

WORKBOOK



Let's talk families

Why families matter and how to make the most of the family market



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



**FAMILY®
FRIENDLY.**

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Overview

Tourist enterprises aren't just in the business of selling products and services. We create and manage experiences. We instil excitement and pleasure. We help customers relax, laugh and be active.

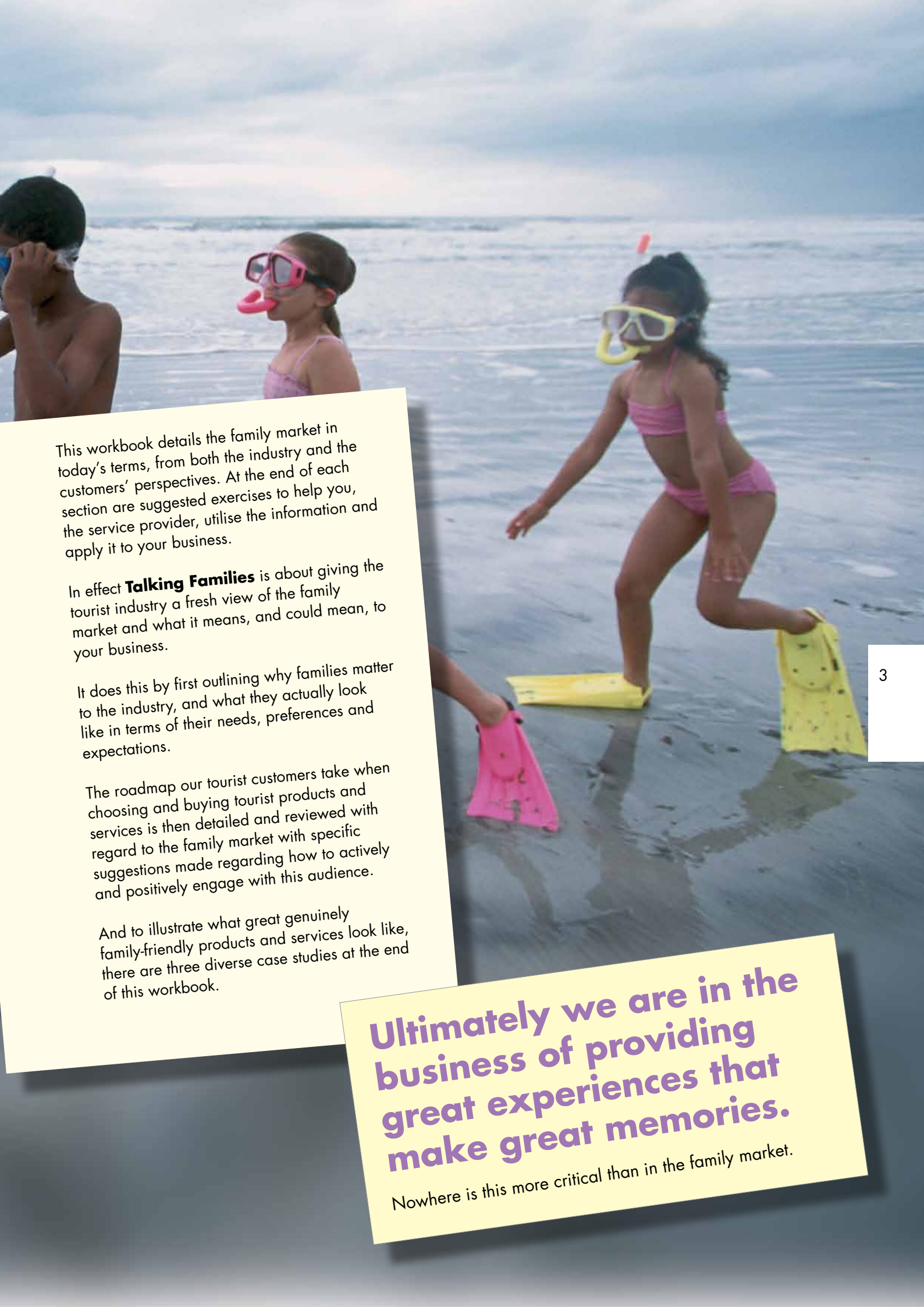
Ireland's tourism industry is worth over €4.7bn. 1 out of every 5 domestic holiday trips are families travelling with children while 1 in 10 overseas visitors are travelling with family.

So with the economic climate presenting difficulties to both tourist and industry alike, it's important we focus our efforts on audiences that offer opportunities.

Given that the number of Irish families are growing in size, the family category represents such an opportunity: one which is acknowledged but fraught with assumptions and misconceptions; one which is recognised, but not fully exploited.

The family market therefore is worth a closer considered look. And **Talking Families** is about giving tourism businesses some practical tools and guidelines to do just that.



A photograph of three children on a beach. On the left, a boy is adjusting his snorkel mask. In the center, a girl is blowing bubbles through her pink snorkel. On the right, another girl is wearing yellow snorkel gear and yellow flippers, appearing to be in motion. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky.

This workbook details the family market in today's terms, from both the industry and the customers' perspectives. At the end of each section are suggested exercises to help you, the service provider, utilise the information and apply it to your business.

In effect **Talking Families** is about giving the tourist industry a fresh view of the family market and what it means, and could mean, to your business.

It does this by first outlining why families matter to the industry, and what they actually look like in terms of their needs, preferences and expectations.

The roadmap our tourist customers take when choosing and buying tourist products and services is then detailed and reviewed with regard to the family market with specific suggestions made regarding how to actively and positively engage with this audience.

And to illustrate what great genuinely family-friendly products and services look like, there are three diverse case studies at the end of this workbook.

