Tourism Opportunity

A manifesto for growing tourism and jobs

January 2016

Ibec

itic

Leading our tourism industry

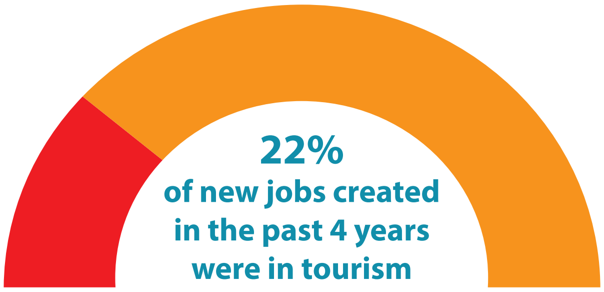
Message from ITIC Chairman, Paul Gallagher

Tourism is one of Ireland's largest industries and it makes a massive contribution to our economic prosperity. Currently, the industry is worth €7.3 billion annually, with over 20,000 businesses supporting 224,000 jobs. Many of these jobs are located in parts of Ireland with few other employment opportunities.

Over the past four years, tourism has been a major source of growth in export earnings and job creation. Over 30,000 new jobs have been directly created by tourism since 2011 – remarkably, over one in five of all new jobs during that period.

But continued growth is not assured and we must be conscious that some current favourable external conditions are unlikely to be sustained. The growth opportunities for tourism are at risk from rising costs, underinvestment in facilitating infrastructure, capacity bottlenecks and dramatically reduced investment in destination marketing.

This report by the Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC) outlines some of the challenges ahead but also the exciting prospect of growing annual visitor numbers to over 10 million in the coming years. I am grateful to Ibec for working with us, and to Tourism & Transport Consult for presenting a compelling case for enhanced investment in tourism.



Message from Ibec CEO, Danny McCoy

Following a number of very difficult years, the Irish economy is now firmly in recovery. Economic output grew in 2015 by 7.1%. This was driven by surging investment in Irish companies and consumer demand returning to normal levels. It is evident, however, that this recovery is still uneven and very urban centric. Households and businesses in many areas of the country are still treading water.

In this context, it is more important than ever that industries like tourism are supported and encouraged to thrive by Government policy. The tourism industry is crucial to the regional economies; the sector generates almost €6 billion for the domestic economy every year, reaching every part of the country, with an additional €1.3 billion in Irish carrier receipts. It purchases the vast majority of its inputs domestically. More importantly, it brings sustainable jobs to areas which have no large domestic industry and little hope of attracting major multinational investment.

Bringing a recovery to the regions is not without its challenges. The tourism sector is currently getting a boost from favourable exchange rates, but it still faces major obstacles to growth from legacy debts, high rates bills and the continuing challenge of inadequate regional infrastructure. In this context, a more ambitious capital programme, the retention of the 9% VAT rate and the reform of local government are more important issues than ever. They must be addressed if tourism is to thrive into the future.

Tourism is one of Ireland's largest and fastest-growing indigenous industries. The numbers are undeniable.

- €7.3 billion in annual earnings
- Tourism has created over 1 in every 5 new jobs in Ireland over the past 4 years
- 224,000 people employed across the country
- €1.8 billion generated in taxes for the Government last year
- 14% increase in overseas visitors last year

The case for supporting tourism is compelling. It is one of Ireland's fastest growing export earners. The sector brings benefits to all regions of the country, with many areas increasingly dependent on it. A pillar of Ireland's economic recovery, tourism has not only delivered new jobs but has the potential to deliver far more.

However, the continued growth of tourism to Ireland is not guaranteed. Despite recent success, tourism cannot be taken for granted and the right Government policies and investment plans need to be in place. For Ireland to continue to successfully 'grow tourism', action is necessary on three primary fronts – Maintaining Competitiveness, Investing for Growth and Destination Marketing.

