a fantastic example of how a successful small business can have a huge impact on an area.

www.eastbeachcafe.co.uk
Don’t be a loner – work with others!

To effectively offer tourism experiences in Northern Ireland we must start to work together. You are not able to do this on your own! So collaboration is key.

But who do you work with? How do you start it?

If you have been used to working on your own and keeping a close eye on neighbouring tourism providers in case they steal your customers – THINK AGAIN! Competition isn’t ‘here’ – it is ‘over there!’ We must start to organise ourselves to reflect the way that visitors make decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Decision</th>
<th>Customer mindset</th>
<th>Does a business collaborate or compete?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST</td>
<td>Will we be able to do what we want to do in NI?</td>
<td>NI tourism businesses collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECOND</td>
<td>Where in NI can we meet our needs (activities, places to visit, places to stay)? REGION</td>
<td>Regional/county tourism providers <strong>collaborate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIRD</td>
<td>We have found a great deal/ offer to stay at X (hotel/B&amp;B etc.) – what can we do nearby? TOWN/VILLAGE</td>
<td>Local area tourism providers <strong>collaborate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOURTH</td>
<td>Which restaurant/activity provider shall we choose in X? What else can we do here?</td>
<td>Same providers <strong>compete</strong> (on value and quality – not price), everyone else <strong>collaborates</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tips on how to collaborate**

✔ Choose other providers who have the same quality and values as you do.

✔ Select and approach those businesses that you know your visitors also visit on their trip. You are then ‘linked’ by the visitors that you share.

✔ Have trust, loyalty and transparency between everyone in your collaboration group.

Working together brings great rewards for everyone – better insights, more bookings, more support and an opportunity to grow and learn.

*”Success in local tourism flows from collaboration and complementarity, not internal competition and division. Organisation and coordination is the key.*

The tourism development handbook; Godfrey and Clarke
Creating an authentic experience – with whisky at the heart of it!

‘The Whisky Coast’ is a whisky trail located on Scotland’s west coast and encompasses golf, fishing, sailing, walking, places to stay and eat, and a range of things to see and do – all based around Scotland’s whisky product.

On route to a distillery, visitors are encouraged to soak up local heritage by visiting Torosay Castle and Gardens on the Isle of Mull. They are also informed about quality places to eat and drink such as the Crannog Restaurant, a former pier-side bait store in Fort William, which serves seafood fresh from the waters of the West Coast. Then Crannog Cruises' boat can take visitors on a cruise down Loch Linnhe, with spectacular scenery and wildlife spotting.

The West Coast Whisky Trail is brought to visitors via a website and map, and a range of trip options: guided tour or guided whisky and golf holiday; self-drive holiday with a planned itinerary; go it alone.

‘The Whisky Coast’ offers a joined-up, memorable experience for visitors around a popular Scottish export. NI is primed for similar opportunities – what could work for you?

www.whiskycoast.co.uk

Learning experiences for all ages in Canada

Visitors to The Miramichi River in the south-east corner of Canada can enjoy world-class fishing whether they’re an expert or beginner, adult or child. After immersing themselves in the virtual world of the salmon with a guided tour of the Atlantic Salmon Museum and aquarium, visitors can enjoy their own fly-tying skills or fly-casting lessons.

The educational programme for children teaches them all elements of the art of fishing for salmon and trout. There is also a children’s day camp and a fun family package, where groups can stay in a real fishing lodge – at the river’s edge, where they can then kayak, canoe, hike and explore one of Canada’s most spectacular wilderness areas. It boasts four and a half days of unforgettable family adventures.

This business capitalises on the trend for new experiences and the ‘currency’ of learning a new skill while on holiday. What could your business offer? Could you take your visitors on a learning experience?

www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca/Products/A/HookontotheArtofFly-Tying-AtlanticSalmonMuseum-EC.aspx

Power of Word of Mouth

Make sure you reply to every review that anyone makes of your business on travel review sites. Did you know that reviewers can contact each other to ask advice? You want to be sure your reviewers are your sales force, not your detractor! Note from one reviewer to another... “This place sounds lovely. Is there any night life pubs or stuff in the area? We figured it would be best to stay near the Giant’s Causeway since the following morning we’d be heading to Belfast. But I would love to hear some Irish music and just enjoy a nice evening after a long day of touring. What do you think? Are their rates good? Do you know if they have live Irish music? Thanks a lot - Sam”

This booking will be made dependent on the first reviewer’s perception – this is how it works!
Opportunities for each of the five guides in the Intelligent Perspective Series we will cover a different opportunity for businesses based on the top things you need to know.