Ultimately we are in the business of providing great experiences that make great memories.

Nowhere is this more critical than in the family market.

Why family matters

With 850,000 family home holiday trips in Ireland, this market is hugely important to the tourist industry. However, it is a changing market and is often either overlooked or presumptions are made regarding its needs, preferences and even make up.

But as an industry, can we afford to let this continue? And are we missing an opportunity by doing so?

Families are a valuable market that have evolved significantly in the last few years and need to be re-considered in a new light.

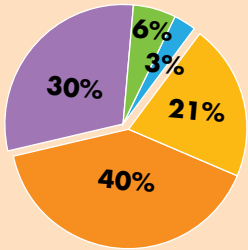
They're important because they're seekers of a rich and diverse range of holiday experiences, and Ireland is a destination that can satisfy these pursuits and needs.

This however cannot be achieved without first recognising and exploring the family market's expectations. So let's start with some facts:



Family Facts

- Families with children are a significant proportion of the Irish home holiday market



- Family with Children
- Other family composition
- Friends/Acquaintances
- Alone
- Organised group/club



Why do something different?

Many service providers already target families so why do anything different?

Because the traditional assumption that "family = 2 adults + 2 children" is inaccurate. As are many of the assumptions regarding what children eat and what parents want to feed them. We need to stop presuming.

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Because families' perception of how family-friendly Ireland is, in terms of value, facilities and services is not necessarily the reality. This can and needs to be redressed.

Because with the growing demand and ample supply that exists, this is a clear opportunity. But new, clear and well communicated messages are needed.

Because today's families are discerning consumers, who do not make tourist decisions in isolation. They have well-honed clear expectations that if not met by your business, or by the Irish tourist industry, will be met abroad.

- Families break the current short-break mould by staying longer
- 8 out of 10 families planned to holiday 'at home' last year
- Families stay longer and spend more: 42% of long domestic holidays are taken by families with children under 15 years
- Families also holiday outside of Summertime with Easter, Halloween, Christmas and mid term breaks
- Families' interests cross a broad range of tourist provisions from historical, cultural, adventure, active etc. and they don't make holiday decisions in isolation regarding accommodation, activity or entertainment. The overall picture is what matters to families.
- While the European population remains static, the Irish population is growing and set to continue to grow, particularly the 0-14 years and 45-64 years age groups which make up Irish families.
- Published trends suggest domestic tourism will benefit from both the older market and the growing under 15 year old market alongside the increase in inter-generational families holidaying at home
- Domestic holidays have particular appeal to families as foreign holidays have many barriers: the hassle of air travel; baggage restrictions and costs; fear of the unknown – food, facilities, language; etc

What "family" looks like today



4 Common Family Themes

Values and value

Even when times are tight, the two week Summer holiday is a *necessary luxury* for Irish families with children of school age and older. Unlike other luxuries, the family holiday will happen, though obviously within the financial constraints of the family budget.

Other ritualistic holidays that are desirables rather than necessities will be the two mid-term, Christmas and Easter breaks. Holidays during these periods are as likely to be chosen spontaneously based on special offers, as they are to be planned.

Families' expectation of these holidays is that they will be memorable fun holidays. And it is family values that dictate the experience this market expects – an inclusive holiday that meets every family member's needs and accommodates quality family time together.

How this all translates into customer value will depend on the family segment, but in all cases will go beyond the cost and the physical product as service, people and brand contribute to the value being delivered. This is discussed further in the segments (pages 8-9) in terms of the 'need to have' hygiene factors each segment will expect from their holiday provider, and the 'nice to have' aspirational satisfiers that will generate the real customer value.

The family audience is a highly consumerist market and families are used to finding whatever goods/services they need, when they need them, and being able to tailor them to their specific needs. Their expectation of the tourism product is the same.



Families do not make tourism-based decisions in isolation

They view and choose a given product or service with regard to how it relates to and ideally complements other tourist products and services being considered. Family-friendly accommodation for example, is not an option if there isn't suitable entertainment close by too. Having outdoor activities on offer is deemed attractive if there's indoor options available too.

Value in the family's eyes, can only really be derived from all the elements that make up the holiday package. This is what their decisions, expectations and satisfaction is based on.



The Rising Middle Class

Despite the drastic rise and fall in income levels over the last few years, the middle classes group in Ireland has grown.

Of particular importance in this regard is that the aspirations and behaviours of the growing middle class families that make up the domestic family market have grown with these income fluctuations. This has in turn altered the family market's expectations and needs to be carefully considered with regard to tourist provider's delivery.

Domestic versus foreign family holidays

Foreign travel has over the years become more accessible and is perceived to be less expensive.

The reality however, is that, for families, the real value of foreign holidays is the whole package – accommodation, activities and food – and NOT just the travel itself. Air travel for a typical Irish family is stressful and expensive, especially as for most airlines children over two years pay an adult fare, and flights to the popular Summer holiday destinations charge a premium during school holidays.

Sea travel, by contrast, offers the convenience of road travel and baggage, and the desire for a foreign holiday. This coupled with all-in packages that cater for families means the French ferry/camp site option has risen in popularity and is likely to continue to do so.

Beach holidays always score highly with families: they're reasonably weather resilient; they're always fun for younger children; and especially if there's water sports on offer too, they're good for older children as well.

So as a family holiday destination, Ireland can score well on both counts – transport and beaches – and when pitched against a family holiday abroad, has many benefits to flag.

But where foreign holidays really excel is in the packaging – the bundling of a multitude of products and services all oriented towards the family. A flick through any campsite brochure illustrates this on each and every single page. Ease of access and the effective communication of relevant information, which crosses a range of tourist services, is therefore key.

