



VisitEngland™



Wast Water, Cumbria ©VisitBritain/Mark Gilligan

Discover England

Taking England to the World - an inbound tourism toolkit

3rd Edition

Welcome to Taking England to the World

Your introductory guide to developing and promoting your product for sale in international markets

This guide has been produced by VisitBritain/VisitEngland – the national tourism agency responsible for building England’s tourism product, raising Britain’s profile worldwide, increasing the volume and value of tourism exports and developing England’s and Britain’s visitor economy. It has been funded by the Discover England Fund which aims to deliver world class, stand-out, bookable tourism products that respond to market opportunities and consumer needs.

This guide is designed to provide you with the basic tools, knowledge and key contacts needed to enter the export tourism market. This information, combined with advice and assistance from tourism associations, industry bodies and tourism operators will help you make fully informed business decisions and will put you on the path to inbound tourism know-how.

This tourism toolkit contains advice on how to:

- Understand the travel distribution system and its rate structure
- Research international markets to establish who will use your products
- Recognise the different travel styles of inbound travellers
- Develop a plan to target international visitors through a range of mediums and distribution channels
- Seek advice from your regional tourism bodies, as well as relevant associations and groups

This guide is designed to help you make more fully informed business decisions.

The information contained is to be used as a guide only, and any facts/figures are correct at time of issue. Use this guide as a tool to direct you on the right path, but do seek further professional advice regarding your business before making any decisions.

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Here are the tools in your kit -
easy to find information to get you started

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1

Pre-checklist: How 'ready' are you right now?





How many of the following can you truly tick off the 'international ready' basic checklist:

1. Do you know your organisation's USP (unique selling point)?
2. Have you secured a strong foothold with the domestic tourism market?
3. Have you conducted a careful assessment of your competition?
4. Have you sought advice from your local tourism bodies in addition to VisitBritain/VisitEngland?
5. Have you researched all potential international markets for your business to determine which will best fit as target markets?
6. Can you identify the different travel styles of inbound travellers?
7. Do you understand the international travel landscape?
8. Do you understand the travel distribution system and have relevant rate structures in place?
9. Do you have booking systems in place to accept international bookings both direct, and via the travel distribution network (on and offline)?
10. Can you identify, or have you already started working with, complementary product in your region to jointly package and/promote internationally?
11. Have you developed a range of promotional collateral with targeted messages for both consumers and the travel trade?
12. Does your business have a digital marketing and social media presence?
13. Have you developed a working export plan/international marketing plan and a budget to target international visitors?

How did you score out of 13?

Any less than 13/13 do not worry! Once you understand all sections within this toolkit you will be armed with the knowledge to become internationally ready. A more comprehensive benchmark for your business awaits at the end of this guide in *Section 22 - The final checklist*.

Good luck! Read on to *Section 2 - Help desk* to find a list of organisations to get you started, and assist your business on the journey.

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Help desk: quick links to get you going





Do your homework and find out what opportunities and which contacts are available and applicable to your business!

VisitBritain/VisitEngland

As the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), VisitBritain/VisitEngland plays a unique role in building England’s tourism product, raising Britain’s profile worldwide, increasing the volume and value of tourism exports and developing England’s and Britain’s visitor economy.

Working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas, our mission is to grow the volume and value of inbound tourism across the nations and regions of Britain and to develop world-class English tourism product to support our growth aspirations.

Active in 22 global markets, and with 4 regional hubs, our international activities include advertising, press and PR, trade shows and B2B initiatives, consumer promotions, online communications and consumer research.

Our online resources are the best starting point for you. These aim to signpost you directly to marketing programs and resources that will help you generate more business and help you gain a better understanding of market conditions.



About VisitBritain/VisitEngland	visitbritain.org/who-we-are
Travel trade website	visitbritain.org/travel-trade
Domestic research and insights:	visitbritain.org/research-insights
Inbound research and insights:	visitbritain.org/research-insights
Business advice hub:	visitbritain.org/business-advice

Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs)

Tourism at a local level is led by Local Visitor Economy Partnerships. The new LVEPs work in collaboration locally, regionally and nationally on shared priorities and targets. Their mission is to support and grow the visitor economy through robust destination management, strong stakeholder relationships and clear planning.

These organisations might be public sector bodies, e.g. a local authority, private companies, or partnerships between the public and private sector. They are funded by their local authority, or by private sector membership, or a combination of the two.

They coordinate a wide range of local stakeholders, including the tourism business community, local authorities, business improvement districts, transport operators, visitor information providers, major landowners, cultural bodies, retail associations and local community groups.



A list of LVEPs can be found here:
visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/local-visitor-economy-partnership-lvep-programme

For further assistance and information, please see the following:

Business is GREAT

Support, advice and inspiration for growing your business, provided by HM Government. The website is packed full of advice from writing a business plan to recruitment advice, with helpful case studies and many links to further information. Government backed support and financial assistance is also available for some ventures, via the website below.



Website: great.gov.uk

UKinbound

UKinbound represents the interests of the UK's inbound tourism sector and ensures it is recognised as a leading economic and employment driver in the UK. It helps its diverse membership of nearly 400 businesses all across the country to grow and develop via a programme of events designed to connect buyers and suppliers in the travel trade. It also provides marketing opportunities, market seminars, and access to the latest industry insights.

In addition, it also lobbies Government on behalf of its members on key industry issues such as skills, taxation and visas, and engages with the media to raise the profile of inbound tourism and highlight its importance to the UK economy.



Website: [Ukinbound.org](https://ukinbound.org)

European Tourism Association (ETOA)

ETOA is the leading trade association for tour operators and suppliers with business in European destinations. Over 900 members include tour and online operators, intermediaries and wholesalers, European tourist boards, hotels, attractions and other tourism suppliers.

ETOA offers a valuable networking platform for tourism professionals and also provides advocacy support on a European level, high profile industry campaigns and B2B marketing representation opportunities; all in order to promote Europe as a number one tourism destination.



Website: etoa.org



British Educational Travel Association (BETA)

BETA represents some of the biggest and most established businesses in the youth, student and educational travel industry. Covering inbound, outbound and domestic youth, student and educational travel, its members operate within the fields of studying abroad, language schools, internships, activity holidays, gap, volunteering, school visits, adventure travel, as well as including a whole host of specialist agents and operators.



Website: betauk.com



For a full list of industry bodies and organisations see visitbritain.org/introduction-tourism-britain





3

Inbound tourism: The what, why, & how



“Marketing Manchester was looking to strengthen Manchester’s proposition as Gateway to the North for international visitors. By creating and supporting a range of new bookable products, we wanted to give international visitors more reasons to visit the city, stay longer and discover more of the North of England. We carried out research, developed products to meet our customer needs and introduced these to distribution partners. Our efforts are already having an impact, and we recognise that international business will grow in the years ahead as we continue to support and promote our bookable products through our ongoing marketing programmes.”

Nick Brook-Sykes, Director of Tourism, Marketing Manchester

What is inbound tourism?

Inbound tourism covers all international tourist traffic entering a country. It is also known as ‘export tourism’ (England is the export), because although tourists enjoy their travel experience within England, they are paying for it using foreign currency.



Benefits of inbound tourism

- International travel patterns are not focused around weekends and may level out seasonality problems
- Spreading risk across a range of international markets can minimise the impact of any changes in the domestic or a single international travel market (ensures you don’t have all your eggs in one basket!)
- Tapping into inbound distribution networks opens up new forms of distribution and gives millions of potential travellers around the world easy access to your product
- International travellers provide a higher spend, on average, three times more than domestic travellers on each trip (2022 IPS* figures)
- Booking lead times are usually longer, allowing better business planning
- The opportunity to meet people from a range of cultures and backgrounds can be extremely rewarding – many life-long friendships get established from around the globe!

**For further information on the IPS, refer to page 13*

Why is inbound tourism so important?

As a nation, tourism is worth £106 billion annually to the UK economy, creating jobs and boosting economic growth across its nations and regions. Inbound visitors to the UK spent £26.5 billion in 2019, and £22.6 billion of that was spent in England.

For you, inbound tourism gives the opportunity to be part of this, to diversify your markets, and access new areas of business that may balance out regular domestic business patterns.

What is the difference between inbound and domestic tourism?

Domestic tourism currently accounts for approximately 77% of all tourism value in England. International visitors to England make up the remaining 23%.

International tourists usually travel for longer and spend more money than domestic travellers – hence the appeal!

The vast majority of English operators concentrate on marketing their product domestically and then market to international travellers once they have secured a foothold at home.

While marketing your product to international travellers has many benefits, there are a number of differences between domestic and international tourism markets and it is important to understand these and tailor your business accordingly.



Domestic Market

- Travellers are familiar with England
- Lower marketing costs
- Traveller needs have many commonalities across segments
- Distribution system is consistent across the one market and operators often deal with consumers directly
- Simpler, short break style itineraries
- No language or cultural barriers
- Easy market to enter and return on investment established more quickly

International Market

- Travellers may have limited knowledge of England
- Higher marketing costs
- Traveller needs vary in each market and segment
- Distribution systems vary in each market
- Complex itineraries
- Language and cultural differences
- Long term investment to recoup costs

What do I need to consider in advance?

Overseas markets are very competitive. Not only are you competing against companies that provide similar products, you are also competing against other international destinations.

Always compare your product offering internationally. What do you consider when you are choosing a holiday overseas – what destination and what experiences are you going to enjoy and why, what stands out and for what reason, how do you compare?

Now reverse this and consider how your product would stand up with the same analysis.

Selling your region, and educating travellers about your destination and its attributes is often the first step in selling your product. You will need to commit to selling the destination and then your product to entice international travellers. Putting the destination on the map comes first.

For example, if you operate walking tours in Norfolk, then it makes sense to work with others to raise awareness of Norfolk as a destination, in the first instance. This way consumers can understand where it is, how to get there and why it might appeal to them. This sets the scene for your walking tours. Working with destinations, gateways, and existing touring routes make this possible.



Successful inbound marketing requires a large investment of time and money and is based on establishing and maintaining good business relationships. In contrast to the domestic market, it may take several years before you earn a return on investment for your international marketing. Therefore, it is important to have a long-term marketing strategy when considering the inbound market and consistently maintain the relationships.

How do I know who is travelling to England?

Visitor arrival details are published on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). VisitBritain/VisitEngland publishes forecasts for UK inbound travel twice a year.

The details are captured in the International Passenger Survey (IPS) - a continuous survey which covers all major air, sea and tunnel ports, providing detailed information on the numbers and types of visits made by people travelling to and from the UK.

Each year VisitBritain/VisitEngland sponsors questions on the International Passenger Survey to understand more about visitors to the UK.

All results are published on the VisitBritain/VisitEngland research pages. You can search by market, date range, and region to look for the level of information to help you understand tourism trends to your area of England.



For more information: [visitbritain.org/research-insights/inbound-visits-and-spend-annual-uk](https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/inbound-visits-and-spend-annual-uk)

Also refer to *Section 5 - Know your markets* and *Section 7 - Tourism industry research* for more detailed information on understanding your potential target markets.



Stonehenge, Wiltshire ©VisitBritain/Andrew Pickett

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The types of inbound travellers

What are the different styles of inbound travel?

A tourist's travel style will influence the choice of tours and activities, styles of accommodation, transport and where and how they make their travel purchases. These choices will be influenced by a number of factors, including the tourist's age, attitudes, budget, cultural background and previous travel experience.

The maturity of the outbound market from the tourist's home country will also influence their preferred style of travel. If you understand the different styles of travel, match and market your product accordingly, you will be on the right path to securing bookings from that type of traveller. For example, a retired American couple will have very different requirements from a French student, or a family from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

What are the differences between a short and long haul traveller?

Tourist perceptions are influenced by their knowledge of the destination, the distance they need to travel to the destination, media coverage, advertising, the available holiday time and whether it is a first or repeat visit.

In short haul markets, such as Germany, England is a highly achievable destination. Short haul visitors often travel to England more than once and purchase shorter, more frequent trips. They then become more familiar with the destination and gain the confidence to plan their own trips, travel in a less structured way, more independently and beyond the gateways.

In long haul markets such as those in the Asia Pacific region, England is seen as a destination that requires a large commitment of both time and money, and thus may be part of a longer European trip.

“Having a clear picture of our customer segments means that we understand not only the booking and travel habits of our customers, but also their motivations. With travel and tourism now being as much about the experience as it is about other influencing factors, knowing our customer segments, what they are looking for from us, and from their trip in general, gives us invaluable insight.”

Bryan Dijk, European Acquisition Controller, P&O

What are the most common travel styles?

Travel styles are constantly evolving and definitions will vary from market to market, however the table below summarises the key styles of which you need to be aware.

i

Fully independent travellers (FIT)

- Like the freedom of planning their own arrangements
- Arrange some core holiday components prior to arrival
- Organise the bulk of their itinerary independently without the assistance of a group tour, pre-arranged schedule or other group setting
- Rely heavily on word of mouth, the internet and social media when planning their trip

Partially packaged travellers

- Pre-book “skeleton package” of airfares, transfers and accommodation prior to arrival
- Search for competitive rates
- Optional themed extras such as car hire and tours are offered at the point of sale to appeal to different segments

Group inclusive tour *or* travellers (GIT)

- Pre-purchase the bulk of their holiday before leaving home via distributors
- Prefer structured itineraries
- Have highly organised and pre-booked tour arrangements
- Use distributor’s preferred products
- Common in less mature markets and with certain segments such as educational groups



What are the key purposes of travel?

The style of travel often depends on the purpose of travel. Some of the more specific reasons for travel are outlined below:

i

Business travellers

- Include delegates of a large conference or an individual on a business trip
- Often include a component of leisure travel during their visit such as pre and post conference touring
- Include delegates participating in an incentive tour – a specialised business segment which rewards performance with travel experiences
- Offer high yield as the per head spend is often very high

Visiting friends and relatives

- Cite friends and relatives as the primary reason for travel
- Often travel beyond the family base to other destinations
- Likely to stay with friends and relatives as part of their stay
- Rely on the recommendations and advice of their England-based friends and relatives when planning their trip

Study

- Includes short course participants, long term university students, school excursions and exchanges
- Potential for year round visits – less constrained by holiday periods
- More likely to travel off the beaten track, and stay for longer (often more than 21 days)
- High propensity to engage in a variety of activities (e.g. education, adventure, work)

Holiday

- Leisure travellers
- Will be looking to purchase travel, accommodation and activities
- Includes sub-segments such as special interest, and luxury



What are the different types of customer segment?

Beyond the style of travel and reason for travel, it is important to identify the different types of customers. Increasingly this is done based on attitude and experiences.

Why are experiences so important?

Experiences are increasingly important to international travellers, as they are what compels and motivates people to travel from market to market. When travellers start planning a trip, they will generally select a destination that can provide the experiences that they are looking for. Therefore, always consider what 'experience' your product is offering and focus on this in your target marketing.



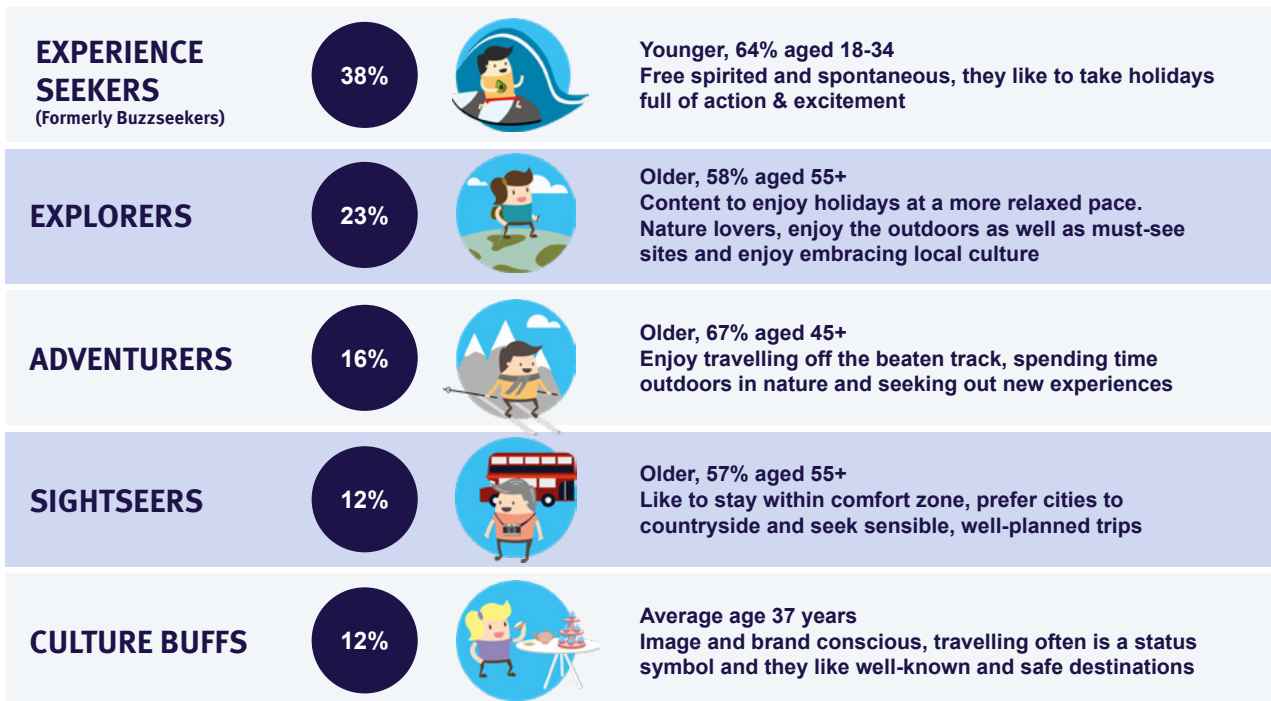


VisitBritain/VisitEngland’s global customer segments

VisitBritain/VisitEngland has identified 5 global segments representing the best prospect customers for travel to the UK. These segments have been built around a number of key attitudes and age is then used to further classify each segment.

