

# ATTRACTIONS: Drivers of Satisfaction

Visitor attractions range from built, natural, heritage, cultural and contemporary experiences. They provide access to specific areas of interest, education and entertainment and are an integral part of a tourist's time in Ireland.

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT VISITOR ATTRACTION?

- Nearly 6,000 visitors (predominantly international) were interviewed across 34 different visitor attractions (2016 & 2018) to test a range of experience features from amenities and staff, interior layouts, exhibits, information tools to the storytelling and the tour.
- This research ranks the key elements that influence visitor satisfaction levels and gives a greater understanding as to what makes a great visitor attraction.



## DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION

This research ranks the elements of the visitor experience that influence satisfaction levels. The following are the rank order of these drivers of satisfaction

**STORY CONTENT**  
A good story goes a long way



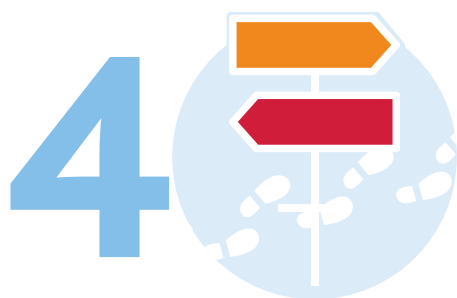
**GUIDED TOURS**  
Tours make all the difference



**STORY DELIVERY**  
Interpretation - there are lots of ways to tell a story



**NAVIGATION**  
Coherent layouts



**VISITOR MANAGEMENT**  
Remember the person in the crowd



Each of the drivers of satisfaction are now discussed in more detail, drawing on examples, both national and international. These examples highlight attractions that do this particular element of the experience well.

## STORY CONTENT: A GOOD STORY GOES A LONG WAY

Stories bring content to life. Great stories **reveal** what may not be apparent, **relate** to the visitor on a personal level and **provoke** an emotional response.



### WHAT IT'S ABOUT

### ATTRACTIONS THAT DO THIS WELL

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

#### Story is interesting and unique

The strength and uniqueness of the story is at the heart of a great visitor attraction. It provides the Unique Selling Point (USP) and a reason to visit

#### Mary Rose, Portsmouth

The history of Henry VIII's warship is made accessible to visitors by focusing on three strands of the story: life on board a Tudor ship, the theories behind her sinking and how she was recovered

Review your current story offering. Consider all target audiences as part of your story development

Ensure you control your stories. If there are too many stories being told, would narrowing the focus give more stand out?

#### Characters are key

Strong central and supporting characters (both heroes and villains) bring life to the story

#### Westport House, Westport

A favourite with visitors was the story of Grace O'Malley (the pirate queen), who broke the mould and reigned from where Westport house currently sits

Research and collate all interesting and relevant characters and their stories. Prioritise their appeal based on key target audiences

#### The plot thickens

Dramatic plots full of drama and conflict appeal. All aspects of human life resonate with visitors

#### Strokestown House, Roscommon

The extremes between the poor and the wealthy landowners during the famine (Irish -v- British) added a whole new dimension to the story for many

While the underdog has enduring appeal, don't shy away from telling darker stories or stories of misfortune in an engaging way

#### Stories need to build upon and be different from what is available on websites (or other sources)

#### Royal Yacht Britannia, Edinburgh

The highlights of the tour are presented online to catch your attention but you need to go to find out why it features in the UK Top attractions on Tripadvisor

Pre-visit information should be just enough to pique visitors' interest. Remember some will have done their homework, others won't

#### Uniqueness of story to Ireland

Even if the story is universal, what is the Irish twist on it? What strand of the story can only be told in Ireland?

#### Foynes Flying Boat Museum, Limerick

*"...The replica of the plane was amazing, you can sit at a bar and watch a hologram of the first Irish coffee being made then you can go and enjoy a real one in the cafe"*

What makes the story special to Ireland – is there something about the people or place that can be a point of differentiation?

## GUIDED TOURS: TOURS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENT

While the delivery of a story can come in many forms, tour guides play a vital role in delivering excellent visitor experiences (with a strong take up where available)



### WHAT IT'S ABOUT

### ATTRACTIONS THAT DO THIS WELL

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

#### Tour Delivery

Passionate, informed guides, who provide an entertaining tour and bring emotion to the story are highly valued

#### Kilmainham Goal, Dublin

*"Very well organised tour, the story was told with such emotion, couldn't have been told any better"*

Interested and enthusiastic tour guides are key to keeping the story fresh for visitors

Allow guides freedom to build on the story from their own research (*as long as it's evidenced*)

#### Tour being fun as well as informative

Humour and distinctive 'nuggets' contained within the tour delivery are often especially memorable