"Customer experience is a mindset. It's not something a business buys, it's something a business becomes."

(Harvard Business Review blog by Peter Merholz <http://blogs.hbr.org/merholz/2009/02/becoming-a-customer-experience.html>)



The New Family Dynamics

The previous Family Facts should whet your appetite regarding the family market. But it is a complex category with at least six segments amongst Irish families and over 13 distinct segments in the UK!

Here we've highlighted the core family segments. Not all may suit your business, but given the commercial potential of this category, all are at least worth an initial consideration.

The table here outlines the key family segments. These may crossover in terms of needs and the service they desire or require, so to gauge the opportunity they represent, each group should be considered as per the exercise at the end of this chapter.



MAKE UP & VARIATION	
NO FAMILIES 416,000	
AVERAGE FAMILY	78% of Irish families are Mum Dad and 2+ children: 40% = 2 children 25% = 3 children 13% = more than 3 children
PRE-SCHOOL FAMILY	
Mum, Dad and 1 or 2 pre-school children	
BLENDED FAMILY	
(step) Mum, (step) Dad, 2-4 + children of broadly varied ages	
BEANPOLE FAMILY	22% of Irish families are Mum, Dad and 1 child
OTHER FAMILY SUB GROUPS & GROUPINGS	
MULTI-GENERATION FAMILY	Various family groups often called vertical family when including grandparent and horizontal when including siblings and cousins
ONE PARENT	98,000 families are lone parent families with at least 2 children. A third are either separated, divorced or widowed. These families tends to holiday with other families and/or relatives
HOME-FROM-HOME FAMILY	Average family visiting relations for long periods

'NEED TO HAVE'	'NICE TO HAVE'	KEY BARRIERS	PROPOSITION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for money • Weather independent activities – pools, play centres, cinema • Varied activities such as beach, farms, heritage sites/centres, cycling, picnics, playgrounds • Childcare/babysitting • Good value food & entertainment options • Family-friendly language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult R & R options • Varied & 'healthy' children's menus • Club options • Close/access to shopping, festivals, day trips, beach activities/sports • Media entertainment for kids • On-line booking 	<p>Cost and the perception that there won't be enough/suitable things to do.</p> <p>The weather is also a barrier, along with lack of easily accessible on-line information</p>	<p>Quality family time at a reasonable price</p> <p>("Value for time")</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off peak discounts • Safe & access facilities • Adult R & R choices • Childcare/club options • Buggy-friendly 'soft' activities • Weather independent activities – pools, play centres • Good (adult) food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby/toddler equipment – potty, bath, buggy - so they don't have to bring it • Adjoining rooms • Activities: beach, petting farms, playgrounds 	<p>Weather and perception of activity options</p>	<p>Fun and relaxing family time</p>
<p>Non age-specific 'family' activities Varied food options</p>	<p>Older children activities/facilities</p>	<p>Cost and not enough to do</p>	<p>Quality family time at a reasonable price</p>
<p>Age-appropriate activities Social activities/clubs Good food</p>	<p>Health/wellness options Environment credentials</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good value/group discounts • Non age-specific activities • Adult space – R & R • Adjoining/large accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult and child food/dining options 	<p>Cost Narrow age band activities</p>	<p>Memorable family time at a reasonable price</p>
<p>Good value accommodation (close to relations) Lots of activity options</p>		<p>Need a reason to stay longer with relatives</p>	



UK families

The British holidaymaker represents 50% of the Irish tourism market and 40% of its visitor revenue so the UK family market offers a great opportunity to Irish tourism. And there are many similarities between the UK and Irish family categories.

As the core family segments in the UK remain similar to the Irish ones – just differ in proportions – catering for the domestic family can have the additional benefit of also appealing to the UK family category.

- 29% of all UK households include children
- 25% of these are lone parents
- 40% are blended families
- As family time and income is very much constrained, the UK family is VALUE conscious
- UK families are also looking for a shared distinctive family experience

The differences then lie in the size of each of the fore-mentioned family segments:

- There is a higher proportion of blended families in the UK – the 2nd highest in Europe
- The average family is more likely to be 2 children, although in research 95% of parents said family pricing should be 2 adults and at least 3 children
- There are fewer vertical families holidaying together
- According to Mintel approximately two thirds of UK families book holidays on-line, so their expectation is that Irish websites can meet this demand for both information and bookings, just as the UK tourist sites do
- UK school holidays fall reasonably in line with Irish ones, except for mid term breaks which may present an opportunity to Irish providers
- The choice of easily-accessed and reasonably priced foreign holidays for UK families is vast



The UK's view of Ireland

The British market's view is that Ireland is a friendly and familiar destination – greatly enhanced by the Queen's visit in May 2011 when Tourism Ireland estimated the visit would generate €150m alone in positive publicity.