Key attitudes used to build and differentiate our segments include:	
Image	“I care about the image I portray to others (and opposite)”
Challenge & change	“I always seek out new experiences (and opposite)”
Busy vs quiet	“I’m more of a city person (and opposite)”
New Discoveries	“when I travel abroad, I like to get off the beaten track (and opposite)”
Pace	“I prefer holidays full of action and excitement (and opposite)”
Luxury	“when I travel, I enjoy exclusive or luxury experiences that others might find unaffordable (and opposite)”

Whilst our key customer segments may change over time, they allow us to identify our target markets, and how best to reach them.



It is important to note that the exact characteristics and preferences of each segment are nuanced from market to market. For example, a European buzzseeker will behave differently to an American buzzseeker.

Updated segmentation profiles can be found at visitbritain.org/research-insights/motivations-influences-decisions-and-sustainability-research

5

Know your markets

What are the key markets for England?

VisitBritain/VisitEngland is active in 22 markets and has 4 major regional hubs worldwide:

- Europe
- The Americas
- Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa
- China and North East Asia

As the tourism partner for The GREAT Britain Campaign, VisitBritain works closely with government department and agencies, including Department for International Trade, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, Foreign & Commonwealth Office and British Council. Our marketing activity is primarily focused on those markets in which GREAT is active. These key markets are as follows:

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USA	Qatar	Italy	India
Germany	France	Netherlands	Spain
UAE	Australia	Canada	China
Saudi Arabia			

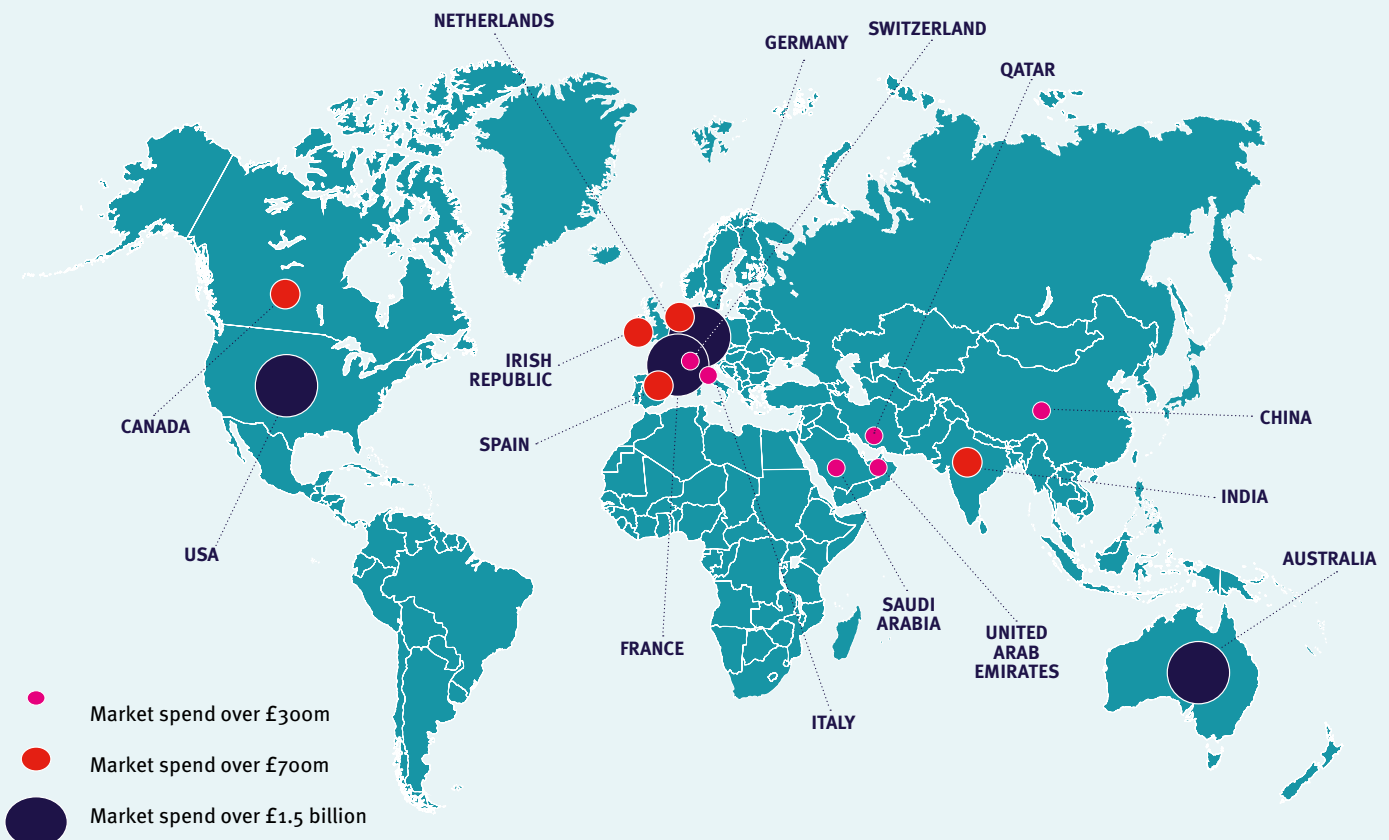
We undertake activity in other international markets too from our network of 21 offices.

+

See for more details see visitbritain.org/who-we-are

As a nation, England’s key markets, in terms of spend in 2022, are shown on the map below:

England's key target markets



Why is it important to understand these markets and to decide which markets to target?

In order to succeed in an international market, it is important to tailor your business and product to your customers' requirements. By understanding how your region and product might appeal to the international market, you can tailor your product, marketing and promotional activities to attract new business.

Understanding your consumer target markets will guide the development of your product, how you price your product in the marketplace, where you offer your product for sale and how you promote your product to consumers.

A key point to remember is don't try to enter every market at once. Select your markets carefully and take the time to plan your approach, allocating your resources to the markets which will generate the greatest return.



What is the travel seasonality of each market?

It is important to know the key booking and key travel periods for each market to assist you in contracting with the key distribution partners and product planning. Whilst the following will vary by type of traveller, it gives an indication as to the key timings of which it is helpful to be aware.

Country	Key booking periods	Key travel periods			
		J-M	A-J	J-S	O-D
USA	3-6 months before departure	17%	29%	21%	22%
Germany	3-6 months before departure	9%	27%	34%	30%
France	3-6 months before departure	16%	29%	25%	30%
Australia	6 months before departure	6%	24%	45%	25%
Spain	1-2 months before departure	12%	23%	27%	28%
Irish Republic	Not available	17%	26%	28%	29%
Saudi Arabia	Less than 1 month before departure	16%	23%	29%	31%
Italy	3-6 months before departure	12%	22%	30%	36%
The Netherlands	3-6 months before and 1-2 months before departure	20%	23%	30%	39%
China	Less than 1 month before departure	5%	26%	37%	32%
United Arab Emirates	Less than 1 month before departure	14%	22%	32%	31%
Canada	3-6 months before departure	7%	30%	41%	22%
Switzerland	More than 2 months before departur	12%	28%	29%	31%
India	1-2 months before departure	11%	28%	34%	27%
Hong Kong	Not available	20%	35%	26%	19%

Data Source: VisitBritain (2021/22). VisitBritain (2022).
 Markets listed here represent the top 15 markets to England in terms of value (2022).
 Key: J-M (January to March) A-J (April to June) J-S (July to September) O-D (October to December).

Where can I gain further information on each market?

VisitBritain/VisitEngland produces extensive market profiles on each market.

These can be found at visitbritain.org/research-insights/inbound-markets

Also refer to *Section 7 - Tourism industry research* for more detailed information on understanding your potential target markets and *Section 20 - Building an export plan* for tips on how to plan your marketing.

6

Cultural considerations



The world is full of differences and we need to understand them.

Cultural background greatly influences the way we communicate with the international market, and the way an international traveller experiences your product. International travellers often visit the same attractions but they may each take something completely different out of the experience.

For example, an Asian visitor may visit Stratford-upon-Avon to sightsee, interesting in the architecture of the buildings and have pictures taken with the landmarks, whereas an American visitor may want to experience the destination, therefore might choose to see a Royal Shakespeare Company performance as part of their visit.

Cultural background also drives the types of tours, activities, food and accommodation requested by international travellers during their stay in England. A Dutch tourist may travel over in his own car and visit remote locations. An American couple may request a twin room with two queen beds. A Chinese group may express a desire for certain foods during a tour.

“During my time in China and listening to many operators we very quickly realised that the visitors were really excited by the country house experience. Due to our unique vantage point and location so close to Windsor and Highclere, we wanted to create programmes that would fulfil the visitors’ expectations. Our programmes enable the visitor to step back in time as they are greeted by actors depicting the butler, housekeeper and so on. To fully embrace the experience visitors can dress up in vintage clothing, Take afternoon tea within the historic halls, closely followed by activity on the lawns, duck herding is a favourite.”

Hon William Stonor, Stonor Park



What are the key cultural considerations?

For each international market you need to consider the following aspects or categories in relation to how they will interact with your product, and how you need to present your product to them. Whilst these may change with age range or generation within each market, an example of each consideration is provided.

Consider	Impact	For example
Religion	Can affect food, dress and activities	Sensitivities around appropriate dress e.g. beach photos with women in bikinis would not be appropriate in a brochure targeting certain markets.
Politics	Can impact what and how you promote	Some governments ban the open promotion of casinos and gambling e.g. China.
Food and dining	Can impact what you need to provide	Vegetarian, Jain, Halal, Kosher etc. For Chinese culture, dining is a shared experience, loud and convivial, large shared dishes are more popular than individually-ordered meals.
Pace	Needs to be faster for some visitors	Eastern Market visitors traditionally enjoy a faster pace of travel than Western Hemisphere markets.
Punctuality	Needs to be reinforced for some markets	Some markets, such as India, are known for taking things at their own pace. The German market, however is very punctual and likes others to be.
Timing	Need to consider if your target market traditionally starts early or late in the day or likes to stay out late	Think of whether they eat earlier, later or around the same time as England, and how long they like to take to enjoy their meal. For example, Mediterranean countries tend to eat their evening meal a lot later and take a lot more time than other markets.
Language	Can impact all components but especially be conscious of safety messages	Consider translation of all safety advice such as the use of life jackets, swimming, fire regulations etc.
Sensitivities	Need to be aware of any cultural sensitivities such as nudity and alcohol	Mormons, Muslims and Jain will traditionally not drink alcohol.
Superstition	Need to be aware of any superstitions that impact the traveller.	Chinese have sensitivities around colour and numbers – the numbers 4 and 13 are considered to be unlucky.



Tailor your message

Once you have reviewed the cultural considerations for each of your target markets, you then need to ensure that this translates into your marketing and also your day to day operations. How the visitor engages with your product, and how comfortable they feel, will ultimately define their experience.

At all times be open and honest about what the visitor may experience, for example, stating that alcohol will be served at a touring lunch stop pre-warns the visitor and also allows them to feel comfortable in refusing or approaching the guide about it should they have any concerns.

When conducting a sales call* or trade show appointment, tailor your message to appeal to the different markets and respect their culture. The quality of your tailored communications is critical to being successful. For example, when handing your business card to a Chinese market client the exchange should always be done so with two hands as a sign of respect. Chinese business cards represent the person to whom you are being introduced, so it is polite to study the card for a while and then put it on the table next to you or in your business card case (don't staple it in a book).

**See section 12 for more information on sales calls*



7

Tourism industry research



“Doing the right industry research enabled us to understand our international customers’ requirements better and turn our paper based rail pass into a mobile M-Pass easily, creating the ultimate travel experience.”

Philip Barnard, International Manager, Rail Delivery Group

What research is available?

When entering into the international market it is critical to undertake ongoing market research including the reviewing of the latest tourism statistics. There is a wealth of up-to-date statistical tourism information readily available for you to analyse. You just need to know where to find it. VisitBritain/VisitEngland provides research services to the industry through consumer and market insights, plus tourism, aviation and economic analysis.

They are responsible for identifying and understanding the needs and drivers for consumer segments that give the greatest return on investment. They also produce relevant and timely analytical research on inbound tourism markets, including analysing and communicating trends in global tourism and identifying new and high-yield markets.



For further information and reports visit [visitbritain.org](https://www.visitbritain.org) and [visitbritain.org/research-insights](https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights)

What factors do I need to consider?

When reviewing any statistics it is wise to consider them in practical and realistic terms. For example, one market may be showing a significant percentage growth, but ensure you look at what base that growth is from. What is the real size of the market and does it hold the same potential as another market that may be growing at a slower rate yet off a higher base?

Also remember to consider the suitability of your product to each market. For example, you may see a high growth in the China market, however before you start targeting that market make sure your product is an experience that that market is interested in and that your product meets the needs of that market. You may indeed get a better return from another market that would suit your product better. Therefore, don't consider the statistics in isolation.

When looking at the arrival statistics, don't consider them at face value for the total numbers. It is important to drill down and review. For example, instead of just reviewing the total arrival statistics for a market, review the specific arrival statistics for each category to see the actual size of your target market, namely; Holiday, Visiting friends and relatives (VFR), Business travel, Study (i.e. students). Then consider the average spend of your target category, not the total overall spend, and how much of that has been pre-spent on carrier fares before they arrive in England. IPS stats will not record the cost of carrier fares (air, ferry etc.) to and from England.

Also it is worth considering the regional spread of the market. For example, if you see a high volume of visitors from the USA, check how many of these visits are spent within your region.

Let's look at the statistics for China



China Visitor Summary (2019)

Ranking: Visits 13th / Spend 2nd

	Total	Business	Study	Holiday	Visiting friends and relatives	Miscellaneous
Visits	883,073	112,717	81,219	511,760	114,950	62,427
Average Spend Per Visit	£1,937	£1,879	£4,506	£1,631	£1,922	£1,235
Spend Per Night	£119	£208	£69	£178	£84	£104
Average Nights Per Visit	16.33	9.03	65.26	9.23	22.94	11.85

If we were to review the summary statistics alone, total inbound visits from China in 2019 is 883,073 with an average spend per visit of £1,937 and an average stay of 16.33 nights. If you were a hotelier considering this in isolation you may think this is an extremely attractive market for you with Chinese guests potentially staying for a long duration from a big and growing market source. However, when you drill down per category, you will see that the average stay for a leisure visitor (likely to be purchasing hotel accommodation and therefore making up your target market) is 9.23 nights, with the market size being 511,760 leisure travellers. This demonstrates how the Study and VFR markets can put a slant on the statistics.

Another area where it is important to be cautious is regional dispersal statistics. The tourism industry commonly refers to regional dispersal as being outside capital or main cities. However, the International Passenger Survey (IPS) defines that regional dispersal means a stay overnight in a place and therefore does not include day visits. For this reason, the actual number of visitors to an area may be much greater than indicated, by the IPS statistics, since they do not include day visits. For example, if you look at China, the total holiday market for China consists of 511,760 visitors, with 388,330 of these visitors basing their trip in London. If you were a hotelier in Yorkshire, you will find the market for Chinese visitors is much smaller at 52,890 Chinese holidaymakers. Therefore, it is important to drill down into the detail of the data to truly understand the market potential.



Top tips for reviewing IPS statistics:

- VFR & Study increase the total average stay
- Expenditure excludes airfares and is reported by country of residence
- The IPS is a sample survey so is open to statistical error, but gives a strong indication

How do I keep updated on a regular basis?

Keep updated with VisitBritain/VisitEngland

To stay up to date with what is happening in the tourism industry you can also subscribe to the following e-newsletters.

VisitBritain/VisitEngland's industry newsletter for news and information on upcoming marketing opportunities, what's new in English tourism, details of the latest research reports, global tourism trends and developments.



Sign up here: visitbritain.org/subscribe-our-newsletters

VisitBritain/VisitEngland's media centre for information on new events, tourism products and new travel ideas to inspire and inform.



For further information see visitbritain.com/gb/en/media

You can also subscribe to your respective DMO newsletters for area specific information and opportunities.

The importance of industry associations

In addition to reviewing statistical information and market reports it is critical to keep up to date with your travel industry partners and products on a regular basis. This can be easily facilitated by your DMO or industry organisations such as UKinbound. Being a member of such an organisation gives you access to a wealth of information, industry comments, market trends and a broad industry network.



For further information see visitbritain.org/industry-groups-bodies

Form your own knowledge base

Use every opportunity to undertake your own research and gain market feedback. For example, when you are attending trade shows (such as the World Travel Market or Britain and Ireland Marketplace) or industry conferences; this is a perfect opportunity to ask your fellow industry colleagues for market related feedback.

Whilst statistical information is essential to review, you will also gain great insight by asking your industry trade partners. They will have a feel for how the market is tracking and also be able to give you some practical advice. This two-way communication will also enable you to market test ideas and gain instant feedback.

Always focus on building your network of industry contacts as they can be a great resource to you.



