

# The Coronavirus - things for tourism businesses in Ireland to think about

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## A Thought Document from Glance Promotions

### Context

COVID-19 is having, and will have, a massive impact on every aspect of society.

The travel world has already changed, and we are entering a period which many are calling the 'New Normal'. It is not going to last forever, but it will be a while before we get back to where we were in 2019.

Therefore, for when travel gradually resumes, you need to think about how it's likely to impact your business and how you might need to do things differently.

### Things to think about

- Plan on the basis that this is likely to be a marathon, not a sprint. It could take a few years for international travel to be back to 2019 levels, but the domestic market will recover more quickly.
- Until the coronavirus is eradicated or more fully controlled, there may be occasional outbreaks that require some restrictive measures. Consider how you structure your business to be able to come through these periods should they occur.
- Most businesses in a crisis will look at cutbacks, as they should. This can include reducing staffing levels and costs,

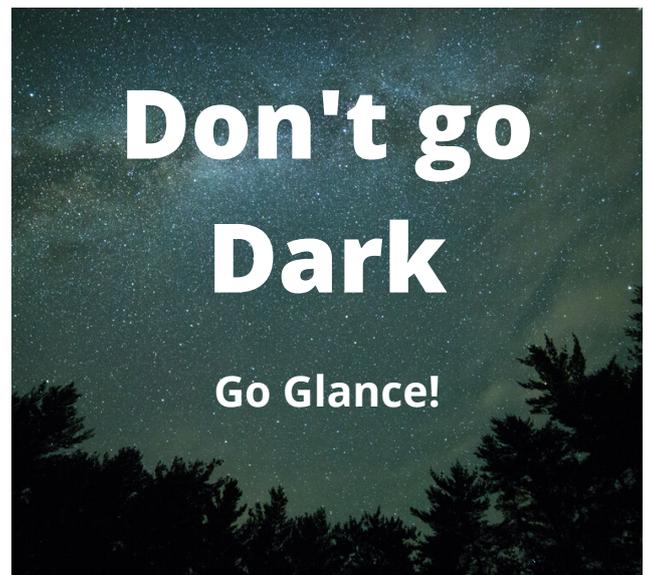
operational costs, and promotional costs. However, if you are cutting back, take care that you don't cut too deeply in a way that negatively impacts the visitor experience, or that means you cannot quickly respond to any upturn in business.

- Assume Social Distancing is going to be a feature of the 'New Normal' - for as long as people don't feel safe. Even if it is not being imposed, it will be front of mind for most. Visitors won't like crowds. How might this affect your business, and what can you do to mitigate against it? For example, if you are an attraction, can you manage the attendance flows better using online ticketing? Are there congestion points within the journey through your attraction that need to be addressed? If you have events, do you 'thin' the attendance and cap it at less than the capacity, so people feel safer?
- When business resumes, it will be a gradual build, beginning with the domestic market. Think about how you can attract more domestic visitors.
- When travel begins again, it is more likely to be non-group visitors who lead the way (families, partners, friends, solo travellers). Think about how you might encourage

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more to visit and buy from you.

- More visitors are likely to arrive by car than by coach. Think about that. How to attract them, cater to them, and avoid over-crowding.
- 'Don't go Dark'. Keep your promotional profile as high as you can afford to, but save by avoiding purely speculative marketing. Cutting back on marketing is often a false economy. There may be fewer visitors about, but you are likely to want to get a greater share of these visitors to visit or buy.
- Importantly, you should 'fish where the fish' are. Targeting the domestic market and visitors who are already in Ireland - makes excellent sense. 'In-destination' marketing will be increasingly important during the next year or two.
- Watch out for 'new' promoters poised to try and capitalise on the vulnerability of businesses by presenting opportunities to promote to visitors through both print publications and online channels. They are likely to be quoting very low participation rates and claiming large audiences for your message. If these offers present as too good to be true, it's probably because they are.
- Think about how you might stimulate business. Perhaps you could offer a small discount or have some creative 'packages' to encourage attendance at particular times or to encourage online bookings. However, there is no need for silly pricing. If someone doesn't want to visit, for whatever reason, a deep discount isn't going to make them want to. You are going to need the revenue to sustain you.
- In the Chinese language, the word "crisis" is composed of two characters, one representing danger and the other, opportunity. There may be few opportunities in the short term, but think about it. For instance, 'open space' and 'fresh air' infers greater social distancing. If you are lucky enough be able to offer the great outdoors as a feature of your attraction, highlight it and look at how you can bring the outdoor dimension more into play - both in practice and within your promotions.



- Think about how to re-position to address likely shifts in your business mix. If you think one segment of your business is going to be particularly affected in the immediate future, think of how to grow the other segments. For instance, it is highly likely group business will be down for a while, so what can you do to boost individual business? Perhaps you could offer enhanced self-guided tours (with walk-around sheets) or guided or part-guided tours with smaller numbers on each tour.
- People are going to have a heightened awareness of hygiene, with safety, cleanliness, and sanitation top of mind. Think about how you can improve this aspect of your business and help reassure visitors by your actions.

Finally, this pandemic will end. No one knows the timeline for sure, but travel will return because it is in our nature. At this moment, teams of scientists from all over the world are working to combat the coronavirus. As one commentator pointed out, *'There has never been more human ingenuity devoted to a single scientific problem than the one we're facing right now.'*

**Glance Promotions** are **in-destination** marketers. This means we DON'T communicate with visitors NOT visiting Ireland. We DO communicate with domestic and overseas visitors, **already in Ireland**, when they are looking at what to do next – to visit attractions, to take in a tour, to enjoy entertainment or dining out, or to participate in activities and great experiences. We can reach them through our Brochure Displays, GuideMaps, 'Your Daily Adventure', and various digital platforms.

**What can we do for you?**

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