

Grow Revenue, Loyalty & Footfall

The Essential Guide For Visitor Attractions

Written by Lee Drew

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This book is dedicated to
**All the visitor attractions we've worked with
over the years and to those ones we'll work
with in the future.**

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Introduction.

About this book

During my career I've been lucky to work with some brilliant attraction owners and operators that have a **passion for providing outstanding guest experiences**. The overwhelming enthusiasm I get from virtually everyone I meet in our industry, whether they are a brand-new attraction or nationwide favourite, is that they want to create an **amazing experience** their **visitors will love**. Whilst that is an incredible goal, it of course comes with the everyday challenges of bringing people through your doors, creating a loyal visitor base, and ensuring you make enough money to keep telling your story in the future! In the next 41 chapters we've shared with you a wealth of knowledge that will enable you to get those elements right, all of which have come from the wonderful attractions I've worked with over the years, as well as my knowledgeable colleagues at VisiSoft.

I have never worked in an industry before where everyone is so willing to share knowledge and give advice to others, the way visitors attractions do. There is no other industry like it. So, this is me sharing my ideas in the hope it can aid others. Within the book I'm certain you'll find ideas that will help you improve what you do brilliantly already as well as helping you to tackle some of your more difficult challenges.

I hope you enjoy, and I look forward to seeing your attraction grow in the future.



Lee Drew

Simplify Your Ticket Buying Process.

Think about your website. How easy is the ticket buying process? Is it simple to do? Have you tried it yourself?

Visitors are on your website, they want to book tickets and come to your attraction. They're ready to buy. But your ticket buying process is clunky, long winded and confusing.

If this is you, you could still lose customers. Make sure your online checkout process is simple.

This is the first step on your journey to grow revenue, loyalty and footfall.

Copy the pros

When you buy anything on the internet, you'll notice common themes pop up in the checkout process. We all know who does it best... Amazon.

Amazon's checkout process does exactly what it needs to: it gets people from basket to completed purchase in the quickest time possible. Plus, the ease of use guarantees you'll come back for more.

Many ecommerce sites use the same principles as Amazon and it applies to buying tickets too. Ultimately, a ticket sale on your site is an ecommerce sale so you need to follow the same process.

If it's good enough for Amazon, it should be good enough for you. The process needs to remain simple and direct.

Give clear directions

A lot of attractions offer different tickets for different age categories, or different parts of their attraction.

When you do have so many different ticket types, the key is to make it obvious what the customer is buying. But we'll come on to how confusing this can be in the next couple of chapters.

Send the user to the right place straight away. For example, if they're coming from a Facebook advert, take them straight to the event you're advertising, rather than the very start of the ticket buying journey. It saves clicks.

Keep your written text clear and concise.

Make it obvious what personal details you're asking for. Do you want a billing address or shipping address, or both? Is there an easy way to use the same address and will it save that information for quicker entry next time?

If you've got options for advertising and communications, make it clear what people are opting in or out of. There's nothing worse than trying to figure out whether to tick the box or not.

Keep it simple

But most importantly, keep it simple. **A lot of checkout processes are overcrowded with too many form fields and pesky pop-ups.** You're asking too much of the customer. Decision fatigue is a real thing.

If people can't make a decision, they're likely to avoid the decision altogether. According to Medical News Today, "The psychological effects of decision fatigue can vary, potentially leading to avoidance behaviours."¹

When you're asking for money, you need to make clicking 'pay now' the easiest decision they've made that day.

Be sure to wait until **after** the purchase to ask for anything else, such as signing up to a newsletter. Even better, wait until after they've visited the attraction and have an invested interest to further secure their loyalty.

Test it yourself

How many clicks does it take to buy a ticket on your website?

We're guessing you probably haven't bought a ticket from your own site recently. But it's worth knowing how many clicks it takes.

Can they confirm the item, address, membership options (if needed), payment details and make the purchase all on one page? Really, the only thing you need another page for is a clear and obvious completion message.

(It's worth including something here that lets them know the important information has been emailed across and they can close the tab without losing anything!)

Don't prioritise style over substance. Yes, you want your checkout to look secure and professional but beyond that customers don't care about the visuals at this point. If the process takes too long, they'll ditch their shopping trolley and head elsewhere.

50% of shoppers are less likely to buy if the checkout process takes longer than 30 seconds². You can reduce checkout time by saving customer information, having quick loading times (which comes from good software), allowing autofill and limiting the number of form fields.

Make your checkout process quick and seamless for a higher conversion rate.

Use Signposting to Sell More Tickets on Your Website

The main purpose of your website is to sell tickets.

Sure, it does other things too, like giving directions or contact phone numbers. But your attraction doesn't exist without people buying tickets and visiting you. The best place to get those customers to buy tickets is on your website.

Make booking tickets easy, by pointing website visitors in the right direction. This is called signposting.

Turn website visitors into actual visitors

The internet is a busy place. With so much competing for our attention, website visitors aren't going to be around for long. You've got a short window to turn them into ticket buyers.