For VisitBritain's trade events see: trade.visitbritain.com/trade-events

For further information, please refer to *Section 2 - Help desk*

8

The travel distribution system

Distribution channels and consumer purchasing behaviour vary from market to market.

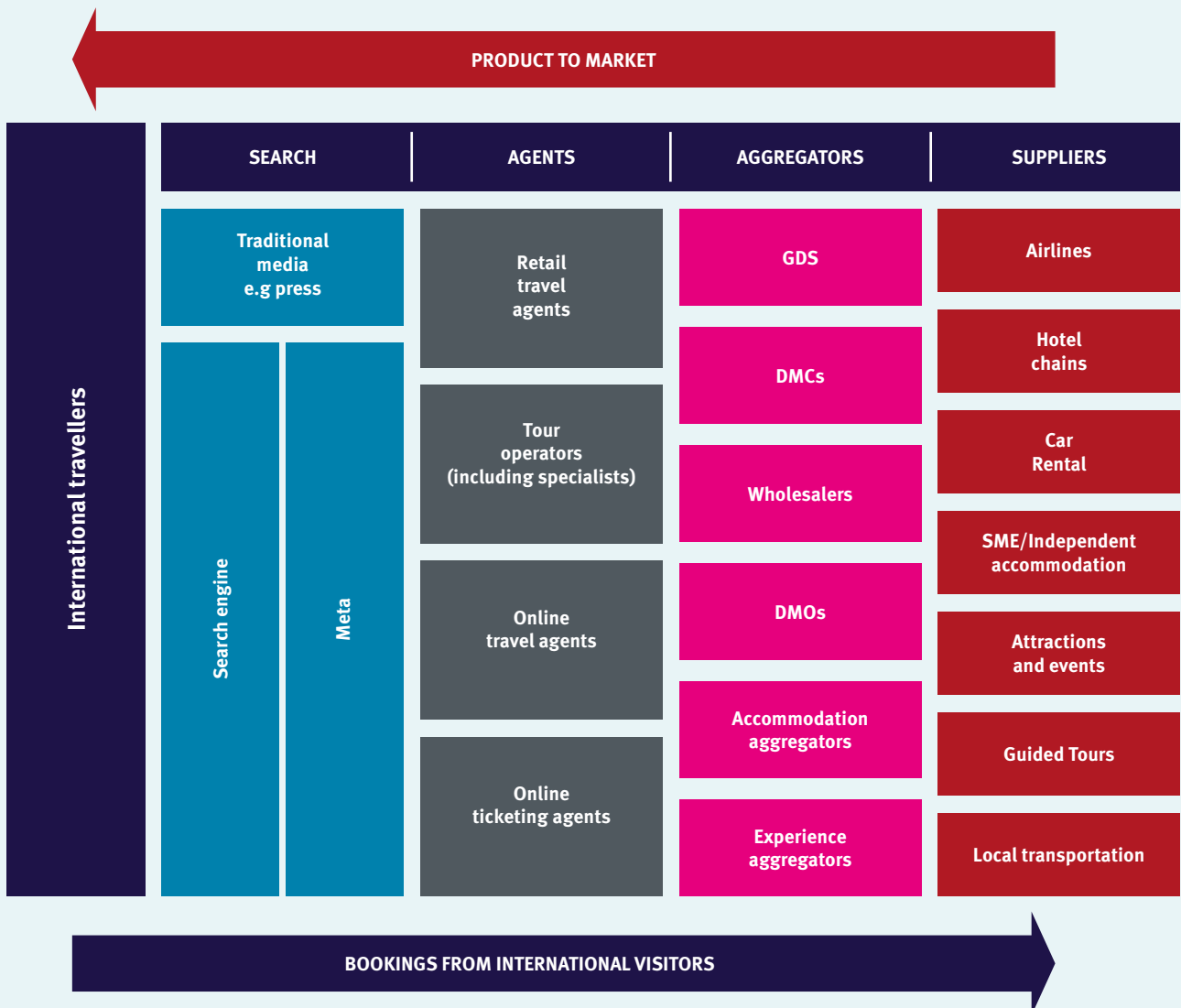
The travel distribution system is a complex, global network of independent businesses, so you will need to understand the structure of the distribution system specific to your target markets before marketing internationally. This network includes a series of distributors or intermediaries, who play a specific role in the development, promotion and purchasing process of English tourism experiences.

Why work with travel distributors?

Travel distributors allow you to broaden your customer base far beyond the reach of your own limited marketing budget. They are important to the inbound tourism industry as overseas consumers still rely heavily on the advice of local travel experts when planning and booking their holiday in England, particularly in long haul and emerging markets. Travel distributors can also provide market intelligence, insights and advice on a specific market.

The travel distribution system covers all the channels through which an international traveller can buy your product. Other than approaching you directly, international travellers may book your product as follows:

The travel distribution system



How does the distribution system work?

The travel distribution system has customarily been very structured with clearly defined functions for each role in the chain. However, online technology and company mergers have transformed the tourism industry, with an increasing amount of crossover in the roles and functions of various sectors of the distribution system. Businesses are engaging a mix of distribution partners to ensure the most effective way of reaching their target consumers.

The diagram on the previous page shows the elements involved in the tourism distribution landscape. As this distribution system continues to evolve, it is important to understand the structure of the companies that you work with and their relationships with other organisations.

With the growth of the internet, many traditional travel distributors such as wholesalers and travel agents are taking an online approach as well as offering their services from a retail shop front. There has also been an increase in online travel agencies (OTAs) who operate solely in the online environment.

Both online and traditional distribution partners have the opportunity to work with each other and directly with products and customers. Therefore, it is vital to understand each partner's role and how your product can benefit from their part in the distribution network. *For further information, please refer to section 5 - Know your markets.*

Who are the key players?



Search

Traditional search

Involves offline search e.g. press, offline listings etc.

Search engines

Those online tools such as Google and Bing.

Meta search

Refers to aggregators (see Experience aggregators and Accommodation aggregators) which search across multiple websites and show the results in one place on their own website e.g. **Viator, Get Your Guide, Trivago.**



Agents

Retail travel agents

Retail travel agents are based in the consumer's country of origin and deal directly with consumers. Retail travel agents offer wide distribution in prominent shop front locations and are a convenient place for travellers to make bookings and buy holidays.

Retail travel agents usually belong to a larger chain of travel agencies, and may be vertically integrated, selling the products of a specific tour operator.

Tour operators

e.g. Flight Centre, Dertour, Cox & Kings, TUI, coach operators

Tour operators contract supplier product or may have it supplied by a wholesaler, or a DMC.

They coordinate the reservation, confirmation and payment of travel arrangements on behalf of the consumer and may package up ground arrangements with flights.

They operate B2C when selling direct, or B2B via a travel agent.



Agents

Online travel agents

e.g. Expedia

Online travel agents (OTAs) specialise in online distribution and deal directly with consumers and tourism product. Consumers can purchase a product or an entire holiday package online.

Online ticketing agents

e.g. Viator

Online ticketing agents contract tickets to attractions, and sell directly to the consumer online.



Aggregators

Global Distribution Systems (GDS)

e.g. Amadeus, Sabre, Galileo

A global distribution system is a computer system that holds inventory from airlines, hotels, car hire etc. Sellers (e.g. retail travel agent, online travel agent) have direct access to this inventory.

Destination Management Companies (DMCs)

e.g. Tour Partner Group, Abbey Tours

A Destination Management Company normally operates in two ways:

1. As a contracting operation and supplier of packages or itineraries which it sells B2B (e.g. via a tour operator). For example, Hotels and More supply product for Dertour, in Germany.
2. As a provider of group travel services (e.g. bespoke travel services for groups). This may involve some or all aspects of meetings, incentives, conferences and events travel (MICE). It may also involve travel for schools, or other groups. Here the DMC can be involved in a few or all elements of the group travel.

Wholesalers

e.g. GTA, Miki Travel, JAC Travel

Wholesalers contract supplier product. They are B2B and act as a silent partner. They will sell these products via travel agents, tour operators, coach operators and other third parties.

Local Visitor Economy Partnerships/Destination Management Organisations

e.g. Marketing Manchester

Some DMOs have their own retail sites, for products they have contracted relevant to their geographical area.

Accommodation aggregators

e.g. Trivago

An accommodation aggregator searches across multiple websites and show the results in one place on its own website.

Experience aggregators

e.g. Viator, Get Your Guide

An experience aggregator searches across multiple websites and show the results in one place on its own website.

Documentation branding will either be that of the aggregator or the supplier, depending on the set up of the aggregator.

For more information on how to work with each of these distribution system players, please refer to *Section 9 – How to work with the distribution system's main players.*

9

How to work with the distribution system's main players



“Travel distributors allow you to reach a customer base beyond your marketing budget. The most important thing is to have price uniformity with all your distribution partners. The tourism industry is very transparent. Once you have established distribution channels and pricing levels, track your bookings and monitor how each of your distribution partners are performing. Your distributors will reward you with revenue generation and strong business relationships.”

Mark Stredwick, Owner, Brewtown Tours

What are travel distributors looking for in products?

In *Section 8 - The travel distribution system* we identified who the key distributors are and how the overall system works. If you have decided to work with these distribution partners, you need to ensure that your product offers the following minimum requirements, commonly termed as being ‘export ready’:

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- Quality products and experiences that are delivered consistently
- Reliability and efficiency (consistent operating hours and regular schedules)
- High levels of customer service and helpful reservations staff
- Clear and easy to understand collateral, both online and offline
- Understanding of the cultural needs of different markets
- Consistent pricing policies that consider all levels of distribution* and offer commissionable rates
- Easy communication via phone numbers, email and other online messaging tools
- Fast and efficient turnaround and response times for bookings and enquiries (within 24 hours)

**For further information on pricing, refer to section 10 - Pricing: it's all about balance*



How do I distribute my product with wholesalers?

Building a relationship with a wholesaler is critical. To engage successfully, you need to work with all the distribution partners along the chain and ensure there is awareness and interest in your product. This might begin with building relationships with UK based wholesalers to familiarise yourself with international audiences with the support and expertise of the UK businesses.

Once you finalise your offering and objectives, you can start to look at international wholesalers. This can be achieved both nationally and internationally. If you feel more comfortable with events based in the UK you can engage with events such as the [World Travel Market in London](#) (UK stand delivered by [UKinbound](#)) and [BIM](#) the Britain & Ireland Marketplace (by [ETOA](#)) to meet with key travel decision makers.

Don't be surprised if it takes up to 3 years of engagement before a wholesaler begins to use your product. Wholesalers need assurance that you are an established operator. It may also be that some wholesalers are hesitant to start contracting your product/experience due to their loyalty to existing product suppliers and stringent consumer protection laws in some major markets and their own product cycle planning process.

Once you have secured a product distribution deal with a wholesaler, you will need to provide the wholesaler and key front-line sales staff with ongoing education and product updates to keep your product front of mind via newsletters, sales calls, trade shows and educationals. Educationals are visits that allow sellers to experience your product first hand to improve their product knowledge. We offer opportunities such as [Showcase Britain](#) to host international buyers and media, you should speak to your local LVEP to find out how to be involved.

Make sure you are consistent in your approach and do not give up if you encounter some barriers along the way. VisitBritain and your local authority can always try to offer additional help if needed.



Top tips for working with wholesalers include:

- Research – find out which markets and market segments the wholesaler targets, the type of experience they sell and who their distribution partners are (e.g. tour operators)
- Keep wholesalers updated on any new developments or changes to your product
- Suggest ideas for packaging your product with complementary products in your region to make it easier to sell
- Be open to ideas from wholesalers that can help to improve sales of existing products. Feedback is important to developing and improving products
- Highlight your unique selling point (USP), the benefits of your product and the factors that set you apart from the competition
- Ensure you allow for wholesaler commissions in your rates and include concise terms and conditions. Be prepared to provide rates up to 18 months in advance
- Keep in mind consumer protection laws that the wholesaler must adhere to. There are strict consumer laws that require companies to deliver the promised standard of holiday experience.

How do I distribute my product with DMCs (destination management companies)?

The information for distribution via wholesalers also applies to working with DMCs.



Additional top tips for working with DMCs:

- Offer a variety of itineraries that include unique and diverse experiences
- Suggest interesting ways to package your product together with other experiences
- In the case of Business and MICE travel, participate in cooperative marketing activities organised by VisitBritain/ VisitEngland and your local Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Find out what their specialisms are (if any) and make sure your product fits with their requirements and customer's needs
- Build a good /long term relationship with your DMC partners. Take time to visit them and invite them on educational. Use their feedback on helping develop further product that fits their needs
- Consider offering a DMC a package that is unique solely for them, like a behind the scenes tour...something that is only available to them.

How do I distribute my product with online travel agents and online ticketing agents?

As online travel agents and online ticketing agents deal directly with the consumers, you can research their website as if you were a consumer. See how it operates and how it will promote your product. Contact them to see how information is loaded and updated. An excellent tool to determine the most visited consumer travel websites is Experian Hitwise. This company provides insights and reviews into the performance of travel websites.

Many sites provide you with access to maintain and update your details. While this does provide you with control over the information on your product it can also be very time consuming, especially if you are featured on a number of sites. Online distributors may also run a number of affiliate sites on-selling packages. It is important that you are aware of any affiliate sites and where rates may appear.

When distributing online, rate competitiveness is critical. Rate competitiveness exists when the same rate structure for a product exists across all its distribution channels. When a product effectively controls rate competitiveness, rate integrity is assured and the consumer becomes confident in booking the product. Rate competitiveness ensures an even playing field and protects a product's relationship with all its distribution partners. This will ensure that consumers receive the best pricing and value no matter which of these channels they use to make their reservations.

When considering online distribution, it is important to think about the possible impacts on your traditional distribution partners. You need to manage and preserve the relationship you have with these partners. It should be your goal to mirror the same retail rates at all points of reservation for your travel distribution partners. It is important to:

- Clarify commission and inventory levels required and the level of promotion for your product
- Find out how much new business the site may generate
- Check if there are any affiliate sites that may operate in addition to the main site
- Check how your information on the site is maintained - by you or the site host?
- Check how the site is promoted. Is it targeted at the trade or consumers? Are there any distribution agreements in place?

How do I distribute my products with a tour operator?

Larger tour operators, online travel agents and ticketing agents have product and contracting departments that identify and select the products and suppliers they want to sell. These departments can offer advice on suitable markets for your product and suggestions about product development and packaging.



Top tips for working with tour operators include:

- Research who the tour operator works with in the distribution system and which markets they target to ensure your product is the correct fit
- Compile a sales kit with product fact sheets (in PDF format), brochures and images
- Ensure information on your website is up to date
- Provide reviews of products where possible. At the same time as finding reputable operators, reviews help to back up a product offering.
- Provide a visual presentation, including video footage
- Provide rates that allow for commissions and include concise terms and conditions. Be prepared to provide rates up to 18 months in advance
- Provide information in other languages (online fact sheets, brochures) if targeting markets where English is not commonly spoken
- Participate in networking events, workshops or educationals organised by your local DMO or VisitBritain/VisitEngland
- Provide prompt (same day) turnarounds on enquiries, quotations and bookings
- Don't expect prepayments or deposits
- Accept vouchers and trading terms
- Action complaints promptly
- Provide updated product information, training and educationals for key tour operator staff
- Check that the tour operator is licensed. Don't be afraid to speak to other businesses that work with the tour operator to confirm that it is a reputable company

How do I distribute my product with overseas retail travel agents?

One of the best ways of distributing your product at the retail level is to identify established wholesalers/DMCs/tour operators with a wide distribution via retail agents.

Training the wholesalers/DMCs/tour operators about your product and providing them with the tools to train their retail partners is the most effective way to target these retail agents.



Top tips for working with retail travel agents include:

- Meet retail agents and wholesale reservation agents by attending trade shows that target these staff
- Establish and maintain good relationships with your retail travel agent's preferred wholesalers/DMCs/tour operators
- Provide key agents with regular but relevant product updates
- Get involved in VisitBritain/VisitEngland's BritAgent programme



Boost your sales with TXGB

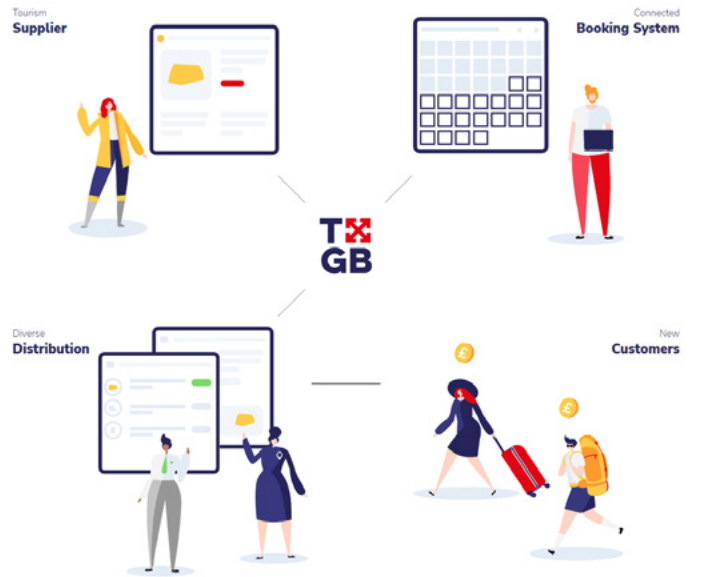
Tourism Exchange Great Britain was launched in partnership with VisitBritain / VisitEngland to provide the UK tourism industry with a central marketplace, enabling tourism businesses to trade, collaborate and innovate.

i TXGB makes it easier than ever to be bookable online:

- **Free to sign up** - no setup or additional monthly fees, just 2.5% booking fee + chosen distributor commission
- **Real time two way sharing of data** - send live availability and prices, and receive bookings directly into your booking system or free TXLoad inventory loading software
- **Extend your reach** to distribution channels all completely optional and in your control via the TXGB dashboard
- **Optimise commission costs** with unique, low commission channels alongside established distributors and well known global brands
- **Access direct payment channels** - get paid directly, at point of sale, protecting cash flow and sharing customer data
- **Support your destinations** - opt into smarter regional and national marketing campaigns that offer direct bookings and where any commissions paid stays in your destination

The TXGB team can assist you to opt into the sales channels that will help you drive bookings and reach new customers.