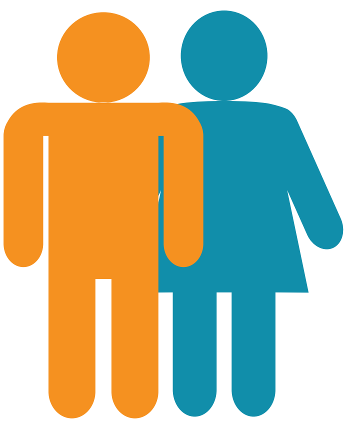
Tourism is worth €7.3 billion annually

1. Maintaining Competitiveness

Ireland is currently ranked more expensive than ten competitor destinations in Europe. Labour costs are rising. The industry is at a competitive disadvantage because of the higher cost of utilities and local government rates, as well as the lack of a supply of qualified staff.

What Action is Needed

- Reform income taxes and the regulatory framework
- Maintain the 9% VAT rate
- Provide education and training more in tune with industry needs



Tourism employs 224,000 people across Ireland

2. Investing for Growth

Investment by the state in tourism has been in continuous decline over recent years. The Government has a target of attracting 10 million international visitors to Ireland by 2025. However, the recent €27 billion National Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan 2016 – 2021 allocated only €106 million to tourism over this five-year period, a disappointing and inadequate sum for an industry employing over 220,000 people.

What Action is Needed

- Increase the capital expenditure budget
- Introduce Government incentives to stimulate investment
- Give training incentives for businesses

3. Destination Marketing

Ireland's spend on destination marketing has almost halved over the past seven years, despite an increasingly challenging trading environment and more competition in the marketplace. Ireland's share of voice in its top source markets has dropped. The inevitable result of this is a damaging loss of impact in winning attention and influencing potential tourists.

What Action is Needed

- Reverse the cuts to the destination marketing budgets
- Introduce a measurement system to monitor return on destination marketing investment
- Maximise efficiency in the organisational arrangements for the delivery of destination marketing programmes

The Case for Tourism

Tourism is One of Ireland's Best Performing Industries

Tourism is one of Ireland's largest industries and it makes a substantial contribution to economic prosperity, employment and the Exchequer. Over the past four years, tourism has been a major source of growth in export earnings and job creation.

Currently, the industry is worth over €7 billion annually, providing 224,000 jobs, including 140,000 in the accommodation and catering services sector alone. Over 20,000 businesses are engaged in the industry, bringing economic activity to many areas with few other industries.

The Exchequer received nearly €1.8 billion in taxes from tourism in 2015, as 24.5c of every euro spent by tourists (domestic and overseas) goes to the Government. **Without the annual tax take from tourism, the Exchequer would have to raise an extra €900 from everyone in the labour force.**

Overseas visitor numbers grew by 14% in 2015

Tourism Drives the Economy

Despite underinvestment, Ireland's tourism has proven to be resilient, with 7% growth in overseas visitors in 2013, followed by a 9% growth in 2014. Visitor arrivals in 2015 were up a further 14%. Tourism has passed from a recovery phase into one of sustainable growth.

Fig. 1: The Value of Tourism

Value of out-of-state tourism in 2015	€5.7 billion
Value of domestic tourism in 2015	€1.6 billion
Total value of tourism earnings in 2015	€7.3 billion
Growth in export earnings since 2011	+46%
Jobs created since 2011	30,000

Sources: CSO & Fáilte Ireland

Tourism Delivers Jobs

Nearly 225,000 people owe their jobs to tourism, with almost one in every nine jobs in the country directly dependent on tourism. An estimated 30,000 new jobs have been directly created by tourism since 2011; it has also facilitated the creation of many new downstream jobs.

The tourism sector has increased employment at a faster rate than nearly all other sectors of the economy over the past four years, and in absolute numbers it has provided more employment opportunities than other business sectors.