Your website conversion rate (the number of visitors who buy a ticket of your website/the total number of visitors to your website, typically expressed as a percentage) is dependent on good signposting.

Conversion rates are usually between 2% to 10% depending on the industry³. But that's from websites that are already popular. There's every chance yours is lower.

Increase conversion rates by putting 'book now' or 'buy tickets' buttons or CTAs in strategic places.

Place buttons strategically

Having a 'BOOK TICKETS' button in your header is essential. It's usually the first thing people will see, and it should be visible on all pages.

Far too often we see attractions falling at this first hurdle. Good signposting reduces confusion and will increase your clicks.

Clicks = sales.

The next best place to put buttons is where people are already hanging out. Use your popular pages to increase click to converting pages. *Note - If you don't know what pages get the most traffic, your marketing team or agency will be able to tell you.*

For example, let's say one of your most popular pages is a 'What's On' page. People are planning their day out and want to know what events are happening. While they're there, grab hold of that interest and tell them! Displaying information and event ticket prices clearly will increase your clicks and ultimately ticket sales.

Add a button at the bottom of the page saying, "Don't miss out and book today".

Make it pop

If you're going to have buttons, make sure people can see them!

A lot of people will be visiting your website on a mobile device. **At least 63% of Google's organic search traffic comes from mobile devices⁴**. The best way to make sure every single visitor can access your website is to ensure your site is mobile friendly. (Don't worry, there's more on making your process mobile first in Chapter 10.)

That's not just designing your website for mobile users either, it's also making sure key buttons such as 'Book Tickets' are easy to click and the journey to making the sale is well signposted.

We know that 10mm x10mm is a good benchmark for button size⁵. Plus, Red, Green, or Blue are the best colours to use if you want people to click. It's scientifically proven that these colours communicate importance, reassurance, and integrity⁶.

Everything you should want someone to feel when they spend money online.

That doesn't mean you can't incorporate your brand. You can still get creative and have some fun with the design. For example, if you're a historical attraction, why not make the 'book tickets' look like an old-fashioned ticket?

The point here is to **make those key converting buttons stand out** and pop against everything else on the website to signpost your users to convert.

P.S. This may require some help

This is all part of good user experience (also referred to as UX) design, so you may need some help from the pros. Trust us when we say, it will be worth it.

A ticketing system doesn't have to replace your main website, and this should always be the main place they go for things like info on up-coming events. Simply customise the buttons on your website to take customers to the correct page on your ticketing site, don't make them start from your ticketing home page when they are trying to book for Fireworks Night!

Getting the basics right will mean you don't miss out on potential conversions because visitors couldn't find where to book tickets.

No More Than 6 Types of Memberships

Don't overdo it. Too many options put people off.

Memberships are a great way of retaining loyal visitors. And they usually make a lot of sense to the visitor when you consider added discounts and other benefits, they receive from your membership scheme.

But you don't want to overwhelm them with choice. Too many options and bundles for 'types' of membership available at your attraction will just get confusing and will cause people to disengage or not bother.

If someone is looking to purchase a membership, then your marketing and web team have done their job to convince them that's the right choice. Getting a user to a point where they have decided to buy is hard enough as memberships usually have a higher value.

The job of your ticketing system is to get that sale over the line by making it obvious what memberships are available and signposting which one is most relevant to them.

The title of this chapter is 'No more than 6 types of memberships'. *You might think it's an odd title* – but it does what it says on the tin.

Far too often we have seen a whole host of membership deals and options available, with some attractions offering up to 20 different combinations and membership bundles.

Put yourself in your visitors' shoes **and think**. How many different types of membership do I actually need to offer?

We say 6. Hence the title of the chapter.

Here's why...

Break it down to your core audience types and the tickets you're most likely to sell. They will be along the lines of:

- Adult
- Child
- Senior
- Student/Concession

You may also have special memberships for Armed Forces and Blue Light card holders or a type of ticket specific to your attraction.

Unfortunately, the standard family passes are not popular anymore. Family dynamics have changed, and the traditional 2 adults and 2 children passes just aren't applicable to as many people.

Rather than trying to accommodate every family type...*thus the list of over 20 combinations and options*, keep your memberships simple and offer a fair discounted rate per ticket type and be more inclusive of a broad range of people. Too much choice is confusing and won't win you any brownie points with visitors.

Don't Ask Pointless Questions During Checkout

The buying process is made up of adding to cart or basket, checkout (filling in details) and payment. Each step should be streamlined and easy to do for your customers.

The checkout process should be quick.

To speed it up, limit the number of questions you ask the customer.

Form filling is no one's idea of fun. And if you're asking for their life story you might lose them before they've clicked pay.

If a visitor buys a ticket at your attraction's admissions gate, your team will usually make the sale without asking endless questions about ages, dates of birth, address. So why do you ask so many questions in your online sales process?

Don't make the mistake of asking too much online.