You can contact the team for more information by using any of the details below.



Visit the website at txgb.co.uk
 Email hello@txgb.co.uk
 Call 0330 223 5050

Find out more information about other distribution opportunities

VisitBritain/VisitEngland offers a range of activities to assist you to target key travel trade distribution contacts including trade shows, sales missions and familiarisation trips.

Be mindful that building relationships and establishing your product with travel distribution partners can take time, usually a minimum of 12 to 18 months to see results.

Once you have established distribution channels and pricing levels, it is important to set up a system to track your bookings, recording where they come from. It is essential to monitor how each of your distribution partners are performing, as knowing where your bookings are coming from and which partners are generating business for you, will help to maximise your marketing expenditure. It will also allow you to strengthen your relationships with agents and partners who are performing well.

For further information on distribution strategies refer to *Section 20 - Building an export plan*



Pricing – it's all about balance





What are the pricing considerations?

Your price is the cost to consumers at various points in the distribution chain. It includes the price that consumers pay when they buy direct from you, the commission and net rate structures offered for intermediaries and the rates for children or students. It also includes your booking terms and conditions.

A product must be priced consistently, accurately and competitively to be successful in the market place. This requires a clear understanding of each individual cost component, including commissions and their impact on the total price of the product. Getting your pricing right is a key requirement for success.

The gross or retail rate of a product is the amount that the consumer pays and should be consistent across all distribution channels. Rate integrity is vital in maintaining good business partnerships.



The price should be set according to:

1. Your competitors' pricing
2. The level that your target market is prepared to pay
3. The cost of distribution (i.e. commissions) built into the overall price
4. Fixed and variable costs
5. Seasonality
6. Your profit margin
7. Sustainability. The price should be set at a rate that can be maintained over a long-term period, and does not change drastically season to season. If prices are set to gain entry to a market, this needs to be made clear to distributors.

What is the 'cost of distribution'?

If you plan to sell your product through the distribution system, you will need to factor commission levels into your price structure. Commissions are a cost of distribution and the fee paid to the inbound tour operator, wholesaler, online and retail agent to market, distribute and sell your product. This is their income, paying for their operation and the services they provide.



Distribution costs can be either:

- You, the operator, making a percentage commission repayment to the distributor
- OR
- The distributor paying you a net rate, an agreed rate that already has the commission removed

Each level of the distribution system receives a different rate of commission. If the price of your product does not allow for these levels of payment, you will find it very difficult to market your product through a tour operator, wholesaler, DMC, online channel or retail agent. Within distribution, you will find that a wholesaler will sell your product to a DMC, who will package that product with others and sell this package to a retail agent. The retail agent will then sell this to the customer. Therefore, the wholesaler will charge you, the supplier, more commission as they need to then pay commission to the DMC, who pays commission to the retail agent.

Why should I factor in the cost of distribution?

If you plan to sell your product through the travel distribution system, you will need to factor commissions and net rates into your pricing structure. These are the cost of distributing and selling your product internationally.

Cost of distribution is a cost of doing business in the international market place. If you can get your pricing right, you should view it as an opportunity to market and distribute your business to an international audience that you might not have otherwise been able to achieve.

But I can't afford to pay commission!

But can you afford to turn sales away, and do you have the budget and time to be able to market your product across the globe without being part of the distribution network?

This issue needs to be addressed from 2 different perspectives:

1. How you incorporate the right amount of commission in your prices
2. How much money you make if you pay commission on a sale



How do I price to incorporate distribution costs?

The price of your product is made up of the following cost components:

- Fixed costs or overheads – light, power, marketing, telephone, admin wages etc.
- Variable costs – the costs associated with supplying the service – e.g. laundry, cleaning, inclusions
- Profit margin – the amount that will contribute to your end of year profit
- Cost of distribution – an allowance to be able to pay commission to distributors
- VAT – if you are VAT registered

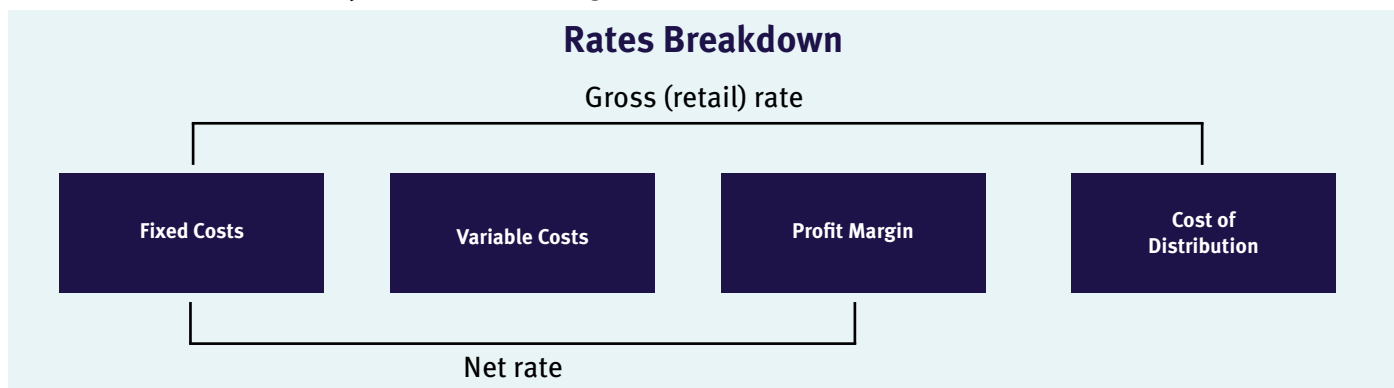
The sum total of all the above costs is your market price or gross price. From this gross price you can calculate the net price by deducting the specific level of commission offered to the partner in the distribution chain. It is important not to just add the commission on top of your publicly displayed market price, as the customer should pay the same price if they book direct, via an international travel agent or via the internet, for example. Consumers will not purchase the product from a distributor in advance if they know they can purchase it directly from you at a reduced price. Distributors will not promote and market your product if they know the consumer is not going to buy from them.

How do I price my products for distribution system partners?

When dealing with the travel distribution system, you must understand the difference between net and gross (or retail) rates and 'protect your rates' by providing the correct rates to each level of the distribution system.

It is important to understand that commission levels will vary across the entire distribution landscape, so it is best to work on a case by case basis.

Rates should be clearly marked as either gross (retail) or net.



The margin is referred to as a percentage of the final price, rather than as an addition to the net rate.

For example:

When opting to distribute your product, you need to negotiate your price. Some distributors will allow you to use a gross (retail) rate, whereas some will want a net rate. For example, below we have a retail rate for a hotel at £125. This retail rate includes all the fixed costs and variable costs, the desired level of profit and the cost of distribution. A tour operator may charge you 20% commission to distribute your product. See the below example:

Gross rate / 'brochure' price		£125	per room per night
Tour operator cost of distribution		20%	
Hotel net rate / contract rate		£100	per room per night

The tour operator here makes 20% commission (£25), calculated as a percentage of the gross rate / 'brochure price'. This is either paid by the supplier to the tour operator once a sale has been made, or the supplier can offer a net rate, in this case £100.

This is where the tour operator pays the supplier £100 for each sale made, therefore, already accounting for the cost of distribution. An agreed proportion of this gross rate (e.g. 10%) may be paid by the tour operator to the retail travel agent, if sold by one.

The 'do's and 'don't's of pricing**DO**

- ✓ Get the price right for the market and compare it with prices offered by your competitors
- ✓ Build a totally consistent rate schedule
- ✓ Guarantee your rates for 1 April to 31 March. Price guarantees may need to be valid for up to 18 months
- ✓ Ensure that your price will generate sufficient profitability and turnover
- ✓ Ensure that the validity date and all booking terms and conditions are clearly stated on all correspondence related to pricing
- ✓ Ensure that you identify any seasonality in your product (i.e. high season, low season, and days of operation and clearly identify the corresponding rate alterations)
- ✓ Ensure you know who you have distributed rates to so you can update them
- ✓ Ensure your prices are sustainable in the long term

**DON'T**

- ✗ Just add the cost of commission for the different distributor channels on top of your public pricing. This will immediately ensure the inbound market will not do business with you as they will be priced out of the market
- ✗ Distribute rates intended for wholesalers, DMCs and tour operators to retail agents. This will either increase your commission payments or dispense with one level of the distribution system for your product
- ✗ Consider commissions as a 'discount' as they are part of the cost of doing business. Intermediaries' have to promote your product and pay their costs in selling and packaging your product
- ✗ Try to set different rates for local and overseas visitors unless there is a variation in the product offering

What specific information do I need to include in my rate agreement?

In order to make your product easy to sell for your distribution partners, when setting your rates, keep it as simple as possible. If your product is seasonal, or if you have chosen to use mid-week and weekend rates, keep the number of seasons or price categories to a minimum. Having too many rate periods is confusing for agents, makes your product more difficult to sell and may mean that your product is less likely to be featured in distributors' programs.

This doesn't mean that 'specials' can't be offered throughout the year. When offering special rates or packages ensure that they are structured to include all levels of distribution and that the validity and terms and conditions are clearly stated.

To protect your business, it is important to clearly state all the booking terms and conditions with your rates. It is preferable that the terms and conditions are on one page, attached to your rates. The more information that you provide on your rates agreement the easier it will be for your distribution partner to load your product efficiently into their system ready for sale.

You may also be asked to complete risk assessment or SLAs as part of the rate agreement, to ensure that this complies with distributor regulations or insurance policies. Make sure that this fits with your own liability and insurance policy.

This is to be used as a guide only. You should seek professional legal advice for your own business, especially to ensure all your terms and conditions are covered to protect your business.



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Rates agreement - what to include?

- **Rate validity dates:** Rates for the international market need to be valid 1 April – 31 March and need to be guaranteed and final
- **Gross (retail) and net rates:** List both the gross (retail) and net rates and the commission level percentage. Be clear – are your rates per person, per room, per vehicle? Use tour codes where possible
- **VAT:** Clearly indicate if rates are VAT inclusive or exclusive and any further additional charges that may apply
- **Contact details:** Include address, phone, fax, mobile, email and website. Include specific contact details for bookings, marketing and accounts
- **Cancellation conditions:** Explain cancellation charges based on the time cancellation occurs prior to travel. Ensure your cancellation conditions are in line with industry standards as well as meeting your operational needs
- **Termination policy:** Explain obligations on both sides in case either side needs to end the contractual obligations
- **Amendment charges:** Explain amendment charges based on the time amendments occur prior to travel. Ensure your amendment charges are in line with industry standards as well as meeting your operational needs
- **Child/Infant:** Advise age ranges and then provide actual rates on your rate sheet. For example – Infant is under 2 years, child is 2 to 12 years inclusive. If you also offer discounts, such as a Seniors Discount, please also list this and the identification required
- **Group conditions:** For example, how many days prior to the tour or accommodation booking do you require a group rooming list? What is the minimum number required to access group rates if provided?
- **Free of charge (FOC) policy:** Stipulate that this applies to groups only and advise how many rooms need to be booked or how many passengers on tour. For example it is usually 1 FOC for every 15 paying passengers or 1 FOC room for every 10 rooms booked
- **Inclusions & exclusions:** For example meals or room inclusions i.e. breakfast, newspaper
- **Minimum night stays:** Ensure these are listed, if they are only over peak periods list the specific peak period dates
- **Minimum and maximum guest capacity on tours:** Also advise any minimum numbers to make a booking
- **Any block out periods / seasonal rates / days not operating:** These need to be advised at the time of contracting, not after the rate agreement has been issued
- **Bedding configuration:** Also include maximum capacity per rooms and any additional bedding charges (e.g. rollaway bed)
- **Departure times, dates and points:** Also include any specific details to assist your customers in finding your tour departure (e.g. include a map)
- **Payment policy & banking details:** Include when the payment is due for each booking and how payments should be made. Also state that if a trade distribution partner is going to be on an account basis (for example invoiced every 30 days) that they need to complete a credit application form and a credit check will be undertaken
- **Any special conditions:** For example, if photography is not allowed on tour or that the tour may not operate in certain weather conditions, or if it is an all weather activity. Be careful to cover inclusions on your tour, for example guests will have the opportunity to spot whales, however sightings can not be guaranteed
- **Any additional information of relevance:** For example, check in/check out times, what passengers need to bring on tour, if passengers need to arrive at a set time prior to departure, what they need to wear (e.g. long trousers for safety), what level of fitness they may require etc.
- **Damages and responsibilities:** This clearly needs to state who is responsible for any damages. You may also include that you recommend that all passengers have travel insurance

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Consider your product: review or bundle

“Working in partnership with other local attractions has enabled us to diversify our product by creating a number of joint tickets and experiences. We are fortunate to have excellent attractions The Mary Rose and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard on our doorstep. Collaborating with these partners strengthens Portsmouth’s standing as a world-class tourist destination. The benefits are passed on to our guests through joint ticket discounts.”

Tony Sammut, General Manager, Emirates Spinnaker Tower

What is a product?

Your product is the combination of ‘goods and services’ that make up the visitor experience, including the standard of your facilities and equipment, the level of service you provide and the quality of your interpretation.

An individual product will make up only part of the total travel experience for a consumer. The complete travel experience includes all the elements that a tourist consumes from the time they leave home until they return. This includes transport, accommodation, meals, attractions and activities. These may be purchased independently by the consumer or bundled into a package for sale by a tour operator, wholesaler or DMC etc.

All products should be reviewed to ensure market alignment prior to releasing rates and product information for the next season.



i

What should I consider when reviewing or developing new products?

- **Market Suitability** – Does the product suit the markets that I am targeting? Look at the characteristics and product choices of the consumer from this market and is there a match? The development of your product should be guided by the type of experience your target market seeks
- **Product Tailoring** – Do I need to make product changes or enhancements to suit certain markets, as consumer tastes vary per market? Small changes to tailor-make your products can have significantly positive impacts
- **Unique selling points** – Do you still have a point of difference from your competitors? Review your Unique Selling Points
- **Product feedback** – What feedback have you received on your products? Review your customers' feedback including websites such as Trip Advisor. Have any of your customers or trade partners provided suggestions for new products or changes? What would your consumers like to see?
- **Product Pricing** – Is the product competitively priced and does it allow for all levels of commission? Is the product profitable?
- **Location** – are there attractions and facilities nearby which enhance the appeal of your product? Are you promoting the destination as well as your products?
- **Accessibility** – is your product accessible enough? Could you provide better transport links?
- **Seasonality** – are you open to coincide with peak arrivals from your target market?
- **Hours of operation** – are they regular and compatible with transport times and meet the needs of your markets?
- **Time** – how do you fit into an international itinerary? Consider providing suggested itineraries to demonstrate this
- **Information availability** – for both tourists and your distribution partners
- **Reservations** – How easy is it for consumers to book your product?
- **Sustainability** - make your business more sustainable to save money, reduce your impact and wind more customers

What is product bundling?

It is often difficult to attract international visitors to an area outside established destinations as they may have limited time and knowledge of the area. By working cooperatively with your region to promote the destination as a whole, there is a better chance that visitors will take the time to visit. If a potential visitor can see that within your local/regional area there is a plethora of attractions, day trips, activities and more, they are more likely to extend their stay, thus bringing more value to the area.

To achieve a full destination proposition, work in cooperation with local operators and create a bundle that will make your product more enticing. Bundling refers to aligning and marketing complementary products together to form compelling and unique experiences for the consumer. It helps to improve visitation through regions and increase tourist revenue through multiple suppliers offering complementary products, or via single suppliers providing services that complement their core offering. It also assists by offering a stronger commission-able proposition for distribution partners.

For example, if you were a bed and breakfast operator in an area known for its outdoor activities, you could work with other operators such as walking tours, bike hire, restaurants and attractions to provide a combined product that could offer the ultimate food and wine holiday experience.

Bundling can be done in many ways. It could be as simple as having links to other organisations' websites on your website. Or it could involve joining forces with other businesses in your region to create more substantial marketing activity and promotions. Most importantly, the key to effectively bundling your experience is to cross-promote like-minded experiences that enhance the overall visitor experience in your region.



What should I consider when bundling products?