#### Museum Hack, USA

Selected US museums provide unconventional museum tours with lively 'insider' stories, juicy gossip, activities in the galleries and fun photos with the art

Visitors want enjoyable experiences and can only take in so much information, so keep the narrative light and fun

Allow the guides to bring out their own personality

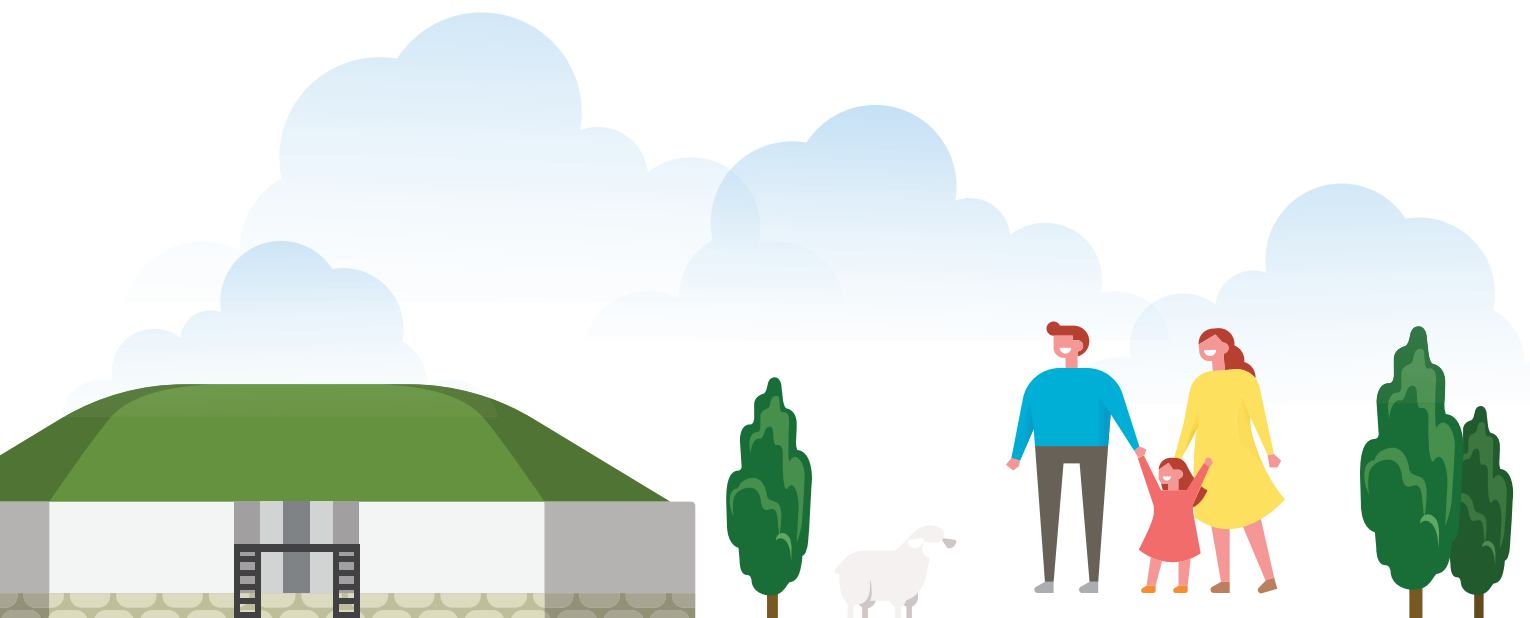
#### Re-tellable stories

Stories about people, rituals and events are particularly well received and stick in the mind of the visitor

#### Hook Lighthouse, Wexford

As the world's oldest operational lighthouse, Hook is the source of many story vignettes – from the monks who wore down the stone steps carrying coal to the fire beacons, to the more modern tales of families who made Hook their home

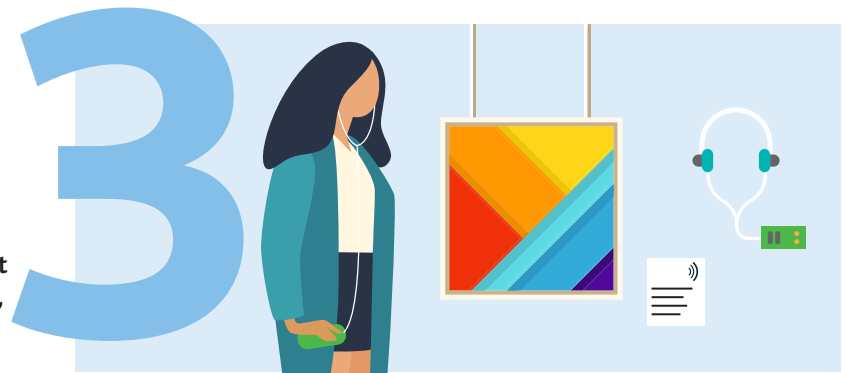
What fun fact will resonate with your visitor and get them talking long after they've gone, marketing your attraction for you?