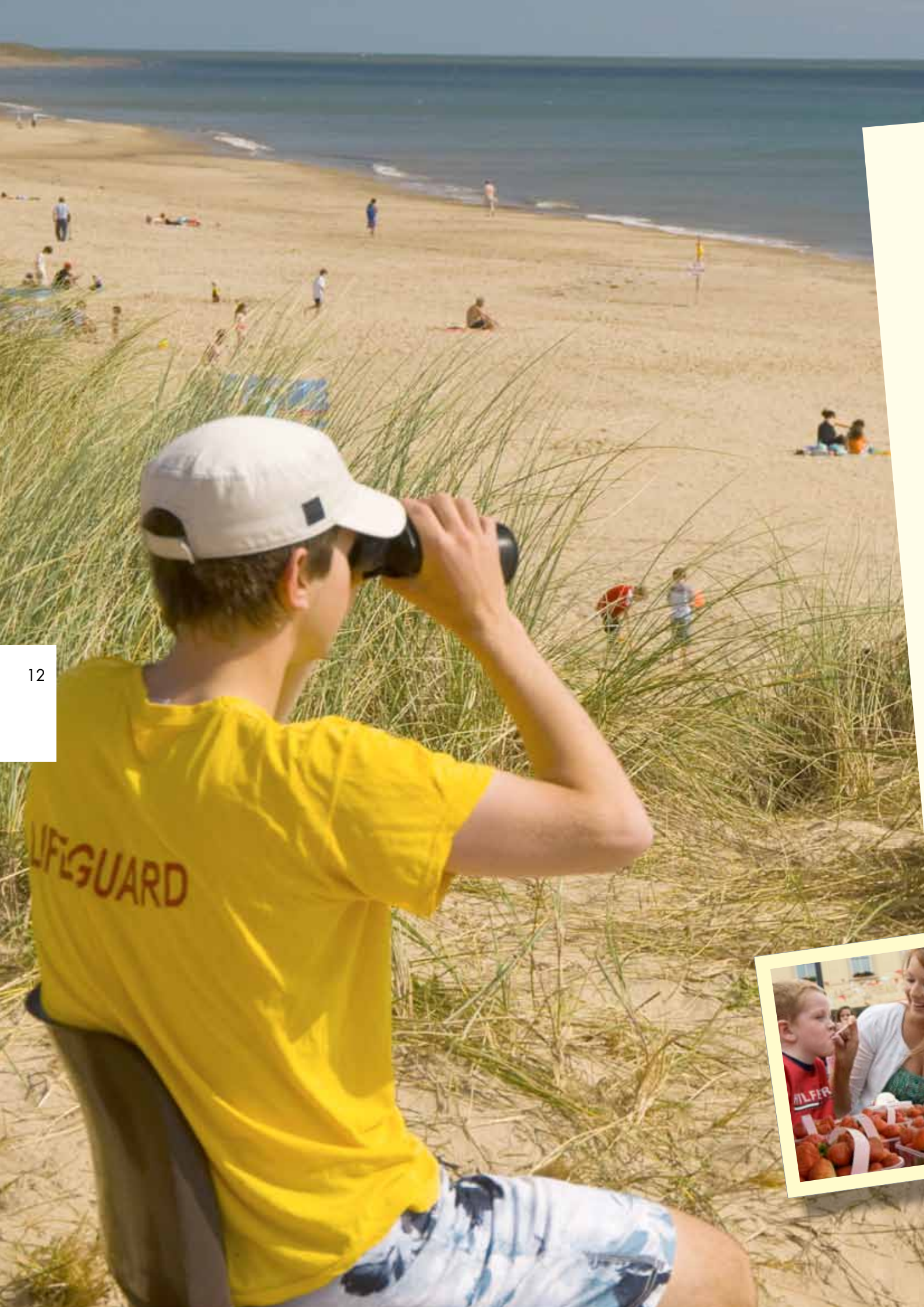
Six million British citizens claim Irish parents/grandparents, which further enhances the clear connection between the two markets. So whilst 59% of British families currently holiday "at home", and, as travel to Ireland by sea or air is as quick and easy as travelling within the UK, Ireland should be seen as a viable holiday option.

UK tourists to Ireland typically cite the countryside and scenery as the main reasons for coming here. But these also create the misconception that there's little to do here (outside of Dublin).

Euro destinations are also seen by UK holidaymakers as expensive, and the perceived poor transport options regarding the quality of our roads and public services are other additional barriers. Unfortunately alcohol-related stereotypes fill the potential UK tourist's knowledge gap, and this would certainly put off families in particular.

So UK families represent a clear opportunity to the Irish tourist industry, but there are issues to address and clear, positive and informative communication will be key.

(English Tourism Council research 2002, Social Trends UK Office National Statistics 2006 and Fáilte Ireland research)



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Exercise 1

Does Family suit your business?

Go through the table of family segments and think about the ones that describe your current customers. Write down some points regarding these customers, who they are, when they came, what they did/bought, if they came back, did they recommend you, etc.

Now consider how important each group is to your business and rank them.

Look at the ones you haven't ticked, the ones that aren't current customers, but could they be? Could your service meet their needs and expectations? Are they worth targeting?

Now consider the points made regarding the UK market. Could this represent an opportunity for your business?



Making your customer aware of your offering means you have to think like them

How customers make decisions

The customer journey follows a distinct path that steers them through the decision making process in four steps.

Examining each in turn, we can determine if and how we might positively influence each stage as the customer progresses through this series of decisions.

Here we look at this from the generic customer's viewpoint, and in the next section specifically from the family perspective.

Step 1 Awareness

The first stage is the cognitive stage, where the potential customer needs to be made aware of your product or service.

To generate this awareness the customer needs to have plenty of opportunities to see, hear and read about your product.

This could be via your website, other tourist websites and the various site links associated with both. Local tourist offices are another obvious point of information. Posters, leaflets and other marketing material displayed in key places can also play their part.

And high visibility in the form of advertising and/or retail/main street presence adds to this awareness and can generate the all-important familiarity with your product.

A point to note is that making your customer aware of your offering means you need to think like them and take the trouble to find out what media they consume and how they are made aware of travel and tourist products. These are all your crucial points of opportunity.

And finding a good mix of these can work harder for you than relying on a single marketing medium.



Step 2 Motivation

This familiarity then needs to be converted to *favourability* in order to interest the consumer sufficiently to motivate them to act and find out more about you.