**Guide 1: Coasts and Lakes**  ➔  **Routes to Market**

**Guide 2: Unique Outdoors**  ➔  **Sustainability/Green Credentials**

**Guide 3: Creative Vibe**  ➔  **Social Media**

**Guide 4: Naturally NI**  ➔  ** Authenticity**

**Guide 5: Living Legends**  ➔  **Visitor Feedback**

Now that you know more about which types of visitors are attracted by what you offer, you can start to be more proactive about how you attract them and what the best way to do this is.

There is a variety of methods that you can use to promote your business to your key visitor segments and this should be based on what you know about them – not what the cheapest/easiest method is.

### What and why

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<td><strong>Word of mouth and social media</strong>&lt;br&gt;Recommendations from people we know and online review sites are trusted more than any other marketing route.</td>
<td>Encourage people to recommend you and offer incentives to encourage them. Sign up to online review sites and encourage visitors to comment. Don’t forget to reply to each and every comment!</td>
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<td><strong>Direct promotions</strong>&lt;br&gt;Newsletters, specific promotions distributed through your own database and other third parties.</td>
<td>Don’t be too ‘salesy’ – be genuine and authentic – write as an advisor rather than a sales person. Develop a month by month promotional plan – be proactive over a year and don’t just react when you need bookings.</td>
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<td><strong>Your own database</strong>&lt;br&gt;For email campaigns and to keep a note of likes/dislikes to show you care to recognise repeat visitors.</td>
<td>Keep notes on individual repeat customers so that you can ‘recognise them personally’. This is a great tool to show you care. Keep a record of how people have found you.</td>
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<td><strong>Collaborating with others</strong>&lt;br&gt;Can be around a local area, a theme, a sector or an activity.</td>
<td>A group of businesses can leverage better PR and media coverage to bring in more bookings and referrals. Consider joining a local consortia or marketing group.</td>
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<td><strong>Intermediaries</strong>&lt;br&gt;Travel agents, tour operators, destination specialists, other travel specialists who develop packages.</td>
<td>Find out more about who sells ‘packages’ to visitors for your area. Ask your own customers if they know of package holidays deals to your area.</td>
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<td><strong>Your own / community website</strong>&lt;br&gt;Over 75% of visitors use the internet to search for ideas and offers for holidays in NI.</td>
<td>Take care of your website and make sure it is always current – don’t forget this is your shop window. If you don’t have a website, make sure you are featured on a community one. If you are not visible – people can’t find you!</td>
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### What can you do NOW?

| **Get to grips with experiential tourism.** | Consider NI’s tourism offer from your own experience. Go out and be a visitor in your own locality and look at it with a critical visitor’s eye.  
Do you give feedback? If not, why not? Give feedback on every place you visit using travel review sites. Start to think like a visitor.  
Do you use social media as a visitor? Start to tweet about places you like – share the good news with others. You are a visitor, too! |
| **Attract more visitors using our Coasts & Lakes as a hook.** | Don’t try to be all things to all people! Know what types of people are attracted to you, and then simply give them what they want.  
Visitors look to interact with locals and see ‘behind the scenes’ – how can you enable this to make their visit extra special?  
Repeat visitors are very important – how can you encourage more repeat bookings and ‘word of mouth’ recommendations? |
| **Use the assets of our Coasts & Lakes to develop experiences.** | Be aware of current and upcoming world trends – it’s a great way to stay on trend and have competitive advantage.  
Refer to NITB’s Creating Experiences Toolkit – and design itineraries for your key visitor segments. Who can you collaborate with to make these happen?  
Communicate the things that make your local area stand out and will give the authentic experience people are looking for. |
| **Get the basics right.** | Offer visitors lots of information on local things to see and do! Prepare some sample itineraries of the most memorable places and activities in your area.  
Always ask for (written) customer feedback to know who is coming to your business and what they like. It will help you target your offer and fix any issues. |
| **Collaborate with others.** | Get to know other local businesses that offer complementary products and services to you. If they engage in the local scenery, history or culture – how could you collaborate with these providers?  
Who operates a business locally that you admire? Think how you can collaborate and get in touch to suggest the next steps. |
| **Communicate with visitors and attract more bookings.** | Consider all the possible marketing channels and focus on the best one or two for your business and make them really work for you.  
Think ‘where is the added value?’ with every promotion you run. It’s best to only discount for last-minute offers. |