- **Target** – Who do you want to target? What markets, who are your customers? Does this market align with your products?
- **Inclusions** – Based on your customer profiles what package inclusions would appeal to them and at what price? For example, a 'Romantic Package' for an accommodation provider could include dinner at an exclusive restaurant, or a picnic basket option, a personalised tour or spa treatment
- **Time elements** – be careful not to 'over package' and remember that some customers enjoy flexibility in their travel choices
- **Partnerships** – what specific product partners will you need? What agreements will you put in place? Ensure these are mutually agreed and confirmed by legal agreements
- **Price** – distributors might expect that the sale price would be lower based on a bundled product, due to the shared costs for promotion meaning that the need for a margin on the rate would be lower, or due to volume of services purchased
- **Branding** – Think creatively when naming your bundled product, the name must appeal to the target market
- **Promotions** – With your product partners, agree on all elements of marketing the bundled product including what promotional mediums you will use, what promotional copy and PR activities. Develop a communications strategy to consumers and trade partners, decide on what sales activity will be undertaken, what the marketing budget will be and how you will jointly review the return on your investment. These details should also be included in your agreement
- **Agreed terms of operation** – work out all the logistics with your product partners and include these in the agreement. For example: What period will the product be available, how will you price your product ensuring you allow distribution system commissions, how will the bookings be handled, what booking lead times does each component need, create a specific tour code, ensure all reservations and operations staff are cross trained on each product, ensure all legal and insurance compliances are met



Remember to consider the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 when product bundling. More information can be found in the VisitEngland Pink Book: Legislation for tourist accommodation and attractions: <https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/pink-book>

12

Relationships are key: formal & informal

“Networking, nurturing and good communication are key in our industry. It is all about building relationships (formal and informal), and sharing new ideas and processes to grow business. Face to face relationships can be built through regular attendance at workshops, meetings, seminars and events. Phone calls don’t go amiss either. Keep in touch!”

Ginette Goulston-Lincoln, Travel Trade Consultant, Liverpool

Focus on building industry relationships and have that ‘elevator pitch’ ready

Building relationships with distribution trade partners is critical to your success in the international marketplace. This is a relationships industry and nothing beats face-to-face contact either via formal meetings such as sales calls, staff training and trade shows, or via informal networking opportunities such as industry social nights and trade event social functions either pre-planned or unplanned.

At all times, be prepared to deliver your elevator pitch – secure their interest in your product. Be prepared to highlight who you are and what your company and products are about. You should be able to do this quickly, and your listener should walk away with good information and a desire to know more.

Whether you are at a trade show, networking event or scheduled sales call, the key to a successful elevator pitch is to focus on your compelling selling points – your unique assets that make you stand out that you would have defined in your marketing plan.



Top tips for building industry relationships

- Your pitch should take no longer than 30-60 seconds or be no more than a couple of sentences
- Use language that everyone understands, don’t use fancy words or jargon
- Tell a story and make it entertaining
- Aim your pitch at a specific audience. If you have a few diverse target markets, you might want to develop a unique pitch for each
- Have a clear goal in mind of what you want to achieve
- Briefly describe your product but do not go into excruciating detail
- Have a hook at the beginning - something that attracts your listener’s attention and makes them want to know more
- Explain the benefit your product gives to people – why they love your experience
- Be passionate. This is your business, be proud to promote it!
- At the end of your pitch, ask for something - do you want their business card, to schedule a meeting or to go into more in-depth training information?

Why are sales calls and staff training essential?

Maintaining regular contact with your distribution partners and providing them with updated product information helps foster strong relationships. Face-to-face sales calls are an excellent way of building rapport.

Remember, distribution partners are like an extension of your sales and marketing force, therefore you need to ensure they are always kept up to date and know how to best sell your product. Once you have established a relationship with the distribution partner and they have begun using your product, you should train and educate their staff so they are able to effectively sell your product.

It is also a good idea to train staff when your product is being featured in any special campaigns or promotions.

When and how often?

Plan a sales call schedule each year as part of your marketing activity, and book appointments well in advance (at least a month).

The number of times you visit on a sales call or training will depend on how much business, current and potential, they generate for you. Speak with the Product Manager, as you will find some companies are more flexible with training than others. Remember, distribution partners are busy people; don't visit them more often than you need to.

For international sales calls, the timing of your visit is also important and this will vary from market to market, so don't just plan around your overseas holiday. When planning individual sales calls in market for the first time, contact your local DMO as they may be able to assist with planning and introductions to key wholesalers and travel agents on your first sales visits.

Always keep in mind that distribution partners, whether in England or overseas, have peak working months or periods where they are on reduced team resources (e.g. around traditional holiday periods). Due to work demands they may have dates that they don't take sales calls visit or only have certain days of the weeks or time slots.

You will also have an opportunity to meet with distribution partners at trade shows, workshops and sales missions that you attend.

What should I consider when planning a sales call & staff training?

- Consider your purpose and who you need to meet with. Always meet with the key product buyer/s to discuss rate contracts and provide updates on your products before training the reservations teams
- Is your product being sold as part of an itinerary? It is often good to conduct training with other complementary products to sell a destination
- How many staff will you be training?
- How much time do you have?
- Allow enough time between meetings for travel (and hiccups) and also for potentially longer meetings than initially planned

What are the 'do's and 'don't's of sales calls and staff training?



DO

- ✓ Make sure you have something new and interesting to discuss or feedback to give
- ✓ Make an appointment and turn up on time – be organised
- ✓ Reconfirm your appointment a few days prior
- ✓ Research the distributor before you call. What markets do they work in? Do they sell a competitor's product or product that is complementary to your own?
- ✓ Make sure you have a basic understanding of cultural differences and local customs even if they are based in England, i.e. if you are visiting an Asian distributor don't be afraid to take a small gift. Research cultural differences and respect them
- ✓ Be flexible – impress your distribution partner by offering to accommodate adjustments in product or booking procedures and offering incentives when necessary to secure their business
- ✓ If possible, provide your distributor with feedback, let them know how much business they have been producing for you
- ✓ Keep your presentation simple, factual and interesting. Include a simple overview of the products you provide using great images, focusing on your unique selling points (what makes your product different from your competitors) and the functional aspects of booking your product
- ✓ Take brochures and any additional relevant sales collateral
- ✓ Consider bringing in morning or afternoon tea
- ✓ Follow up and honour everything committed

In addition, consider creating webinars or pre-prepared content that sales teams can digest in their own time. As there are time pressures on many sales teams, this might be a way to get greater reach if they are able to do this in their own time.



DON'T

- ✗ Visit during busy periods, when major trade shows are being conducted or during product planning
- ✗ Don't arrive unannounced – cold calling is almost never appreciated and likely to prove counter-productive
- ✗ Don't commit to rates or services without keeping a written record

Who else should I contact for sales calls and staff training?

Apart from your distribution partners, always keep your local DMO updated. These organisations are also promoting your products and packages, providing opportunities for e-newsletter inclusions and joint marketing opportunities, and can provide updated information and contacts.

What opportunities can networking offer?

There is often a range of social events held within the tourism industry that provide networking opportunities, which can further support your relationship building and product awareness. Networking can be undertaken at formal events, such as welcome and farewell functions at trade shows or at informal events.

However, don't wait for a trade show to network, as there are plenty of other opportunities. As a start, contact your local DMO who may have a listing of upcoming industry social events.

Even better, offer your venue or product as a networking location – not only will you get to meet industry professionals but you will get to showcase and provide a familiarisation on your product at the same time. People who are in the tourism industry tend to be very social and welcome the opportunity to meet each other.

Understand the purpose of networking & set your goals

To make the most out of networking opportunities you need to understand your goals, such as getting to know people, asking questions, sharing information about your product, building new relationships and further developing existing relationships.

Quality is more important than quantity – don't focus on grabbing as many business cards as you can, rather, focus on building the best relationships you can. Also keep in mind that it's important for you to return the goodwill by giving referrals as well. Supporting and encouraging other businesses may facilitate referrals back to you and provide opportunities for synergies.

By having a pre-prepared list of the questions you want to ask, you will avoid awkward silences and ensure that you gain the information and outcomes related to your goals. Don't be too scripted, be natural, however be mentally prepared with some ideas for discussion. Focus on open-ended questions to ensure the continued flow of conversation.

What further resources are available?

Refer to *Section 13 - How to get the most out of trade shows* for further information on how to conduct the perfect appointment and tips on how to follow up. This information also directly relates to sales calls and staff training and will assist in ensuring successful appointments.





A steam train is chugging through a hazy, mountainous landscape. The train, led by a black steam locomotive, is pulling several red and yellow passenger cars. A large plume of white steam is rising from the locomotive, partially obscuring the sky. The train is moving along a track that curves through a field of tall grass and shrubs. In the background, there are dark, forested hills under a cloudy sky. A small white signal post is visible on the right side of the track.

How to get the most out of trade shows

What are trade shows and why attend?

Trade shows are a forum to meet key industry players and develop or enhance business relationships. They are an excellent opportunity to meet with a large number of targeted clients in the one place at the one time.

Trade shows are held either in person, or virtually, throughout the year, each targeting different audiences and designed to achieve different objectives. They may target specific members of the trade distribution system (wholesalers, tour operators, frontline retail staff), specific market segments (youth, luxury) or particular industries (business events).

Events may be more time and cost effective than conducting individual sales calls, however often your appointment time will be limited. At most trade shows you will need to pre-arrange appointments with trade buyers in order to give a short presentation on your product.

If attending trade events, especially those held overseas, it is a good idea to incorporate individual sales calls, pre or post the event, into the visit. Refer to *Section 12 – Relationships are key* for further information.

Trade shows require an organised and targeted approach, with clearly set goals and committed staff to ensure you meet your trade marketing objectives.

Whichever events you choose, be prepared to commit to participation in the same event for a minimum of three years. The awareness of your product will significantly increase each year, as will your own expertise and knowledge of how to work the show.



For a listing of events see: [visitbritain.org/training-and-events](https://www.visitbritain.org/training-and-events)



Tips for preparing for a trade show

- **Get with the programme** – know the event program inside out to ensure you don't miss out on any opportunities. Understand all the terms and conditions and maximise the process for making pre-scheduled appointments
- **Deadlines** – don't miss any!
- **Booth / appointment space** – obtain accurate information on the dimensions of your booth and its exact location to enable you to plan your display accordingly
- **Order and deliver your marketing materials** – often trade shows have freight partners
- **Prepare to stand out in the crowd!** – Consider a company uniform or brand feature that carries through your attire. See if there is an event dress code
- **Book your travel arrangements well in advance** – often discounted accommodation offers will be available
- **Ensure your booking systems and website are up-to-date** – Consider where the trade show buyers may look for information about your business and products. Is your website the best it could be?

Know what you want to achieve at the trade show

Make sure you set measurable goals such as:

- Making a specific number of new contacts
- Meeting a set number of existing clients
- Gaining competitive information
- Discovering trends in the market place
- Supporting existing trade partners

Develop a strategy to achieve these goals, including ensuring you are well prepared, that you conduct successful meetings and that you follow up after the trade show.

Invest the time in pre-trade show research

- **Ensure you have reviewed your booking system reports** identifying sales by distribution partner and comparing them with the previous year. Clearly identify the partners where you can see growth, and the partners whose sales have declined. This will form the basis of your discussions with existing clients, and also assist with your appointment preferences for the trade show
- **Know in which brochures you are and/or listed online for sale**
- **Review the delegate lists** and identify new partner opportunities
- **Determine how your product may fit within the partner's existing product selection/portfolio**
- **Know as much background information as possible about the partners and the current market conditions**
Refer to *Section 5 – Know your markets*
- **Know where the partner sits in the distribution chain**
Refer to *Section 8 – The travel distribution system*
- **Talk to your reservations and sales teams** to gain specific partner feedback (both positive and negative) that can be addressed in your meetings.
- Overall, **be informed and be knowledgeable** to demonstrate to the partner that you are enthusiastically monitoring their business with you.



Pulteney Bridge, Bath ©VisitBritain/Simon Winnall

Meeting preparation pays off

- **Make contact with distribution partners prior to the trade show via email**, ideally before they select their trade show meeting preference
- **Ensure distribution partners are well versed in your products and have your seasonal contract rates**
- **Maximise the pre-appointment scheduling opportunities** by accurately reviewing the list of distribution partners and ranking your meeting preferences based on your prior research. If available, use online messaging to fill gaps in your appointment schedule
- **Prepare your presentation**, remembering to keep your message short, sharp and measurable. Bullet points work best as they allow you to tailor your presentation during your partner meetings
- **Use visuals to showcase your product and focus on delivering a professional presentation.** Ensure your images are of a high standard and accurately represent your product, proof read your presentation and practice its delivery, keeping in mind different distribution partners
- **Know your destination.** In addition to selling your own product, you are also selling the destination. Ensure you know as much as possible about your region
- Be aware of the **international planning periods.** Each market has a different time of year in which they plan brochures and undertake their marketing. There are also key holiday periods that differ between countries so understanding these is imperative.
Refer to *Section 5 - Know your markets.*
- **Make a great first impression** by being prepared for each individual meeting – have pre-prepared notes specific to each partner
- **Ensure you are prepared to capture key contacts and information** – design an easy to use template to use in each appointment. This can also act as a prompt in discussions
- **Review the products that you are offering and consider tactical offers or product bundling to boost interest in your products**
Refer to *Section 11 - Consider your product.*
- **Consider giving partners a promotional item/gift as a further reminder of your product** - Face to face only



What should I take to trade shows?

- Your delegate name badge that you will receive at registration – otherwise access will not be allowed
- Your appointment schedule – don't miss an opportunity to slot in a key appointment
- Pen / Paper (or electronic device/ required chargers) – don't rely on your memory at trade shows, they are a busy few days
- Business cards (lots) – you can never have too many
- Stationery kit (pens, paper, stapler, staples, scissors)
- Your presentation on an iPad, Laptop or similar
- A reference copy of your marketing material (e.g. brochure)
- Water – replenish frequently!
- Energy boost type snacks for you and your delegates

**Some items above may not apply when attending virtual trade shows*

How do I conduct the perfect appointment?

- **Arrive early and be organised.** Make sure you have everything set up well before your first appointment
- **Know who your client is** before they sit down. Use your research and have a clear outline of the information or questions you need to ask your trade partner, in front of you. Make sure you are fully aware of the different markets and cultural expectations
- **Typically you have 15 minutes** so use the time wisely – listen for 80% and sell for 20%. Make sure there are opportunities for the trade partner to ask questions throughout the meeting. Bear in mind that you might not do business during this meeting, but be prepared to follow up – see below.
- **Pinpoint one truly amazing thing about your product or region and open with that.** Focus on your compelling selling points and what really makes you stand out from competitors
- **Make it relevant and don't deliver a rehearsed spiel.** Use bullet points to allow you to tailor your presentation to each trade partner and their market so it is relevant to them. Partners want to feel that you really want their business, not just that you are repeating the same thing over and over
- **If the trade partner is already sending you business then thank them for it.** Review the sales with them, ask for any customer feedback and update them on changes or new products. Don't be afraid to ask why their sales have increased or decreased
- **Make your product memorable.** Even if the trade partner only walks away with one piece of knowledge, as long as it stays with them, you have succeeded. Remember, you will be providing the partner with detailed information in your follow up
- **Remember to ask questions.** This is your product development opportunity to ensure you are meeting the trade partner's needs and to ask the hard questions. What can you do to improve the business? What are their clients looking for? Are they aware of your product or even the destination?
- **Avoid the use of slang or colloquialisms and be mindful that English may be your trade partners' second language.**
- Use the **correct commission levels** in your discussions. Make sure you understand where they sit in the distribution chain. Refer to *Section 8 - The travel distribution system*.
- **Take notes!** It is perfectly okay to take notes at trade shows – it demonstrates your commitment. You can use your pre-prepared template for this
- **Invite trade partners to experience your product through trade educationals**
- **Don't give out brochures or heavy information packs** – use your follow up to further showcase your product, or consider providing a USB with your information
- **Understand your outcomes.** It is important that you have a clear idea of what you want to achieve from each appointment (remember your goal setting). You should be aiming for leads, awareness and relationships in order to successfully promote your product. Conclude each appointment by summarising your follow up actions and agreed path
- **Seek opportunities for further discussion** – invite the trade partner for a drink or coffee during any free appointments / breaks and or networking opportunities
- **Ensure your booth is attended at all times** – you don't want to miss that great 'passing by' opportunity
- **Review your progress and make any necessary changes to your strategy** – this can be done either during breaks or at the end of the each day



Don't forget the value of networking opportunities

There are often multiple opportunities available during trade shows that allow you to build or consolidate business relationships outside the scheduled business appointments. The organised social functions are prime occasions, as well as breakfast or quick catch-ups in the hotel lobby before the show, or even walking around the trade show floor. For further tips on networking see *Section 12 – Relationships are key*.

The appointment is only as good as the follow up

- **Following up is the most critical component of any trade show.** If you don't have the time to follow up, then consider not participating in the trade show
- **Timing is imperative** - follow up should be done either during or immediately after the trade show
- **Personalise and thank you** – each trade partner should receive an individualised follow up specifically referring to the content of your appointment and always thank the partner for the business and their ongoing support. Use your meeting template to prompt you and personalise your follow up – make reference to your discussions during the trade show
- **Categorise your trade show appointments/ leads in order of priority** and complete your follow up in this order
- **Send all the material and information that you promised as soon as possible**
- **Continue to promote and update** your latest marketing collateral and information online
- **Post trade show planning should include a multiple contact plan** until you meet the buyer again. Keep the buyer updated and focus on strengthening the relationship. Consider using your social media channels, such as Facebook and Twitter to boost your social media activity
- **Ensure your follow up includes all partners in the distribution chain** – if the buyer partners with a local tour operator ensure you also follow up with the tour operator directly as well as the overseas buyer
- **Prepare and distribute training material to buyers** – this extends the reach of your appointment to the front line reservations teams
- **Remember to also follow up with complementary sellers and industry associations** – continue to work together and seek out joint opportunities.
- **Be in regular contact with your DMO** to jointly promote the region and the products offered and to seek out opportunities
- **Be patient** – understand that it takes time to establish a relationship and to be selected for brochure/online inclusion. Some relationships may not come to fruition even within the first year. If not, it's important to stay connected to the buyers, as the opportunity might arise later on
- **Add new contacts to your database and track if business is generated from them.** Keep your buyers updated on their sales achievements
- **Update your teams** on the outcomes of the trade show and any required actions specific to each buyer
- **Measure your trade show success against your pre-set goals.** Consider such questions as what worked, what you could improve on next time, did I meet the right people, what did I learn from others, what did I learn about the competition?