Fig. 2: Employment Growth 2011-2015

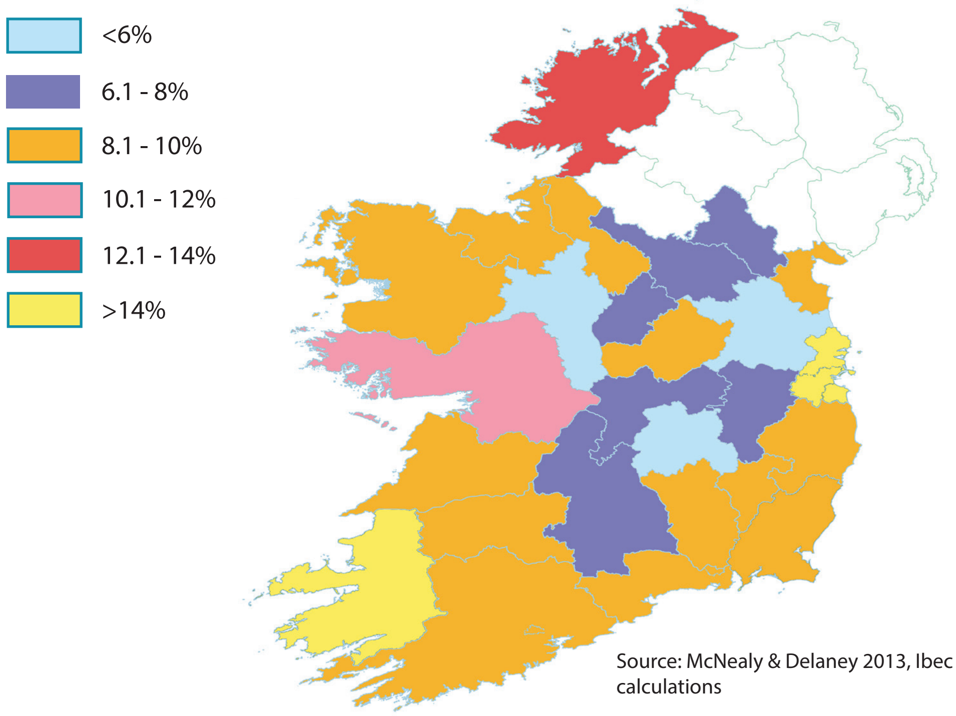
	Q3 2011	Q3 2015	% Change	Net New Jobs
Total employment	**1,846,000**	**1,983,000**	**+7%**	**+137,000**
Agri, forestry & fisheries	83,000	112,700	+35%	+29,050
Construction	109,000	127,400	+16%	+18,400
Industry	239,000	252,300	+5%	+13,300
Wholesale & retail	277,000	273,800	-1%	-3,200
Tourism *[including Accommodation & food services]*	194,000 *[121,000]*	224,000 *[140,000]*	+16%	+30,000 *[19,000]*

Source: CSO QNQ03 Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment by Sex, NACE Rev 2 Economic Sector

Tourism Benefits Are Spread Across the Country

Tourism businesses make an important contribution to economic activity and employment throughout the country. Nationally, one in every nine jobs is within the tourism sector.