## STORY DELIVERY: THERE ARE LOTS OF WAYS TO TELL A STORY\*

Presentations, exhibits and information tools (all types of interpretation) are vital to a great visitor experience. They must be well-planned, entertaining and relevant to the story

\* Particularly important for self-guided visitors



### WHAT IT'S ABOUT

### ATTRACTIONS THAT DO THIS WELL

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

#### Flow and orientation

Help visitors navigate and orientate themselves around your attraction. Guide them through the story from beginning, middle to end

#### EPIC, Dublin

The one-way system and passport inspired map combine to easily guide visitors from one story gallery to the next

Does the flow of the attraction allow the visitor to experience the story in sequence?

#### Range of media

Diversity of media and exhibits provide a more creative and memorable experience (*also appeals to different learning styles*)

#### National Museum Edinburgh

Has designed each exhibition for multiple types of audience engagement-props and hands on activities for children (and adults alike), different layers of information etc

How can different media and interpretation techniques be used to best effect through the story narrative?

#### Story structure

Visitors have differing tastes in how they want to engage with the story. Layer information for all appetites

#### Wellcome Collection, London

Show minimalist interpretation for exhibits, however each panel is hinged and can be opened out for more detail for those looking for more depth to the story

Using a journalistic approach, how can headlines, executive summaries and more detailed information be innovatively facilitated to accommodate all visitor information needs

#### Props and physical exhibits

3D models provide context for many stories – giving insight into buildings, terrain, wider area etc. Opportunities to physically involve oneself in the story with props is also welcomed by visitors

#### Dublinia, Dublin

Visitors enjoyed the hands-on exhibits, digital streetscapes and Viking exhibits. Engaging with props creates a point of differentiation for visitors

What elements of your story could benefit from a physical prop (*things to hold and touch, 3D models etc*) to help further understanding

#### Digital media

Digital is no longer a novelty (*everyone has a computer in their pocket*), therefore any digital media must add to the story

#### DDR Museum, Berlin

While the experience showcases what life was like in former East Germany, digital tools have been effectively woven into their visitor experience e.g. using an old Trabi car with a driving simulator.

What nuance or layer can digital media interpretation add to your storytelling?

#### Audio guides and information

Audio guides can provide a consistent high quality of storytelling (for all, but especially for non-English speakers)

#### Alcatraz, San Francisco

The compelling Cellhouse Audio Tour "Doing Time" through the cellhouse featuring the voices of former guards and inmates is available in ten languages

Audio guides can provide consistency of storytelling when done right

Getting relevant narration by key protagonists in the story is powerful and emotive

## NAVIGATION: COHERENT LAYOUTS

Good stories have a beginning, a middle and an end. Make it easy for visitors to find the start of your story and follow the flow



### WHAT IT'S ABOUT

#### Confusing exterior layout or unclear direction at the start

Can negatively impact the visitors experience from the get go

### ATTRACTIONS THAT DO THIS WELL

#### Louvre Museum, Paris

Navigating the world renowned museum and monument is not without its challenges

*"...too hard to find the entrance and exit. With a huge and confusing map, and very few knowledgeable staff, this place is daunting.."*

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Understanding that visitors don't always read signs; is there a physical way to easily help visitors navigate to the start of your experience?

#### Clear interior layout

Self-guide visitors want to feel in control and pick content that most interests them, however they don't like to feel they are 'doing it wrong'

#### Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington

*"Bloody excellent, we would recommend anyone visiting Wellington see this museum, the layout of the exhibits is marvellous"*

What are the usual orientation questions staff receive?

Can interventions be put in place to ease navigation?

## VISITOR MANAGEMENT: AMENITIES AND STAFF

Put yourself in your visitors' shoes to get insight into how to continually improve their experience



### WHAT IT'S ABOUT

#### Value for money

Cost is not an issue when the experience is world class, however it is all about the value visitors perceive

### ATTRACTIONS THAT DO THIS WELL

#### Puy du Fou, Les Epesses, France

Park entry (includes parking) for a full day experience is seen as great value, with so much to see and do. Experience includes musical spectacles, roman gladiators, dancing horses, fireworks and chariot racing, fighting Vikings and more

### HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Are you offering good value for money?

What value add can you offer as part of the overall experience?