14

Sales missions & overseas representation

“Using insights to the overseas markets, I select those with an interest and propensity to include the palaces in their programmes and excursions. Investing time to meet these potential clients on their own doorstep is highly appreciated and goes a long way to establishing relationships that bear fruit, all being well, for years to come.”

Ann Wilson, Head of Sales, Historic Royal Palaces

What are sales missions and why consider attending?

VisitBritain regularly conducts sales (or trade) missions into key overseas markets. These missions are useful for first time entrants into the market as well as operators already established in the market looking to further develop their business. Visiting the market allows you to present your product to the travel trade. Travelling as part of an organised sales mission allows you to present your product and destination alongside other complementary products to a targeted group of distributors.



For a full list of VisitBritain's sales missions visit

[visitbritain.org/training-and-events/our-proposed-202425-leisure-trade-events-programme](https://www.visitbritain.org/training-and-events/our-proposed-202425-leisure-trade-events-programme)



Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland ©VisitBritain/Yin Sun Photography



Top tips for sales missions

The golden rule for international sales missions is ‘do your homework first’. The more preparation you do, the greater the return on your investment.

During a sales mission the audience will vary from retail travel staff to wholesale or tour operator product managers so make sure you are aware of who you are meeting and tailor your presentation to suit their needs.

The guiding principle in a successful sales mission is not the amount of ground covered or even the number of meetings held. It is in seeing the right people from the right organisations that have an interest in seeing you and the potential to sell your product.

Develop a sales kit for sales calls, sales missions and staff training to include: brochures, product fact sheets, your sales presentation, a collection of images on USB, online tools such as podcasts and video-casts, display banners and posters. When developing your sales kit, keep the look and feel consistent and ensure information is accurate and up to date. Make sure that you have full rights and permissions to the images and video footage that you share (see *Section 17 - Creating engaging content*).

Always check with the host organisation what the format of each event during the sales mission is and what marketing material is required and will be allowed. For example, at some events banner space may not be available, or you may be required to deliver a group presentation rather than having one-to-one appointments so be prepared.

Certain countries have customs not usual to England; observing local courtesies and morals will be highly appreciated by your hosts and significantly enhances your chances of success.

Refer to *Section 6 – Cultural considerations*.

Remember you are travelling with a group and you need to be timely, as per the assigned schedule and mindful of travel etiquette. Consider your luggage, keep it minimal and be well organised.

As with all types of sales activity, follow up is vital. Don’t forget to send a follow up thanking them for their time and include any information that may have been requested.

Refer to *Section 13 – How to get the most out of trade shows* for tips on effective follow up.

What can a General Sales Agent (GSA) or Product Representation Company (PRC) offer?

A general sales agent (GSA) can represent and market your product in key international markets and provide a local booking service for retail agents. It is essential that you consider all channels of distribution and the needs of your business before signing a GSA agreement.

Many businesses choose to appoint an international sales representative or product representation company (PRC) to actively promote their product in their key international markets. However, unlike a GSA, a PRC doesn't provide a booking service.

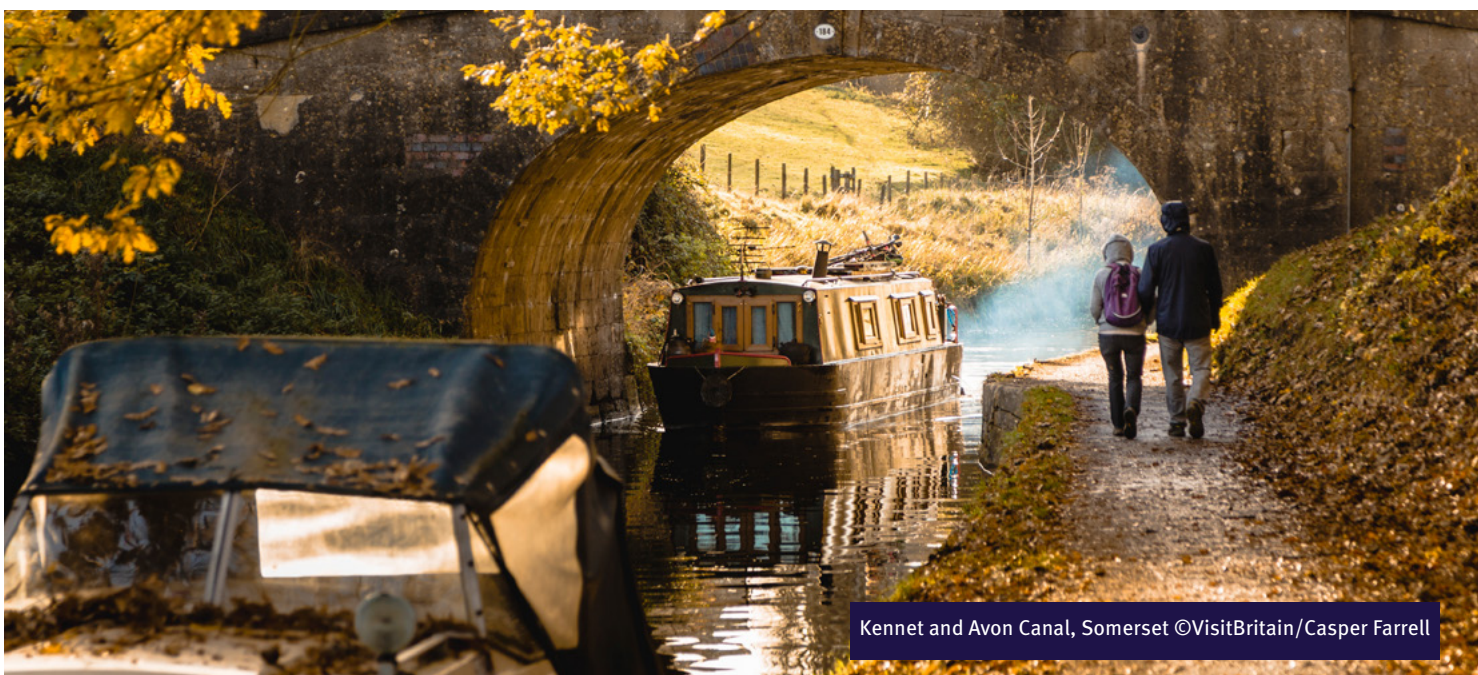
PRCs can:

- Make sales calls to wholesalers and retail agents
- Train wholesale and retail agency staff
- Provide representation at trade and consumer shows in the market
- Give feedback and advice on market trends



Key factors to consider when appointing product representation

- Do they have experience in destination and product-type representation?
- Do they have other clients with English product? Have they represented similar products to yours in the past?
- Do they hold other contracts and are they complementary or competitive?
- Can they provide trade contact records and reports? How will you measure their effectiveness and how will they report on their activities to you?
- Do they have established relationships with the clients that you want to reach?
- What is their reputation in the market? Are they respected by the industry?
- Does the GSA retail products and how will this impact on their ability to sell your product?
- Consider the cost versus the level of business from the market and balance these against the cost and benefit of making calls and attending trade shows yourself



15

Working with the media



The power of publicity – how can I maximise my media exposure?

Generating positive publicity is a vital component in establishing and maintaining your reputation. Publicity can create a powerful media endorsement that acts effectively as a word-of-mouth recommendation. Positive media coverage can assist you in raising awareness of your products and experiences and can lead to direct enquiries and bookings.

Journalists are approached constantly by businesses seeking to attract their attention. So how can you make a journalist take notice of you? How do you achieve publicity?

VisitBritain/VisitEngland's Global Public Relations Team works with all levels of the English tourism industry to generate inspirational publicity about England in the world's print, broadcast and online media. They are also responsible for generating influential word-of-mouth commentary through a range of cutting edge advocacy programs. Their [online media centre](#) provides a wide range of information and resources for those looking for written and visual content relating to England.



Online media centre - [visitbritain.com/gb/en/media](https://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/media)

Media representatives also often attend trade shows looking for story angles, hence you need to be well prepared to respond to both delegate and media enquiries. On some occasions, official media events are held prior to a trade show and are definitely worth participating in, so ensure you always have a media kit prepared.

What is a media kit and what should it include?

A media kit is a pre-packaged set of promotional materials that is distributed to the media for promotional use. It should give media representatives a thorough background on the topic and provide information in various formats.



A media kit in either hard copy or electronic format could include:

- Current media releases
- Fact sheets about your business and products
- A background on your company's history
- Recent awards
- Product biography
- Executive biography
- Latest brochures
- High-resolution images (downloadable – make sure you have full rights and permissions) of products, company logo, key executives etc.
- Media contact information



What is a media release and what should it include?

A media release is a written statement that provides information in a ready to publish form that you provide to a journalist or editor to make an announcement or inform them of something you would like reported. The media release is one of the most fundamental PR tools, but it is easy to get wrong.



Top tips for your media release include:

- Identify key messages and ensure you deliver them early on in the release
- Use lead paragraphs to sell your idea – make sure you include “who, what, where, why and how” in the lead paragraph
- Always use clear, simple language and avoid jargon and acronyms
- Pay attention to grammar, punctuation, capitalisation, spelling out of numbers etc.
- Provide quotes from a credible spokesperson who can be contacted at any time
- Make sure that you have included all the relevant information that the journalist will need to know, such as prices, inclusions, validity for any special offers and your full contact details
- Make it easy for the journalist to understand your story and get in touch with you
- Copy should be written in the third person, i.e., the “he=she” format as in: “he said”
- Have high-res (1MB) pictures readily available (ensure you have full rights)

Often it is a good idea to have both a hard copy presented in a folder as well as an electronic version so it can be emailed to a journalist quickly.

Review your images and video – do they make your product shine?

Photographs and videos can be one of the most effective methods of communicating the true nature of your tourism experience. A really good image can make the difference as to whether your story is published, or even whether a distribution trade partner is interested in working with you.

- **Make sure that all your images are captioned** to explain the content of the photography (including the location); names of people and any copyright issues or photo credits should be clearly indicated. It is important to ensure that you have permission to use any images which are not your own, and that all approvals have been obtained prior to printing (for example, be sure you have signed talent release forms)
- **Avoid using out of date imagery**, in particular with landscapes and people. This is mostly noticeable through style of clothing, hairstyles, vehicles and built environment or infrastructure
- **Most publications will require high resolution images**, a minimum of 300 dpi and around 1MB in size. Often it is best to present these high resolution images to media representatives on a Tablet, or have them in a downloadable format on your website for easy access
- **Make sure you have a selection of interesting, high quality images.** Ensure they are motivational, and that the people in the images bring the experience to life. Investing in a professional photographer can pay off both in terms of publicity via the media and also securing partnerships with trade buyers. Remember, your images tell the story of your product





Maximising educational & familiarisation trips



“Do some research on the companies that you are hosting before they arrive on their familiarisation trip. What works for one company who look after big groups is very different from a company who look after fully independent travellers. Make sure you give agents or buyers the experience their customers would want.”

Rebecca Clay, Marketing Manager, Roman Baths

What are trade educationals and media fam trips?

In the tourism industry, trade and media are key third party proponents of your product and story. Trade educationals and media fam trips provide a taste of what’s on offer by experiencing your product first hand. They are your chance to educate and win over the people who influence consumers in making their holiday decisions.

- **Trade educationals** - includes your distribution partners, for example wholesalers, inbound tour operators; their product buyers and sales teams
- **Media fam trips** - includes journalists and writers for print, broadcast and online media channels

If trade partners and travel writers know your product and like it, they can do a lot to sell it through their respective channels. Building trade and media relationships is an essential part of doing tourism business. After all, your product competes not just on a regional level, but also with tourism destinations and products across the globe. Educationals and fam trips are a relatively low cost way to promote your product to larger networks of trade and media.

Many local LVEPs and DMOs are proactive in organising these trips. VisitBritain/VisitEngland also runs media visits on an ongoing basis, and trade educationals as part of Showcase Britain. You can also build your own programmes and invite delegates directly.



Saltburn-by-the-Sea, North Yorkshire ©VisitBritain/Sabina Trojanova



Tips for hosting a successful educational/familiarisation trip

Before

- If you are approached to participate in a familiarisation trip/educational, find out as much information as you can before committing to host the group. Determine if they are part of your target market and what the benefits of hosting the visit are for your business. Don't be afraid to say no to a request if you don't think that your product is suited to the group.
- Generally, support for these trips is requested free of charge (FOC) or on a comp (complimentary basis), in return for the benefits for your business via the exposure. If you are unable to offer complimentary services you may consider offering a reduced rate. Discuss options with the organiser to try and create a "win win" situation.
- Know their itinerary and obtain contact details – when do they arrive and depart, where the group has been and where they are going, have they experienced a competitor's product?
- Consider the available time and present your product as the customer would experience it
- Be culturally sensitive. Be aware of the cultural sensitivities such as religious dietary requirements, appropriate conduct and greetings. If you aren't sure ask the trip organiser.
- Brief staff, making sure that all staff are aware of the group

During

- Professionalism – be on time, well presented and groomed, offer refreshments if required
- Make sure that participants are welcomed – introduce yourself and exchange business cards
- Ensure the product is at its best
- Outline the programme while at your property or on your tour
- Escort the group during the familiarisation trip and be a gracious host
- Give time and attention to questions and make a note to follow up any requests
- Present an information kit and offer to post information to participants
- Ask the group for feedback on your product

After

- Add the participants to your contact database
- Send a thank you email and follow up any requests for additional information
- Follow any sales lead opportunities presented by the fam visit/ educational
- Keep participants informed of any relevant changes or updates on your product



Leeds Corn Exchange, Leeds ©VisitBritain/Penelope Bielckus

A man in a checkered shirt is pruning a vine in a vineyard. The leaves are yellowing, suggesting autumn. The background shows a fence and more vines. A dark blue speech bubble contains the text.

Creating engaging content

When we talk about content, this includes written information, images and video.

Content is not just the information and images that you distribute via your own online and offline channels, but also that which you distribute via other third parties. Your own channels might include your website, a brochure you produce or your social media channels. By third parties, this might be a blogger featuring your product, or a company with whom you are working in partnership.

Engaging content is:

- Customer centric – identify your customer segments, and their content needs
- Data driven – where you have the information, base your content on what you know works, then measure it and tweak it to ensure that you're always learning. If you don't have this information, then put measures in place to track it.
- Focused on clear objectives and KPIs (key performance indicators) - based on where the consumer is on the decision making journey
- Relevant and timely
- Distributed via the right channels at the right time



Before creating any new content, it is helpful to ask the following:

- What is the role and purpose of this content?
- Who is the audience? What are their needs? How well do they know your product?
- Where does the content sit on the customer journey?
- Is there anything you already have that could be re-used, or edited?
- Is this the best way to achieve the goal?
- Where does this sit in your overall content plans?
- Do you have enough time to produce it?
- Are you best placed to create this content? And to publish this content?
- Which third party channels could utilise your content?
- Who else could/should contribute to this piece?
- Is the content relevant i.e. is it seasonal, timely or news worthy?
- Does the content answer a particular question or query?



What international considerations are there?

Written content

- Consider whether you want to translate your content, and whether you have the budget to do so. It may be that you just translate in certain markets, and that markets where English is widely understood you leave the copy in English. Similarly you may translate your most popular pages
- Consider whether you use a local market url for your website e.g. www.thelittlebarn.fr
- Your tone of voice needs to embody your brand e.g. playful, straight-talking etc. – and remember that this may or may not work so well in foreign languages
- Try to avoid using idioms, as they do not translate well. Word play will also not translate so is best avoided
- Translated content usually leads to a higher word count than the original English copy, and so will take up more space on the page
- Do not assume knowledge. The consumers may not know where a certain place is or who a particular famous person was, so if it is vital information it is best to explain it. Bear in mind that international awareness of England outside of London is generally low
- Consider using a strap-line to help explain your product, if it isn't evident from the name itself e.g. *The Little Barn – Notre petit hotel gastronomique au coeur des Cotswolds*
- Different markets have different language needs. For example, where the French consumer or consumers from the USA are happy with a descriptive approach, German or Dutch consumers prefer reading copy which is more factual and direct
- Rather than getting it translated word for word, consider submitting bullet points to be re-written by a copy writer. This allows for local nuances to be taken into consideration
- Localise keywords rather than translating directly, as it is important to ensure that your keywords correspond to what people are looking for in the local market. Do not leave the keywords in English
- Avoid using superlatives and over descriptive language
- Avoid using Google Translate. If you are not going to translate properly then it is often better to keep the text in English. Most browsers now offer to translate content for you if you wish, so then the decision to translate is the user's. A German user may, for example, just think you are lazy for not translating, but will be actively turned off if they land on a page with a poor Google translation that you have selected. Ideally copy should be translated by a native speaker and then checked by an independent native speaker
- Observe seasonal and date differences e.g. Mothers' Day is on a different date in the USA





Visual content

- Images should be aligned to your brand and have a similar look and feel. An emphasis on experiential images (real people doing real things) works well, and can be used across different content channels
- Consider diversity - ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, and bear in mind your target market
- Remember that in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) images should not show bare arms, legs, alcohol or meat. Content in these markets should also avoid LGBT imagery and themes
- The first three to five seconds of video footage are key – and on mobile there is even less time (as little as 0.25 seconds) to capture people’s imaginations, so make sure that the first few frames are eye-catching and impactful, and don’t start the video solely with a logo or any other graphic
- Many people scroll through videos with the sound turned off, so colour, movement, and subtitles are key
- Visual content almost always needs to be accompanied by permission forms. Whilst images can be used for your own editorial purposes without permission forms, as soon as you use these commercially, then best practice is to ensure you have property / model / artist release forms signed and stored. If you let other people use your images or film then you should ensure they sign a licence agreement so that your visual content is used in a way with which you are in agreement

Visual content – what does good look like?