Fig. 3: Regional Tourism Dependency - % of Employment in Tourism

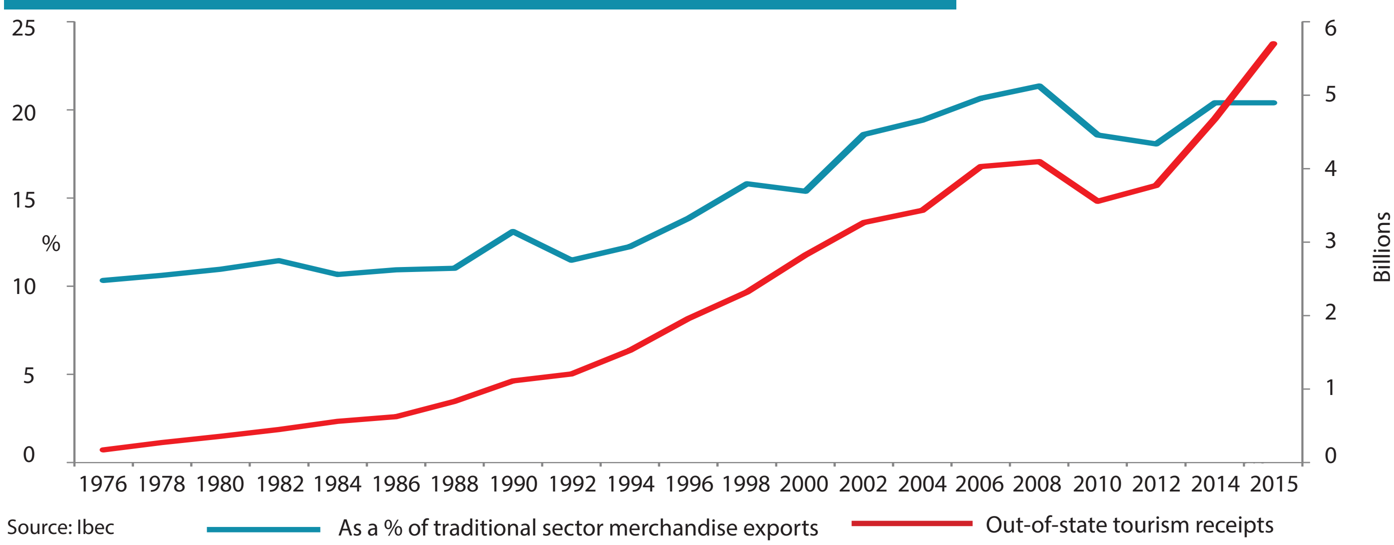


Source: McNealy & Delaney 2013, Ibec calculations

Tourism is One of Ireland's Fastest Growing Exports

Exports earnings from out-of-state tourism reached €5.7 billion in 2015. This is equivalent to one third of all exports by indigenous Irish firms. Over the past ten years, tourism export earnings have grown by 46%.

Fig. 4: Irish Tourism's Growth in Importance as an Export Industry



Source: Ibec

Tourism is a Pillar of Ireland's Economic Growth

In 2011, the Government identified tourism as one of the pillars that could provide much-needed employment and growth to drive economic recovery. Policy decisions were made – to reduce VAT on tourism services, to suspend the air passenger tax, to liberalise the visa regime for entry from selected markets and to provide a stimulus for job creation. These decisions have combined to deliver significant results. However, **growth in the future will be far more challenging**, particularly if the worrying and counterproductive trends of inadequate investment in tourism product infrastructure and reduced investment in marketing Ireland as a destination continue.

Challenges and Obstacles

Despite its position as a driver of employment and socioeconomic progress, tourism's growth is far from assured. It will always be subject to external factors (global economic conditions, geopolitical factors and extraneous events such as terrorism) over which neither the Government nor the industry has control. However, a number of risks to continued growth are within the control of Government and the industry.

The findings from ITIC's 2015 Industry Leaders Survey clearly show that the constraints on growing business are primarily on the supply side. Current capacity is a limiting factor and **further growth requires investment in expansion to cope with an increase in demand.**

To achieve growth, Irish tourism needs a suitably qualified labour force at cost levels comparable to competitor destinations. As well as this, respondents identified the increasing burden of regulation and compliance costs as an impediment to tourism growth.

It would appear that access to finance is improving, although one in four businesses identified this as a current limitation on their enterprises. The Government, working in partnership with the industry, can address a number of factors to ensure that Ireland can realise its potential for continued tourism growth.