It is critical that it's easy for the customer to find information on your product/service. And this must be the *right information*: up-to-date prices, opening times, access, special offers etc.

Armed with this, the customer can then evaluate the different options available to them. They do this via a formal or informal checklist of what they feel would be '*nice to have*' and what they '*need to have*'.

The '*need to have*' will be the hygiene factors without which the product will not be tried. Importantly, these may not be

enough to persuade the consumer to try the product, but will be enough to determine that they *don't* try it if absent. The '*nice to have*' factors then will be the *aspirational motivators*.

Step 3 Sale/trial

Having ticked the various boxes and now with sufficient positive motivation, the customer will try your product.

All of the elements that go into this sale – the booking, the journey there, the service, etc. – will matter as much as the actual product itself. All will affect the customer's experience, and all will influence their views and subsequent decision to repeat and recommend your product, or not.

**It's critical that it's
easy for customers
to find information
on your product/
service**





Step 4 Repeat/ recommend

Based on this experience the customer will either:

1. be mildly satisfied and will leave it at that;
2. be apathetically dissatisfied or sufficiently dissatisfied to complain or bad mouth your product;
3. will be so happy with the experience that they repeat the purchase and possibly recommend the product

Even after the sale there are opportunities for you to influence these views and maximise your customers' positive experience. Getting feedback, staying in touch, asking for and rewarding recommendations, offering discounts for further business, all contribute to the overall experience.



Even after the sale there are opportunities to influence your customer's experience



Exercise 2

Consider your customer's journey and answer the following questions:

How did your customers find out about you? (press ad, location, recommendation, radio ad, tourist office, website, etc...)

Are there other ways they could find out about you?

What motivated them to visit? Why were they interested in you? What spurred them to find out more (offers, suitability, weather, etc)?

How easy was it for them to purchase/visit? Were there any obstacles they had to overcome (finding the location, transport links, payment issues, etc)?

How much of your business is repeat custom? And who is that customer?

How much of your business comes from recommendations? And who is doing the recommending?

Other possible activities:

If you don't already ask your customers then why not start now, have a visitor experience book and always record how they found out about you

How to engage with families and create great family experiences



Taking the customer roadmap now let's look at how the family audience makes its holiday decisions and what you as a tourist service provider can do to positively affect these decisions:

Awareness

Awareness is created when there are plenty of opportunities for a family to see, hear or read about your product or service.

Wherever families are is where you should be. Whatever they read and wherever they go, your product needs to have a presence.

Asking your existing family customers how they heard about you, what they read, what stations they listen to and what sites they visit, will give you an idea of the media you could use to generate awareness (as per Exercise 2).

Advertising is an option, but choose wisely as it can be an expensive or wasteful option especially if it's not seen/heard by the actual customer group you're targeting. Radio can be very effective, especially as families holidaying in Ireland spend a lot of time in the car!

PR can also be effective, and all national newspaper and consumer magazines carry travel sections and are increasingly covering Irish destinations and options, as well as human interest stories with a travel or tourist angle.

Promotions and competitions run in the media will give you space and coverage in return for some free or discounted product.

Again make sure your chosen media, magazine, radio station has the same audience as your target market.

Attending the many festivals and events around the country that are relevant to families, will also create awareness and positive association with other family-friendly brands.

Identifying other providers that families may be interested in, will give you a network that could be utilised for cross selling, cross promotions and package creation.

As evident in the family segment table, families actively seek out information regarding holiday pursuits. And the Internet is typically the first port of call. It's advisable therefore to do a search on your business and on its competition and related businesses, to see what the browsing customer could find:

Your site should be easily found via the popular search engines. And as there's a growing number of "what to do with kids" websites both nationally and in your area you should have or consider links with these and other tourist information websites.

Popular general family websites such as www.daysout.ie, www.fundays.ie, www.mykidstime.ie and www.familyfun.ie can also provide useful ideas on other offerings in your area with whom you might team up and share information, publicise each other's business, or even offer complementary discounts. These sites also carry reviews so once your business is on the site it's imperative that you check in regularly so you can see the customer feedback and where necessary act on it swiftly.

And finally, peer to peer recommendation is a perfect channel for awareness raising (see Repeat and Recommendation ideas).

Many tourist providers' websites do NOT carry basic information like prices

Motivation

So what motivates families to select a holiday destination, activity or accommodation?

The key motivating factor is families' aspiration to *create great family memories*. What this means in practical terms, is that there are several motivational drivers we need to address:

Expectations and information

Families have distinct satisfiers and dissatisfiers (hygiene factors) and they will seek out the relevant information to gauge whether these can be met or not.

It's therefore important that customers can access, easily and swiftly, all the relevant and key information related to the hygiene factors, such as pricing, discounts, access, location, timing, ancillary services, childcare, etc.

Families need to be able to do this easily – whilst the Internet and the general family websites makes finding information easier, it's still up to the providers to ensure your site is up to date, easy to navigate, and has all the right information.

Many tourist providers' websites do NOT carry basic information like prices

You should also review your website with a family-oriented critical eye: Is the information on it relevant to your family segment? Does the imagery on your website reflect your family focus? Could you make it more appropriate to them? Are the facilities, directions, opening times, prices, family packages, other bundles easily found on the site?



Satisfaction for families is measured on how the product compared with their expectations. Providers can, using your marketing, websites, brochures etc., influence these expectations, but it's important to remember that your competitors can also influence and indeed raise customers' expectations.

Foreign tourist providers' in particular do this. Their ability to deliver impressive levels of customer intimacy has set the bar on family holidays so that families expect providers to meet and respond to their every need, be flexible and especially to be reliable.

Families' expectations must be recognised, met and ideally exceeded.

