

Visitor Attractions

What is a Visitor Attraction?

A visitor attraction is a valuable addition to a holiday experience in an area. It can provide the vital component which is 'something-to-do' in the locality. A good tourism attraction can have huge drawing-power, serving as a catalyst and motivator for tourists to travel to a particular destination. Some good examples in Ireland are the Blarney Stone, Aillwee Caves, Ceide Fields, Book of Kells, Altamont Gardens, Dan O'Hara Farm, Newgrange Farm, Newgrange Passage grave, Cliff of Moher and Dunlewey Visitor Attraction.

Places of natural or scenic importance such as gardens, parks, caves, mines are often a starting point when thinking about developing a visitor attraction. Historic and cultural resources such as monuments, historic sites, houses and castles are obvious tourist assets; they lend themselves to preservation, restoration, interpretation and expansion. Contributions made by previous generations are what distinguish one place from another. The possibilities are unlimited e.g. harvest festivals, music and dancing schools, country markets, farmers markets, culture and craft workshops, cave and mine tours, crystal/pottery/cheese factories, unique shopping opportunities such as craft, paintings, pottery and farm tours.

Possibilities for Development

Research by Fáilte Ireland consistently indicates the importance of visitor attractions for overseas visitors. Up to 11m million visits took place to those attractions in 2003 with Dublin getting 3.3 million. The single most important category of attractions in terms of total numbers are museums/interpretative centres, followed by historic houses/castles; gardens; monuments, national parks, forest park and caves.

Income from visitor attractions

Income to visitor attractions comes mainly from 4 sources with the attraction itself only generating 50% of total income. According to Fáilte Ireland figures, admissions generate 51%, Retail outlets 25%, Catering 13.3% and Other 10%. The top 5 fee paying attraction in Ireland are The Zoo, Guinness Storehouse, Trinity College, Bunratty Castle and Waterford Crystal while the top 5 non-fee paying attractions are The National Gallery; Cliff of Moher; Irish Museum of Modern art; The National Museum of Archaeology and History and The Chester Beatty Library.



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This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.

All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website
<http://www.teagasc.ie/>

Edited by:
John Whiriskey
Paul Mc Carthy
Teagasc
Mellows Development
Centre
Athenry, Co. Galway.
+353 (0) 91 845200

Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources.

Essential Factors for Success

A number of basics must be kept in mind when developing a visitor attraction

- quality
- authenticity
- uniqueness
- activity expansion

Attraction Quality

Attention to product quality is essential. Visitors put huge emphasis on quality to include a pleasing and clean appearance, smooth customer-driven operations such as friendliness of staff and their knowledge and familiarity with the product, staff efficiency and opening hours. Facilities such as craft/bookshop, restaurants, snack bars, visual presentations and ticketing enhance the quality and improve revenue.

Authenticity

Tourists want to see and meet the real people reflecting local character. Ensure your attraction encompasses authenticity. Tourists will travel long distances for something which is unique and can't be seen or experienced anywhere else.

Uniqueness

In a tourism market place where customers are faced with diverse choices you need a unique attraction which sets it apart and different from others. One must ask what is new and more importantly different about your attraction – that is uniqueness.

Activity Expansion

An important question when developing an attraction is “can it be expanded?” as demand and seasons change. Periodic change and expansion and seasonal shifts can encourage a repeat visit.

Attraction Mix

Do not view your attraction in isolation. There may be other attractions, which can add diversity and another dimension to visiting your product. Effective linkages with other attractions to create a visitor attraction mix such as a heritage attraction; a visitor farm, local festival or agricultural show could provide an interesting mix and encourage tourists to stay overnight in a locality, or a tour bus company to buy a package of attractions.