When considering imagery to use in your activity, it’s best practice to:

- Show natural, happy, diverse, people experiencing England together – couples, small groups of friends, and families - to build a sense of connection and welcome
- Use bright, vibrant, colourful images
- Ensure you own the image or have explicit permission from the photographer and people or places featured



Image credits from left to right, and top to bottom: 1. ©VisitBritain/Mollie Bylett 2. ©VisitBritain/Andrew Pickett 3. ©VisitBritain/Amy Davies 4. © VisitBritain/Ollie Kilvert 5. ©VisitBritain 6. ©VisitBritain/Sam Barker 7. ©VisitBritain/ Rod Edwards 8. ©VisitBritain/Andrew Pickett 9. ©VisitBritain/Craig Derrick 10. ©VisitBritain/Francesca Donovan 11. ©VisitBritain/Luxmy Gopal 12. ©VisitBritain/ Anushka Gupta

Images that are washed out, flat, dull, or that are straight on shots of well-known icons do not work so well for our audiences. It’s best not to filter or over saturate images - keep images as natural as possible so that audiences connect with them.

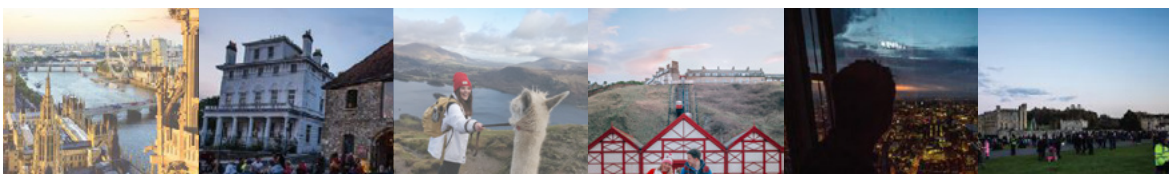


Image credits: ©VisitBritain

What is a content calendar?

If you are working across different international markets, you may find it useful to have a global content calendar. This can be as simple as a table or spreadsheet showing what messages and supporting content you are planning on featuring in your chosen markets across the year.

Using a content calendar will help you coordinate your messaging, and have a joined up approach across your communication channels.

For SEO purposes, seasonal content should be published at least two to three months before it is due to trend.

Your content calendar will depend on your needs, channels and resources but here is a five week snapshot of what it might look like:

INSPIRATION	WEEKS				
	1	2	3	4	5
SEGMENT 1	Easter 'Top chocolate hotspots'				
SEGMENT 2		International Children's Book Day			
EVENTS/HOOK	Easter Sunday April Fool's Day	International Children's Book Day			
SEASONAL TRENDS	Gardens, outdoor activities, spring breaks, summer holiday planning				
SEO				Shakespeare's birthday	
SOCIAL TRENDS	April Fool's Day	World Art Day			Star Wars Day

What content channels are available?

Beyond your own channels, the following channels are examples of platforms to distribute your content:

- Instagram – use for inspiration and amplification
- YouTube – serves video content at all relevant stages in the consumer journey
- Facebook – use for inspiration and trigger
- Website – use for trigger and planning
- X– use for inspiration and trigger
- TikTok - use for inspiration and trigger engagement with like minded communities/ customers
- Email – news and must do information to inspire to book
- Partners/influencers – broaden reach and engagement across the customer journey

Try to ensure that the use of your brand/product name is used consistently across all channels e.g. The Little Barn, should be @TheLittleBarn or @The_Little_Barn – not @LittleBarn or @Littlebarn. Remember that you are operating in a crowded market place, so reinforcement and making it easy for people to find you are really important.

What content channels are available?

SEO:

Google Search Console - search.google.com/search-console

Answer the Public - answerthepublic.com

Backlink Checker - ahrefs.com/backlink-checker

Google Trends - trends.google.co.uk/trends

Content design:

Canva - www.canva.com



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Sales & marketing materials: your brochure



“Having a brochure (online or offline) is a valuable part of our marketing collateral – both direct to consumers but also to B2B contacts. We ensure our marketing materials are targeted to the market, and the end user, and adapt messages, space given to the different properties and images featured accordingly to get the most impact.”

Hayley Stokes, Sales Director, Principal Hotels

Why do you need a brochure?

Consumers commonly research travel and tour options online, however, when tourists are at a destination they still like something they can carry with them and review. On occasions trade partners also like to have a brochure on hand or view in meetings, particularly at trade shows.

Many people collect brochures from the local Tourist Information Centre or their accommodation when they arrive to make their touring decisions.

Trade partners also often refer to online brochures when promoting your product.

You need to ensure that your brochure is an effective piece of marketing that stands out from the crowd. It needs to be fresh and compelling and align with your brand image – what you represent and deliver to your customers.

How will your brochure be distributed?

Before you start to produce the brochure you need to decide whether it will be distributed to consumers, the trade or both – know your target market. You will then need to tailor your brochure message accordingly.

Often distribution decisions will impact your brochure design. Consider where it will be distributed (brochure racks, trade shows, travel agencies) as this will affect the size and layout. Unusual shapes, sizes or layouts are appealing but may limit your display and distribution options. For example, some brochure stands in local visitor centres may be A4 and others may hold brochures in a different format, such as DL.

There are a number of different options available when distributing your brochure to consumers and the trade:



- Many brochure distribution companies will distribute your brochure for a fee within England and overseas
- Contact visitor information centres in your region and in gateway cities to discuss distribution options



What should you consider when producing a brochure?

- **Research** - Undertake research about your customers, your competitors and your budget. Who are your target markets and what will appeal to them? Look at competitor and tourism industry brochures and objectively review the good and bad features. What is your budget to produce and print the brochure? Can you afford to get your brochure professionally designed, or will you be doing it in-house? What is the most common brochure size for your region? Do you want to produce something a bit different, or conform to the norm? Remember, your brochure needs to be practical and fit into a brochure rack
- **Brochure heading & front cover** – Remember that in a brochure rack it is likely that only the top third of your brochure will be visible. Consider if your product will be selected based on your company name, or based on an eye-catching description of your product? This will depend on the strength of your current brand and how well your business name describes your product. For example it may be better to have “Experience the English Coast by Boat” rather than your company name, as this may be more eye catching. Your front cover is the most important part of your brochure as it should inspire customers to select your product over others
- **Written content** - Provide a concise, factual description of your product and your key selling points. Use short sentences and language that’s easy to understand and focuses on the experience. Remember, English might be a second language for some of your customers. Consider having your collateral professionally translated for a specific market should you feel it is worth the return on investment
- **Contact Details** - Ensure there is a clear call to action, include contact details such as physical address, email address, website address and phone and fax number (as appropriate) including international dialling codes
- **Images** - Use quality images that show people enjoying the experience you offer. Images are pictorial language that virtually ‘speak’ to you and conjure up all kinds of thoughts and emotions. Ensure your images are of a high standard and accurately represent your product. Consider using a large photo (like a ‘hero image’) rather than lots of smaller images. Many tourism organisations (e.g. DMOs and VisitBritain/VisitEngland) provide access to their image library (e.g. assets.visitbritain.org)
- **Design elements** - Choose a simple, common and neat font such as Verdana or Tahoma. Use this font throughout the whole brochure – don’t overdo it and mix fonts as this can make your brochure look messy and crowded. Based on your previous distribution decisions select your brochure size. Consider the weight, colour and texture of your brochure, ensuring it will stand up to being displayed in racks
- **Brand image** - Your brochure should align to your brand of how you want to look and feel in the market place. It is what you stand for and your product personality. Brand your product and your supporting marketing material so your customers know and trust what you stand for and deliver
- **Product location** - Use a map to illustrate the location of your product ensuring it is simple and clear

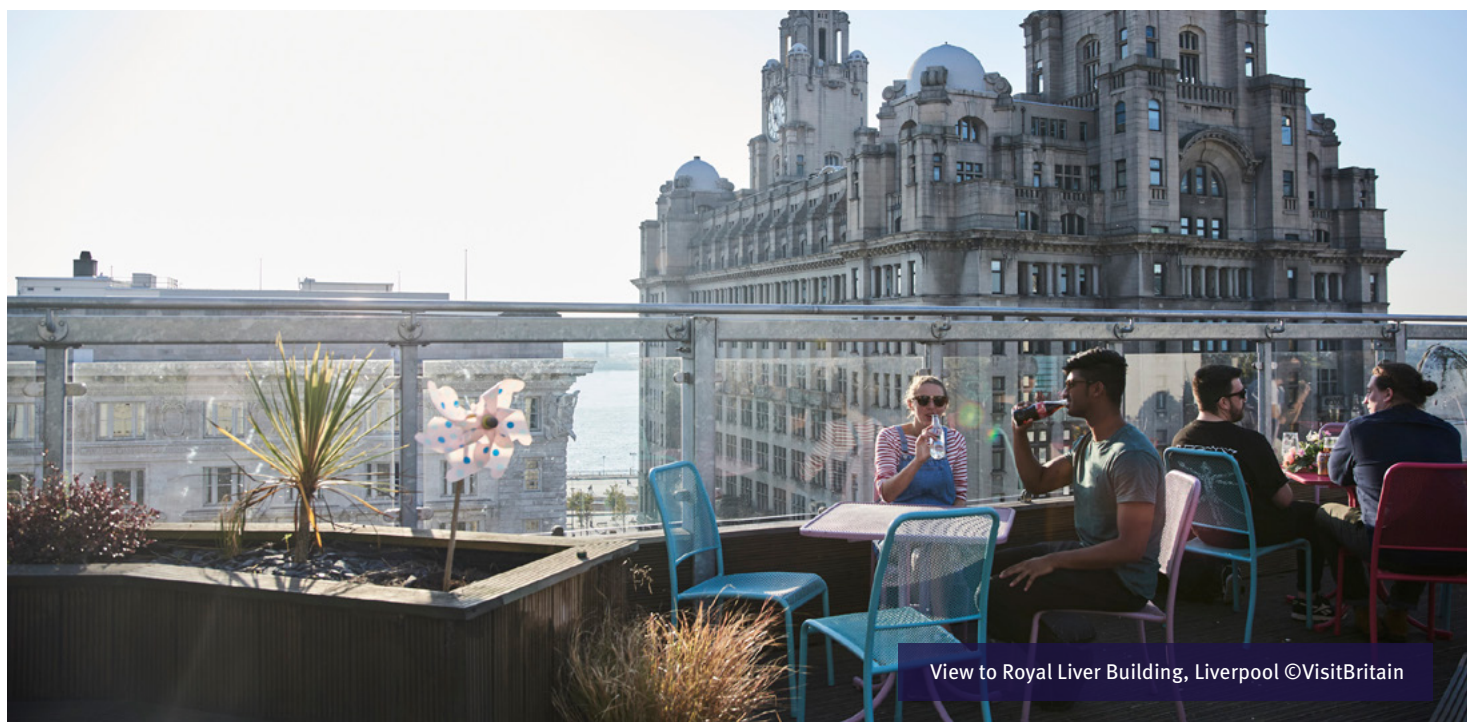
- **Consider if you will include prices** - Pricing details may restrict the shelf life of your brochure. Make sure you clearly state validity dates and any terms and conditions. Consider using inserts for rates or directing consumers to your website for further details. Consider using a “from” price to illustrate a lead in. This can give a longer shelf life to your product and allows for price variations
- **Accreditations, awards & endorsements** - Include these; ensure, however, that the awards are recent
- **Proofread & market test** - make sure that you carefully proofread a draft of the brochure before it goes to print. Perhaps do some market testing of the brochure as your customers may pick up something that you have omitted or that may be confusing or non-appealing. Remember that your brochure can be created as a PDF, and may actually not need printing. This is a way to save on print costs, and will also mean it can live online for distributors to download if they need it

What brochure opportunities can trade distribution partners offer?

Distribution trade partners, such as overseas wholesalers, may offer your business the chance to participate in their brochure, normally for a set fee. The advantage of participating in distribution partner brochures is additional exposure and extended distribution.

The participation cost traditionally covers the production and distribution costs, and is a cost of doing marketing, hence should be considered as part of your marketing plan and activities.

Before committing, ensure you have reviewed the quality of the production (including the overall content), how your product will be promoted and positioned (ensuring you get to review a proof before printing) and the exact distribution locations and quantities. Consider, does this align with your target markets and brand positioning? Also consider what estimates can be made on your return on investment, i.e., review the current level of bookings provided by the partner and jointly assess what additional bookings may result from your participation in their brochure.



View to Royal Liver Building, Liverpool ©VisitBritain

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Digital marketing

“Digital platforms are often the most direct way of speaking to your audience and can provide great value for money when done well. It takes a big time commitment, but the benefits of a strong, personal relationship with your audience are enormous.”

Zoë Rutherford, PR & Communications Manager,
The Cotswold Distilling Company Ltd

What is digital marketing?

Digital marketing (also known as eMarketing, online marketing or internet marketing) is a type of marketing that focuses on the electronic environment and incorporates the following:

- Online advertising
- Search engine marketing and Search engine optimisation
- Social media marketing and user generated content
- Videos, podcasting and videocasting
- The use of mobile phones to search the internet
- Geo search maps
- Website promotions
- Email and viral campaigns



Some of the benefits of promoting your product online include:

- Access to a global audience of potential new customers
- Low cost of entry
- Cost effectiveness compared to traditional forms of marketing
- The ability to measure and analyse results from marketing activities
- Automated processing of enquiries and bookings



For a full digital marketing toolkit see the VisitEngland Business Advice Hub:
visitbritain.org/business-advice/how-market-your-business/digital-marketing-toolkit
visitbritain.org/business-advice/how-market-your-business/get-your-introduction-pr-toolkit

How to market effectively via your website

It is important to maintain an online presence for your product. Your website should reflect the personality of your business and clearly communicate your experience and unique selling proposition (USP) to market your product effectively.



Points to consider when developing your website:

- Ensure the site is quick to load and easy to use
- Secure a domain name that is easy to remember and if possible, keep it simple
- Use a search engine optimisation (SEO) service to improve consumers' ability to find your website
- Provide clear navigation paths and group information in a way that is relevant to consumers
- Use clear and simple copy - consider language barriers
- Provide accurate, high quality and up-to-date information
- Use geo search maps to assist the consumer to find your location
- Set up links to social networking sites
- Use a blog and social media channels
- to develop a two-way rapport with your customers and communicate with them positively and regularly
- Include video, video-casts/podcasts and images on your website
- Show clear validity dates on your rates
- Provide links to your site from major tourism organisations, dedicated travel websites and complementary product sites in your region
- Provide an interactive way for consumers to discuss/review your product – user generated feedback
- Offer simple booking processes and secure payment technology so users feel comfortable entering their payment details

Are you active in social media?

Social media is an umbrella term used to describe online technologies that facilitate interaction and exchange of information online. Social media is an entire online environment built on people's contributions and interactions, connecting groups of people together.

Businesses are using social media as a tool to reach customers and to build or maintain their reputation. As social media continues to grow, the ability to reach more consumers globally has also increased.

One of the greatest benefits of social media is its immediacy – updates provide real time information to anyone interested in your product. For example, smaller and quicker updates that aren't enough for a media or trade release could be used for updating your social media networks. In all instances, social media posts should inspire and contribute to the community, not spam them with unwanted advertisements. Remember on social media channels you are competing against people's family, friends, other brands they like, news organisations etc. It is a crowded world, with there being 4.75 billion posts created on Facebook every day! So make sure what you are putting out there is interesting and something that your audience would actually want to see.

It is also important to be wary of the real possibility social media users may use this platform to complain or discredit your product; a commitment must be made to invest the time required to stay on top of content, as well as customer feedback.

Here are some of the more popular networking sites and ways you can incorporate them into your tourism business:

Facebook

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. With over 2.98 billion active users worldwide, Facebook's fastest growing demographic is the 65 and over age bracket. A free platform, it can be used to provide updates on your product as well as interact with clients and obtain feedback. However, to fully utilise the platform, it is recommended to try and create a budget for promotion and advertising.

If you are a business owner you can set up a dedicated Facebook page that represents your business - this is a place to house all the pertinent information about your company, as well as the more fun, daily updates. You can update information regularly and easily, and the fresher your content, the more you will engage people.