#### One price point

Visitors don't like what they deem to be hidden costs. Multiple pay points aggravate them (car parking, then entry, then audio guides etc).

#### Warwick Castle

*"We got inside the Castle, it's beautiful but you literally have to pay for everything other than admiring the view"*

Is one inclusive price available? Can price points be bundled?

#### Where to next?

Especially in urban areas the plans of overseas holidaymakers can be quite fluid. Are there opportunities to provide recommendations for where visitors can go next (*either generally or to build on your story*)

#### Fethard Horse Country Experience, Tipperary

A large graphic near the exit asks *"Where to next?"* and then promotes other 'not to be missed' attractions nearby. It also acts as a prompt to ask staff and others for their recommendations

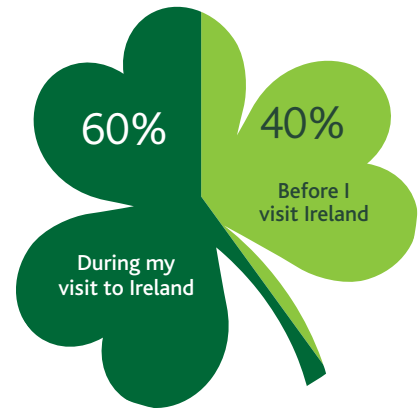
Can you build in recommendations to other local attractions as part of your tour or exit orientation etc

Are all staff knowledgeable about cross promotional opportunities to increase service levels with great advice

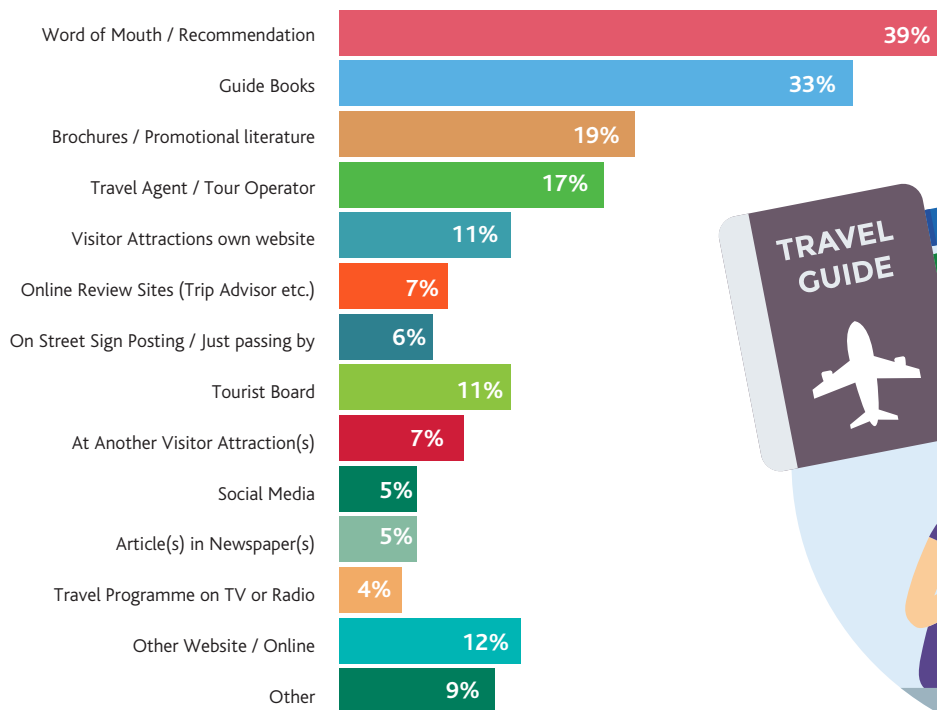
## MARKETING INSIGHTS: OVERSEAS VISITORS

Knowing the information sources that lead visitors to your door is important.

On average 60% of overseas visitors only heard of the attraction they visited from the time they arrived in Ireland. This highlights the importance of cross promotion with other trade partners – *tourist accommodation providers, Tourist Information Centres, other attractions, local businesses etc*



### KEY SOURCES OF WHERE OVERSEAS VISITORS HEARD ABOUT YOUR ATTRACTION



## FIND OUT MORE

- For more detail on this research go to [www.failteireland.ie/Research](http://www.failteireland.ie/Research) – click on **Visitor Feedback** page
- For more information and toolkits on how to plan for better storytelling and interpretation no matter what part of the country you're in go to
  - [www.failteireland.ie/dublin](http://www.failteireland.ie/dublin)
  - [www.failteireland.ie/ireland-s-ancient-east](http://www.failteireland.ie/ireland-s-ancient-east)