Mis-management of expectations will create an unhappy customer, who may in turn become a vocal unhappy customer and complain about your product, which is a behavioural trend that is fast gaining ground in recent years according to the National Consumer Agency.

For example, a "child-friendly" restaurant with a "children's menu" sets an expectation that they offer appropriate children meals at reasonable value, not "6oz sirloin steak" for €9.95 (as seen in a Dublin restaurant)!

Value & affordability

Another key motivating driver is what the customer deems to be the value of the product or service. Crucially for families, this is not just the monetary value or cost, but also the time, energy and emotional costs, as well as the quality and "memorability" value of the product.

To genuinely set a good value price, you must consider your pricing from the families' perspective, and the role that price and value - more importantly perceived value -

plays in particular segments. Research shows families to be wary of 'hidden costs' - for example the hotel that offers family packages but charges for use of their pool and provision of towels; the airline that offers a cheap deal but with extra booking, baggage and insurance costs.

Consumer research clearly indicates that today's consumers want transparency. The family consumer is especially vigilant in this regard.

Offering various packages and discounts allows the customer to select the option that delivers the most personal value to them. For example a family package can have many formats:

- Family: 2 adults and 3 children*
- Family: a group of 5*
- Family: 2 adults and 1 child + €2 for every extra child*
- Adults go free / kids go free*

An additional avenue worth exploring is to utilise Groupon/City Deal. As the nature of this is immediate or at least within a short time frame, it can be a useful tool to shift excess stock, encourage footfall during quiet periods etc. These deals can also be accessed by the many popular family web sites, as well as your own on-line activity and other similar e-services.



For families value is about more than money

Perceptions

Customer's perception of price, family-friendliness, suitability etc., affects their motivation to act. Irish families' perception of a foreign family holiday is based on all encompassing facilities, sunshine, beaches, fun etc. Their perception of Irish holidays may fare less well, but can nonetheless be positively influenced by pro-active communication and marketing (as described in the Awareness section)

The use of family-friendly language and messages can contribute to this perception. To illustrate this see below some of the phrases used by well-regarded family-friendly tourist/amenity providers

"Great memories, fantastic value and the world's best family holiday destinations"

First Choice

"Magical moments creating memories as unique as you"

Center Parcs

"Siblu - French for happy families"

"There's something for everyone at the Alton Towers Resort"

"Keycamp is heaven for kids"

Who makes the decisions?

Of course Mum and Dad do, with varying emphasis in different families. But children are also key influencers in most family purchases. Few providers cannot be unaware of the effect the Disney TV ads have on children. That said there are strict regulations and guidelines regarding marketing to children and the creation of any amount of pester power.



Marketing material checklist

- **Cost** - are the prices clear and transparent with no hidden costs?
- **Incentives & discounts** - are there special offers, packages or affiliated discounts (Scouts, schools, groups, other tourist partners, etc.) available?
- **Directions** - are there clear directions from nearest towns/main roads and motorways with distances?
- **Times** - are the opening hours and seasons clearly indicated?
- **Age suitability** - is there a clear indicator of what's available and appropriate for different family age groups?
- **Weather** - what options are there if it rains?
- **Food & drink** - what are the catering options? Can families bring their own food? Can food be heated up? Are there high chairs? Healthy eating options? Wheelchair & buggy access?
- **Information** - is the information up-to-date? As things change does the information provided change?
- **Facilities** - what facilities are available and for what age groups?
- **Safety** - is your health & safety information prominent?
- **Special events** - do you have special events happening on days such as Halloween, Christmas, Summer, Easter, Mother's Day, Grandparents Day etc.
- **Accreditation & reviews** - do you have accreditations, standards and customer reviews?
- **Contact details** - telephone numbers and e-mail & postal addresses for further information.



To stress test your product from the family perspective you need to put yourself in their shoes

Trial

Once sufficiently motivated, the family will move on to the next stage in the customer decision process, and try your product.

Many elements go into whether this trial meets with their satisfaction or not:

- Did the product itself live up to expectations?
- Was the service good?
- Were the children welcomed or just tolerated?
- How easy was the booking?
- And getting there?
- And leaving there?

To really stress test your offering from the family perspective you need to put yourself in their shoes. Walk through your product or service wearing a specific family hat and experience it through their eyes and needs.

The purchasing stage is also an opportunity to upsell, to offer additional packages, group discounts, or even partner deals with complementary service providers.

Repeat & recommend

Meeting expectations will make for satisfied customers. But exceeding those expectations will generate recommendations. And delivering aspirations will ensure both recommendations and repeat business. And families do seek out and make recommendations to other families. They are also a particularly loyal customer group who, if satisfied, make repeat purchases.

Even as the customer is leaving, there's an opportunity to improve their experience. Asking families how they enjoyed your product and what could you do to improve it, shows you're interested in their opinions. Thanking them for their feedback and rewarding it in some way shows you really value their opinions.

Where positive feedback is being given why not ask there and then about repeat visits and/or recommendations? Carefully constructed incentives can be used to accommodate this and encourage new business, as well as setting you apart as not offering just another "me too" product/service.



Perception is all. Families will make decisions based on their perception of what is a good holiday destination.

Barriers to purchase

There are three key barriers that obstruct potential customers from making the purchase and these must be addressed:

1. Cost and value for money

Families are conscious of the hidden costs where every aspect of the family holiday is an additional extra. Feeding children is seen as expensive – this despite the food on offer to children being typically of the cheap and fast kind (an additional parental annoyance in itself). And entertaining children whilst on holiday in Ireland can also be expensive as there's a great disparity in pricing – free of charge, €5 per child, €27 per family.