Instagram

Instagram is a media platform that can be used to help grow awareness of your business, attract new customers and build relationships. It's a fun and quirky way to communicate your business offering through a series of pictures, Stories (exist for 24 hours and then disappear) as well as video products, such as Reels (up to 90 second video clips and will remain on your profile). There are a range of filters that can be used to enhance photos and it allows you to share snapshots of your product and region in real-time. It is possibly now the most used social platform in the travel vertical and is the home of travel influencers as well as travel brands.

X (formerly known as Twitter)

X is a popular social networking service. It enables people to send short 280 character messages to Twitter using a web or phone interface. If people are interested in a user's messages (called posts) they may decide to follow this user and therefore be informed every time they write a new post. As a tourism business you can use X to keep up with industry news, build industry contacts, monitor your online reputation and easily share quirky facts and updates about your business in real time.

TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform focused on video content. TikTok currently has over 1.2 billion active users each month. The platform hosts a variety of short to medium length user created videos, with a host of genres such as trends, travel, entertainment and more. Typically videos featured on TikTok range from 15 seconds to 10 minutes and can be used to create content to promote your business and build a relationship with your followers. Hash-tags can be used to attract people who are interested in your product and visiting your local destination. It is great platform to widen your reach.

YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing site with over 2.7 billion active monthly users and is the second largest search engine in the world after Google. You can create quality short videos about your product or tour that showcase the kind of experience that your guests can have. Videos that work best are those that are not overly commercial and show the highlights or quirky parts of your product offering in a captivating and visual way. Use keywords in your video title to help people find your videos through search.

Pinterest

Pinterest is an online virtual pinboard where users can create their own boards and share beautiful images they love such as travel destinations. There are 463 million active Pinterest users, the majority of which are female. You can set up a business page to visually represent your product and/or region by creating your own themed boards and pinning high quality photos from a range of sources.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a business-to-business social networking site with over 930 million users. Users create an account, which allows them to create their own profile with their full work history and connect with other profiles. LinkedIn is great for networking with colleagues and leaders in the tourism industry and for staff recruitment. It is a good idea to create a business page that covers basic information about your business. If your customers spend time on LinkedIn then you are able to spend time building relationships and connecting with people.

Google My Business

Google My Business is a free tool that can help you manage the information that people see when they search Google for your business or the products and services that you offer. It acts as a dashboard for your business online and interacts with others Google tools such as maps, analytics, and Google+ (the social network created by Google).



Social media can vary globally – China case study

It is important to do your research specific to the country you are targeting, as social media channels can vary per country, for example let's look at China.

China has the most internet users in the world and is one of the most engaged countries on social media. One out of five global internet users is from China and over 98% of urban Chinese internet users visit social media sites regularly. Being online in urban China generally means that you use social.

So, not surprisingly the internet has become an extremely influential medium in China – but the Chinese internet is different. Many popular western social media websites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are not available to Chinese internet users due to the “Great Firewall of China” (government internet censorship).

Therefore, local Chinese equivalents of these platforms rule the digital space, and the number of websites and platforms is staggering and growing. Social media, media advocacy and word-of-mouth are becoming more powerful sources of information to assist Chinese travellers with planning and purchasing travel.

England as a destination has a presence on China's social media platforms through the activities of VisitBritain/VisitEngland.

The use of social networking and blogs has implications for the tourism industry and the way that the Chinese consumer searches for information. Reading blogs and forums is becoming more commonplace, and information and reviews on destinations are becoming more accessible, providing Chinese consumers with a way to compare travel options. It is therefore worthwhile considering the use of Chinese social media to promote your business.

Any tourism business looking to reach Chinese consumers needs to leverage the internet and social media landscape in China.



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Building an export plan

“Your export plan is really an international extension to your marketing plan, or business plan. With clear objectives, that can be measured and reviewed at every step, and with realistic timescales, our planning and delivery has been kept on track across our international markets. It’s been a useful document for keeping our whole team on task with activities and messages for different markets.”

Mark Holroyd, Head of Programme, Discover England’s National Parks

Why should I develop an export plan?

By deciding to target international travellers to purchase your tourism product, you are, in effect, exporting your product. The key to success is to match the right product to the right market, providing an optimum return on investment.

A detailed export (or marketing plan) should be developed to provide a blueprint for your marketing activities in exporting your product to each market.

An effective export plan will help evaluate your strengths and weaknesses when entering the export market, when you consider:

- The products that you will export
- Your target markets
- Time-frame
- Marketing strategies

Your plan and all the related activities should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure you continue to receive a return on your investments.



What should my export plan include?

- **Overall business objectives** – what is it that your organisation wants to accomplish?
- **Assessment of the market environment** – what are the factors, internally and externally, that will affect your business and servicing of identified markets?
- **Market identification** – what are the specific markets and segments that are most likely to use your product?
- **Marketing objectives** – are the objectives for each target market measurable, achievable, time-specific, non-ambiguous and flexible?
- **Marketing strategies** – what is the best combination of the four Ps (Product, Price, Place & Promotion) for each of your target markets?
- **Strategic action plan** – what are the actions needed to make your strategies work, who will do it and when?
- **The marketing budget** – how much do you have to spend and how will you allocate the resources?
- **Monitoring and evaluation** – how will you measure the performance of your marketing efforts?

You can use these headings as the template for your plan, and it doesn’t have to be a lengthy document. It should be easy to read and review on a regular basis.

What makes tourism marketing different?

The challenge with tourism marketing is that the principal products are experiences. These are intangibles and much more difficult to market than tangible items such as household appliances. The consumer also needs to travel to the product in order to experience it.

Your tourism marketing message should focus on the whole consumer experience. For the consumer, the travel experience is made up of a number of components including: transportation, accommodation, food, shopping, entertainment, touring and events. It is important to consider this when developing your marketing plan.

What elements does the export plan draw together?

Your marketing budget

There is no rule that specifies how much of your turnover you should allocate to your marketing budget. As a rough guide, most small businesses allocate between 3-10% of their budget to both domestic and international marketing. If possible, it is useful to make comparisons to other similar sized businesses. As domestic tourism is the 'bread and butter' of most tourism operators, most marketing budgets are spent on domestic marketing activities. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly research and plan your targeted international marketing activities to maximise the small portion of your budget allocated to this area.



Points to consider in this analysis should include:

- Understand the growth of inbound tourism markets and current domestic and outbound trends
- Develop a business plan including a 'SWOT' (analysing your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats)
- Understand the various distribution channels to market
- Understand what a distributor can provide to you
- Know what you need to do to be able to work with a distributor
- Understand the steps required to gain distribution
- Set the price for your product to allow for distributor commissions
- Learn how to leverage your product by packaging with other products

Your target markets

Identifying and understanding your target markets should be the foundation of your plan. In order to succeed in the international market, it is important to tailor your business and product to your customer's requirements. By understanding how your region and product might appeal to the international market, you can tailor your product, marketing and promotional activities to attract new business.

The four elements (P's) of marketing – the modern day approach

You may have heard of the four Ps of marketing, being Price, Product, Place (Distribution) and Promotion, as it has been used as an approach to marketing around the world for decades. However, with the rapid growth and influence of the internet, it has changed the way we engage with our customers and the relationships that have developed. This means we still need to focus on these four Ps but consider them in the light that your customer will seem to know everything about your business (or want to), and they will want to research it for themselves, rather than the old model of being told.

Product

Product is the combination of ‘goods and services’ that make up the visitor experience, including the standard of your facilities and equipment, the level of service you provide and the quality of your interpretation. An individual product will make up only part of the total travel experience for a consumer. The complete travel experience includes all the elements that a tourist consumes from the time they leave home until they return. This includes transport, accommodation, meals, attractions and activities. These may be purchased independently by the consumer or bundled into a package for sale by a tour operator, DMC or wholesaler.

Instead of just focusing on your actual product in your marketing, focus on the experience, and the solution that it provides. Often a holiday experience will solve a customer’s problem, such as being overtired, needing to feel refreshed, or needing to learn and try new things. Focus on the features of your product that helps them solve these problems. For example, by joining a walking tour of England’s coastal paths you could experience the healing powers of nature, discover breathtaking scenery that revitalises your spirit, try locally sourced fresh seafood, and meet local craftspeople to gain a first-hand insight into England’s arts and crafts scene.

Price

Your price is the cost to consumers at various points in the distribution chain. It includes the price that consumers pay when they buy direct from you, the commission and net rate structures offered for intermediaries and the rates for children or students. It also includes your booking terms and conditions. A product must be priced consistently, accurately and competitively to be successful in the market place. This requires a clear understanding of each individual cost component, including commissions and their impact on the total price of the product. For further information refer to *Section 10 - Pricing: it’s all about balance*.

However, in your marketing plan and activities don’t just focus on price, rather, focus on value. Consumers aren’t analysing your price in relation to your production costs and your profit margins. They will be concerned about price, but it relates to how much value they perceive the experience to have. Therefore, in your plan and marketing messages articulate the benefits of your product relative to your prices.

Place (Distribution)

Distribution is the vital link between your product and the consumer. A distribution strategy considers the ‘place’ your product is sold and the range of different ways a consumer may make a purchase decision. International consumers may buy a wholesale package from a local travel agent before they leave home, or book at their hotel’s tour desk following their arrival. The booking may be channelled through a tour operator or conference organiser. Consumers may have found your product on the internet, in a guide book or received a recommendation from a friend via a social media site.

Less independent travellers are far more likely to go through traditional travel distribution channels. More experienced travellers might organise the bulk of their arrangements once they arrive in England. Therefore, do not overlook distribution points such as tourist information centres, and hotel concierges that your target consumers may approach and factor these into your business and marketing planning. Customers also want to know that your business is accessible, for example, knowing how available you and your team are should something go wrong or need changing. They want to know and see demonstrated that your company is responding to feedback.

Promotion

Traditional ways of promotion were limited to 'interruption marketing' whereby the business told the consumer what to believe. Today we need to think entirely differently as the business has the opportunity to be involved at each point in the evaluation and purchase cycle, and the customer wants to make up their own mind. Therefore, the way you outline your promotion strategy needs to consider all the steps in the purchase cycle, what promotional activities you can do along the way that is a combination of activities to cost effectively reach your target market and get them to convert to a sale. For example, ensuring that your company ranks high on an Internet search for research gathering, to featuring often in travel articles. That is, to provide the information as well as the third party endorsement so that the consumer can make up their own mind.

i The promotional mix usually comprises a combination of the following:

- **Advertising** – print, broadcast, direct mail and the internet
- **Public Relations** – media release, media kits, press conferences, media familiarisation trips, interviews and speeches
- **Personal Selling** – trade and consumer events, sales calls, sales missions and staff training
- **Sales Promotions** – competitions and sales incentives
- **Digital marketing** – Online advertising, search engine marketing and optimisation, social networking and user generated content, videos, podcasting etc.






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Tourism talk: acronyms & glossary



You may have noticed that tourism language is very acronym-heavy! Here are some of the more common tourism acronyms and terms to help you:

ABTA	Association of British Travel Agents	GIT	Group inclusive traveller
BIM	Britain & Ireland Marketplace	GSA	General sales agent
BT	Business tourism (Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions)	IATA	International Air Transport Association
CRS	Computerised reservations system	ICCA	International Congress and Convention Association
CVB	Convention and visitors bureau	ITB	Internationale Tourismus-Börse held every in March in Berlin
DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport	ITO	Inbound tour operator
DDP	Destination Development Partnerships	IPS	International Passenger Survey
DMC	Destination management company	LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
DMO	Destination marketing organisation	LVEP	Local Visitor Economy Partnership
DMP	Destination management plan	MICE	Meetings, incentives, conferences and events
ETOA	European Tour Operator Association	NTO	National Tourist Organisation
FIT	Fully independent traveller	ONS	Office for National Statistics
FOC	Free of charge	OTA	Online travel agent
GALTA	Gay and Lesbian Travel Association	PAX	Passengers
GDS	Global distribution system (same as a CRS) e.g. used by airlines	PR	Public Relations
		UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
		USP	Unique selling proposition
		VFR	Visiting friends and relatives
		WTM	World Travel Market

Tourism glossary

Agent

A person or company that sells your product on your behalf, including ITOs, wholesalers and retail agents

Aggregator

A website that search for deals across multiple websites and shows you the results in one place

Allotment

A pre-negotiated number of seats/rooms/vehicles held by a wholesaler or inbound tour operator for sale

Business tourism

Incorporates visitors travelling for conventions, conferences, seminars, workshops, symposiums, incentives, exhibitions and special events

Commission

The fee paid to agents for them to market, distribute and sell your product

Co-operative advertising

Advertising funded by two or more partners

Distressed inventory

Product whose potential to be sold at a normal cost will soon pass

Distribution

The channels or places through which a consumer may purchase your product

Ecotourism

Ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation

Export tourism

International tourist traffic coming into a country, with foreign currency contributing to the export economy

Educational visits

Hosted trips which provide the opportunity to experience your product first hand and improve attendee product knowledge

Free sell

A room, seat or vehicle provided by an operator to a wholesaler or inbound tour operator in unrestricted quantities until otherwise indicated, so a booking may be confirmed immediately to a client

Frontline staff

The agents that deal directly with consumers including retail agents and reservations staff

Fully independent travellers (FIT)

Travellers who plan their own travel arrangements. There are a number of types of FIT including visiting friends and relatives, and partially packaged travel

Gateway

A major air, land or sea entry point to a region or country

General sales agent

Offer representation and marketing of your product in international markets. They may also provide a booking service

Gross rate

The price that consumers pay for your product. Also retail rate, rack rate or door rate

Group inclusive travellers (GIT)

Travellers who purchase the bulk of their holiday arrangements before leaving home, also referred to as package travellers

Inbound tourism

International tourist traffic coming into a country. Also referred to as export tourism

Incentive travel

Incentive travel is a trip offered as a prize or reward, for top performing employees or sales agents

Industry

All businesses that are involved in tourism including distribution agents and product suppliers

Intermediary

Any dealer who acts as a link in the chain of distribution between a product and its customers. In the tourism industry, travel agents, tour operators etc. are considered the intermediaries (distributors)

Long haul travel

International travel to a destination, generally more than 5 hours from the point of origin, i.e. England is a long haul destination for travellers from USA and Australia

Meeting and incentive planners

Organise and manage all aspects of meetings, incentives and events

Net rate

The gross rate less the commission amount. The amount that you receive from the agent

Online distribution

Using the internet and web portals to distribute or promote your product to consumers

Online travel agent

Allows consumers to check live availability and pricing then book travel products in real time through the OTA website

Operator

The owner and/or manager of the tourism product

Outbound tourism

Residents travelling out of their country to an international destination

Product manager

Responsible for identifying and selecting the products and suppliers that a tour operator or wholesaler will sell

Retail travel agent

The link to the consumer, retail agents allow travellers to book travel products either through a wholesaler, a tour operator, or direct with the supplier

Sales calls

Face to face meetings with agents. Purposes may include; to update and educate them on your product, negotiate inclusion in their programs, negotiate rates etc.

Short haul travel

International travel to a destination, generally less than a few hours from the point of origin, i.e. England is a short haul destination for travellers from France, Germany etc.

Tour operator

An agent that specialises in developing programs and itineraries for distributors

Trade shows

Events held both in England and overseas which act as a forum for product suppliers to meet with agents

Travel distribution system

A global network of independent businesses which allow international consumers to research and book travel

Travel trade

A collective term for the agents that make up the distribution system, including tour operators, wholesalers, retail and online agents

Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)

Visitors whose main purpose is to visit with friends and relatives

Wholesaler

Contract supplier product. They are B2B and act as a silent partner. They will sell these products via travel agents, tour operators, coach operators and other third parties

A person in a red and black paragliding suit is seen from behind, suspended in the air. The background features a vast landscape with rolling green hills, a valley with small settlements, and distant mountains with patches of snow under a clear blue sky. Numerous colorful lines from the paraglider's harness are visible against the sky.

Final checklist: your ultimate list of key considerations



Congratulations on making your way through this inbound tourism toolkit. It can be a daunting decision to enter in to, or target more international business for your tourism product.

So when is a tourism business considered ‘international ready’?

Tick all of the following on the checklist, and you will be ready to not only welcome international visitors, but also maximise international business opportunities for your organisation.

- Is your business already well established in the domestic market with a network of diverse distribution partners?
- Can you identify your unique selling proposition and also align this with particular target markets?
- Can you provide a consistent quality of service, product/experience?
- Do you have booking mechanisms in place for international markets?
- Does your rate structure and accounting system comply with distribution partners?
- Do you understand and recognise the importance of the international distribution system?
- Do you understand the concept of pricing in the international marketplace?
- Are you familiar with the appropriate commission levels and which distribution partners to offer net rates and which require a commission payment?
- Do you keep in regular contact with your distribution partners both locally and overseas?
- Do you invest in relationship building with your distribution partners whether that be through trade shows, sales missions, sales calls or networking events?
- Do you understand online distribution channels both B2B and B2C?
- Do you research and understand the current visitor statistics for your region?
- Do you understand where consumers can source information about your product and invest appropriately in digital marketing?
- Do you have appropriate collateral materials for your clients, both through the distribution networks and for the consumers themselves that is informative, targeted and culturally sensitive?
- Have you researched international markets to establish where your product fits?
- Do you understand culturally-influenced needs of specific international markets?
- Are you willing to invest in educational programs both for trade and media to showcase your product/experience accordingly?
- Do you work collaboratively with other tourism businesses in your area to maximise the marketing and sales opportunities that working together can provide?
- Have you explored how you can work cooperatively with your local DMO and VisitBritain/VisitEngland?
- Do you have an export plan which can help plan and measure success?



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