Having an email address is helpful, we'll admit. It opens a new marketing channel that could come in handy, plus it allows for their ticket and email confirmation to be sent through to them.

But do you really need their phone number, date of birth, children's names etc. to be a required field for day visitors?

Some people will leave the checkout process altogether if it requires entering their phone number⁷, especially when there's no explanation for why this information is needed.

If you can send their ticket across via email and have a way of contacting the customer, you have enough information.

It's all about trust.

Being seen as trustworthy is huge for your attraction. It will increase the chances of a visitor returning, or upgrading to become a member, and even recommending you to someone else⁸.

Bringing down the number of form fields not only speeds up the online checkout process, but you're also leaving them with a quick and pleasant experience which sets the standard for their visit on site.

We challenge you to test it yourself. When deciding whether to capture certain data, really consider what you need it for. If it's interesting to know or just confirms something you already knew then what's the point? Will it drive actual change in your attraction? Will it allow you to behave differently to improve service? Increase revenue or cut costs? If no, then don't capture it.

There is of course a slight caveat to this; you'll need payment details and billing information. Plus, if you're collecting Gift Aid donations you may need some more information to be HMRC compliant. But if that's the case, they'll be expecting to provide it.

You just need to make it clear why you're asking for that information.

And if they've given you permission to use their email for marketing, you better make the most of it! Effectively (and respectfully) get in touch with offers, news and events. More on email marketing later.

Sell By Ticket Type or Event

Different types of visitors are looking for different types of tickets, so offer them the choice.

Make it clear what's available and create simple pathways for them to get what they're after. Filtering your tickets by 'type' or by 'event' is the best way of getting your visitors where they want to be as quickly as possible.

Make the choice simple

Website visitors could be locals who know the attraction well, returning visitors or they could be holiday makers visiting for the first time.

To cover all bases. Assume everyone is in this last camp and make checkout as simple and seamless as possible.

Give them **the option to book by ticket type or event.**

Maybe someone's interested in a specific event and only wants to book that (in which case they're probably not interested in your annual pass), so show them where to click.

Use a calendar

A lot of visitors are going to be planning their holiday or weekend activity around certain dates, so having a live calendar with all your events, available ticket types and opening times info is essential.

By allowing a visitor to select a day on the calendar that they plan to visit, you can then display all the available ticket types for that day and any additional events happening.

Using a calendar to allow them to book on a specific day also means they can rest easy knowing they've secured a spot for that day.

It's amazing the power of a good calendar to take the stress out of booking tickets!

There are benefits for you too

(Other than the convenient checkout leading to more revenue, of course.)

By getting customers to pre-book tickets and specific events, you can **see when things are going to be busy and plan staffing and resource requirements ahead of time.**

Plus, you get a better idea of what's popular and what isn't, so you can constantly improve and tailor your offering to visitor demand.

Create A Sense of Urgency with Traffic Lights

Use a traffic light system on your calendar. Set each date to appear either green, amber, or red, depending on how close to capacity you are on that day.

This creates a sense of urgency **and** provides social proof (the idea that if everyone else is doing something, you should too) – this results in a double whammy of sales and marketing goodness.

Here's why urgency is important:

Making your attraction look busy

We've all been there. You're thinking about buying a [fill in the blank] online, but you hesitate. 'I'll wait a bit' you think. The tab sits open for days gathering dust before you forget why it was open in the first place and close it.

For an attraction selling tickets that's not good news.

If the customer sees that spaces are going fast and capacity is limited, they're much more likely to make a snap decision. This is creating a sense of urgency and, according to psychology, one of the best ways to do this is by using colours, in particular, red ⁹.

Red is used all over the internet ¹⁰ in ecommerce to capture people's attention and get you to click. The other two traffic light colours can also be used to communicate a message.

Indicate your capacity using the same idea.

- **Red** dates mean, 'we're full, so you'll have to pick another date!'
- **Amber** dates mean, 'you've got a bit of time, but don't hang about.'
- **Green** dates show there's plenty of space left.

Some people may want to go on a date that's quieter, in which case green would be more appealing, so it's important they have this information available.

You'll probably know which dates in the year will be amber and red dates as they will be school holidays and events seasons. Make sure visitors know how popular you are by setting up your calendar to change colour when a certain number of visitors is reached.

(Don't make the numbers too high – the point is to get more people to book after all!)

Social proof is powerful

Using this calendar system also creates social proof. Social proof today is usually a form of endorsement in a service, product, or attraction from other users.

We rely on it more than ever with user ratings and reviews, influencer endorsements, and a brand's online popularity all playing a huge role in that brand's success.

So powerful is social proof that in one survey, 88% of consumers said they trusted user reviews as much as personal recommendations ¹¹. We know that from popularity of Tripadvisor reviews too.

How busy something is, can also be a form of social proof. If an attraction is busy, then it must be worth going to, right? By having that amber date on your calendar, you're essentially saying "you don't want to miss out on this. Book now." And therefore driving the user to convert.