These negatives could be in some way addressed by linking in with other providers and offering families package deals and product bundles. And better communication of the options and their costs would at least offer clarity, and make sure families are aware of what's available to them so they can make informed choices that suit their budget and needs.

2. Communication

Perception is all. Families will make decisions based on their perception of what is a good holiday destination. And it is a common perception that there are more things to do with children abroad.



As family entertainment can be adventure, active, heritage or culture-based, families can certainly be entertained on a domestic holiday. And the huge range of activities with family appeal that are listed on the previously mentioned websites are testament to this.

Clear, consistent and *easy-to-find* communication of the genuine wealth of family-friendly activities and options is therefore essential to counter this misconception.

The inclusion within this range of free of charge, expensive and inexpensive prices, also needs to be communicated to address the perception that Ireland is an expensive family choice.

3. Weather

Obviously we can't do anything about the weather, and it is a key barrier. However, popular foreign destinations such as Northern France also experience inclement weather and yet manage to attract Irish families year after year.

We need to shift families' conviction that the weather dictates the success of their family holiday by ensuring they are aware of the many weather-independent activities available throughout the country.

The increase in swimming pools, water parks, leisure centres and cinemas offer great family days out. The many heritage and historical sites, from local museums in towns to country houses and parks, are another option. And Ireland is literally awash with water-based and adventure activities that are growing in popularity with families.

Exercise 3



How do you currently engage with families? Using the information in this section, consider and list what you're doing right, wrong and what you could do better.

Consider how flexible you need to be, and can be, regarding the various segments you'd like to target. Re-visit the last section's list of motivations and consider ways to address this and prompt trial and repeat visits.

Walk through your business carrying a baby and a backpack or accompany a family and try to experience your business through their eyes. What did you learn? What would you change?

Do a thorough Internet search on your product. Take particular note of third party websites' descriptions and comments and also reviews on sites such as Tripadvisor.com. Is your business easily found on-line? Are you on any of the family sites? Do they adequately describe your product? And if not what can/are you going to do about it?



Review your advertising and marketing and write down who these activities will really reach and in what volumes. Consider a Cost Benefit Analysis of this using the table below as a guideline:



Examine your pricing options – do you offer choice? Value? Flexibility? Think about what incentives may appeal to families and be accommodated without being prohibitive for your business for example early/late/last minute discounts.

Mystery shopping – call your telephone number at various times of the day and test your service.

Jot down how the identified segments could be made aware of your business, what would motivate them to try it, and what would ensure they return and recommend your business.



Walking The Talk – Westport House

WESTPORT HOUSE



Celebrating 50 years in business in 2010, Westport House offers tourists and families in particular, an experience rich in history, heritage, adventure and fun. Arguably whatever the family tourist – domestic or foreign – is looking for, they'll find it just outside the town of Westport in the superb parkland setting of Westport House.

From the bronze statue in the grounds, to the stories of piracy and royalty, Westport House's connection with the 16th century Pirate Queen of Connaught, Grace O'Malley, thrills families and children of all ages.

But Westport House's ability to meet the expectations and needs of the family from toddler to grandparents lies in its broad offering that makes full use of not just the House itself, but also its magnificent surrounds and natural resources, and its proximity to the popular family destination town of Westport.

Since opening the house to the public in 1960, Westport House has been actively targeting families with added attractions over the years.

In 2008, the family-focused attractions were re-branded the Pirate Adventure Park offering a genuine "treasure trove of family fun" catering for all age groups with thrilling rides, miniature railway, boats and slides for the under 12, alongside the more sedate options of children- and adult-focused guided tours, exhibitions and fishing.

To ensure it stays at the top of families' to do list west of the Shannon, more activities are added every year as the fun evolves and every need is catered for.

RAIN OR SHINE Westport House can entertain families with its recent additions in 2011 of an adventure activity centre offering the popular and exhilarating zorbing, laser combat games as well as water sports. In addition, this year, they have added a Paint your own Pottery studio to the basement of the house and a Grainne Uaile Experience which includes a 30 minute guided tour about the infamous pirate queen and her connection to the house, and concludes in a newly renovated dungeon area that depicts her maritime life.

Westport House strives to combine natural beauty and great amenities

This year, visiting families and campers staying onsite could also join in a Summer Camp that fully utilises the site's beautiful outdoor setting, childrens activities, and allows for a fun study of art, history and music inside the House itself.

There's also plenty of dining options to suit various appetites and budget including new picnic areas proving popular with budget-conscious families. And to keep families coming all year round, Westport House hosts a number of Special events like Father's Day Treasure Hunts, Car Boot Sales, Halloween Fest, Winter Wonderland and Summer camps.

- As families come in all shapes and sizes so Westport House has created a choice of payment options:
- Pirate Pass provides unlimited use of Westport House & Pirate Adventure Park
- Annual Pirate Pass 2011 - for the price of 3 days, families may visit up to 120 days
- 10% On-line ticket purchase discount
- Reduced prices for senior citizens as well as children (3s and under go free)
- Discounts for combination tickets for the various activities
- Returning family campers gain a further 15% discount on a repeat purchase

And the website has a full list of additional special offers in all areas.

Westport House strives to combine natural beauty and great amenities, and its Caravan and Campsite offers both in abundance - very specifically with families in mind. The vast array of onsite facilities available to campers includes WiFi access (essential for children and teens), recreation room and playgrounds, free use of table tennis, tennis, indoor soft play and pitch & putt in the evenings as well as movie night and teen disco at weekends.

So whether the visiting family is interested in the Pirate Queen history, an active adventure experience, outdoor fun for the younger ones, scenic camping, or a combination of all of the above, Westport House can certainly accommodate them.





There is little more enchanting that the sight of a child engrossed in a book

Walking The Talk – The Dalkey Book Festival

Dalkey Book Festival was launched in 2010 to celebrate and foster the wealth of literary talent in and around the town.

The idea for the festival was borne from discussions within the Dalkey Business Group and the community's desire and need to tackle the problems of dwindling trade in the recession. Renowned journalist and broadcaster David McWilliams, who visited the group, had written about the idea of local communities fighting back in his weekly column in the Irish Independent.

Following an overwhelmingly positive response, he suggested that one of the valuable resources unique to Dalkey might be all the writers who live here and have experienced the town in one shape or form over the years. And so the Dalkey Book Festival was created.

Its success in its first two years is down to the co-ordinated collective collaboration of its founders David McWilliams and Sian Smyth, a superb team of volunteers, and the goodwill of the Dalkey community and local businesses who have offered support and provided venues for the festival events.


And of course the authors and performers without whom there would not be a book festival.

Children

"There is little more enchanting than the sight of a child engrossed in a book. Children will be at the centre of the Dalkey Book Festival with over a dozen authors lined up to read, talk, draw and even dance" (www.dalkeybookfestival.com).

From the outset, the festival was deemed to be a family event. Children were included as an audience as well as active participants.

At the 2011 festival there was a full day of events specifically for children, with talks and workshops from renowned writers including Roddy Doyle, John Boyne, Gordon Snell, Niamh Sharkey, Sarah Webb, Don Conroy, Gillian Perdue, Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick, Mary Kingston, Nicola Pierce, Conor Kostick, Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick, John Newman and Judi Curtin.

A photograph of two young girls standing outdoors in front of a stone wall. The girl on the right is wearing a light green t-shirt, blue polka-dot pants, and red sneakers with orange laces. She is holding a book with a colorful cover featuring a red roof and a yellow background. The girl on the left is wearing a white t-shirt and has long blonde hair. They are both looking at the book together. The background shows green foliage and a stone wall with a large opening.

Storytelling, illustration, drawing and dance workshops as well as readings from the best of Irish writers for children from 3 years old to teenagers also formed part of the programme.

And throughout the festival there were lots of opportunities for children to be engaged, entertained and involved on the streets of Dalkey with music, facepainting, puppet shows and cookery demonstrations.

**From the outset
the festival was
deemed to be a
family event**

Walking The Talk – The Electric Picnic



electric
picnic
2011

THE ELECTRIC PICNIC
STRADBALLY HALL, CO. LAOIS
SPONSORED BY: B&B

8 years on, The Electric Picnic has established itself as a truly unique annual Irish festival, set amid the rolling lawns of Stradbally Hall, Co Laois.

Renowned for great music, art, theatre, comedy, pantomime, food and holistic health, the festival has in recent years expanded its appeal to younger picnickers with great results. The effort by the organisers to understand and meet families' needs has certainly paid off.

The feedback from all attending families is great and the Electric Picnic is firmly on the family friendly list of festivals!

At a practical level, families are well accommodated with a specially designated Family Campsite created for families and genuinely catering for their every need. Parking for example is within close proximity to the tents, and this part of the site is exclusively for families so parents have no need to worry about rowdiness from revellers or late night noise.

Entertainment-wise, families have plenty of choices to keep children amused: The "Soul Kids" children's area is a wonderland for children and has a reception for babies, toddlers and children up to 12, but in appreciation of parents too, it also has a chill out space for parents.

Like children, Soul Kids' just keep growing! Since it started at Electric Picnic in 2006, it has grown into a magical & creative space embraced by both parents & children alike. The Soul Kids' team have put a lot of love, energy & imagination into the Soul Kids' area over the last few years and plan to develop even further.

In 2010 Soul Kids' broadened its boundaries embracing the whole of the Enchanting Walled Gardens of Stradbally Hall. They filled this magical space with an abundance of creativity, fun, imagination & more than a sprinkling of fairy dust & magic!

The effort by the organisers to understand and meet families' needs has certainly paid off



Of particular importance, is the Soul Kids' appreciation of the challenges in catering for families and in 2010/11 offered an impressive free service for families, presenting an amazing assortment of activities, entertainment, workshops & performances over the course of the festival weekend.

Activities range from the active such as yoga and dancing, to the musical – drumming workshops, singing, and discos - to the unusual with juggling and circus acts. And there are relaxing options too with storytelling, willow weaving, arts & crafts, balloon modelling and puppet shows.

Of course different families have different needs, especially where babies and toddlers are concerned, so there's also a separate area within Soul Kids called Soul Babies which is just for under 3's and their parents. In Soul Babies there is a soft play area, sensory toys, junior Arts & Crafts & plenty of experienced staff on hand to help. Our fantastic team of energetic staff are on hand to entertain parents & children over the course of the festival weekend.

Timing is deemed important to families so Soul Kids is open from 2-7pm on Friday & from 11-7pm on Saturday & Sunday. There are baby changing facility within the Soul Kids' area for parents' convenience.

Ensuring families feel safe adds significantly to their enjoyment of the festival, and appreciating that children's safety is critical to parents this is also of paramount importance to the organisers. Only Family Camping ticket holders therefore are allowed into the designated Family Camping area. And adults can only access the Soul Kids area if accompanied by a child.

In terms of management, families require a different approach too, so on-line pre-registration is advisable and then once at the event there's Soul Kids receptionists on hand to book children in for workshops or events during the festival.



Notes

A sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines and a dotted midline, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. The paper is slightly tilted and has a soft shadow beneath it, giving it a three-dimensional appearance against the orange background.

Lined writing area with horizontal blue lines and a dotted midline.



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