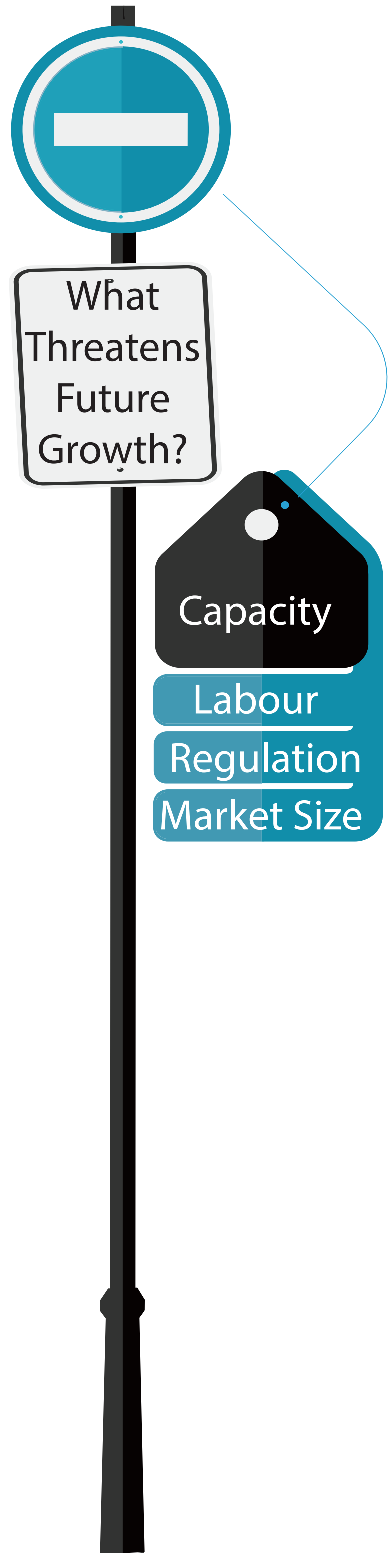


Fig. 5: Risks to Sustainable Tourism Growth

Risk Ranking		Considered Risk/Serious Risk by Industry Leaders
#1	Rising costs	66%
#2	Underinvestment in tourism plant	61%
#3	Underinvestment in infrastructure	54%
#4	Regulatory environment	49%
#5	Competition within sector	41%

The opportunities for sustainable growth and job creation are great, and Ireland is well-poised to capture an increasing share of the forecasted growth in international travel. However, failure to address a number of issues will result in expansion opportunities being lost.

"Tourism is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors and has significant potential to play a further role Ireland's economic renewal"

– PEOPLE, PLACE AND POLICY – GROWING TOURISM TO 2025
(Government Policy Framework, published March 2015)

Taking Action

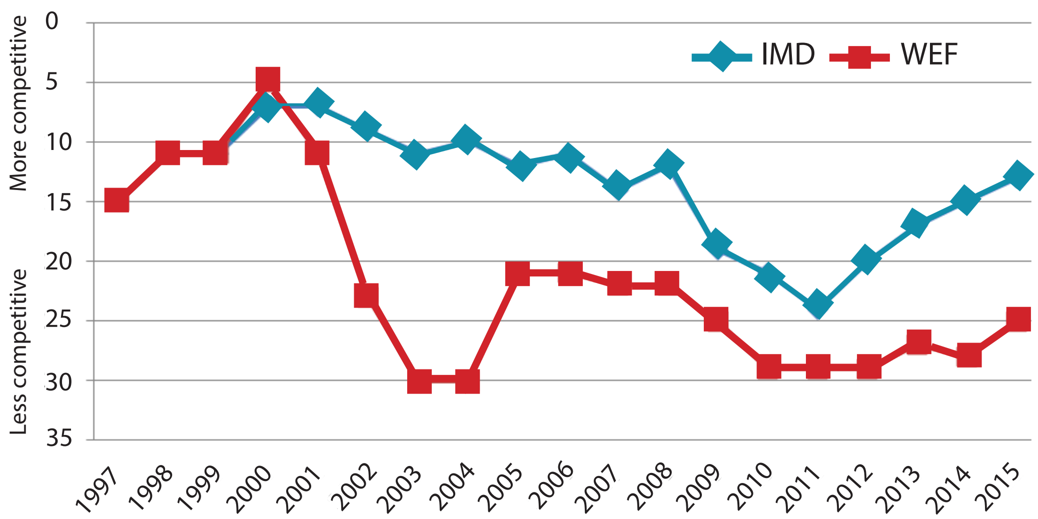
How the Government Can Support Tourism

For Ireland to continue to successfully grow tourism, Government action is necessary on three primary fronts - Maintaining Competiveness, Investing in Growth and Supporting Destination Marketing.

1. Maintaining Competitiveness

Ireland's economic global competitiveness position has improved in recent years. It is currently ranked 25th by the World Economic Forum's analysis of the competiveness landscape of 144 economies, while the IMD World Competitiveness Scoreboard shows that Ireland is ranked 15th of 61 economies. However, Ireland still lacks the more competitive positioning it enjoyed more than a decade ago.

Fig. 6: International Ranking of Ireland's Competitiveness



Against a backdrop of modest recovery, cost pressures are already emerging, with particular pressures evident in the labour, energy and business services sectors. The competitiveness of Ireland's offering is seen as the greatest threat to sustained growth in tourism. Four out of five visitors indicate that good all-round value for money is important when considering a visit.

The danger of rising costs leading to a loss of competitiveness needs to be the prime policy focus for Government and the industry. Businesses do not wish to see a repeat of the experience of the early noughties where Ireland, as a result of high wage and import inflation, effectively priced itself out of the market.

The level and cost of regulatory compliance, together with state-induced cost burdens, are also high on the list of factors endangering the industry's ability to remain competitive.

As tourism has very low import content, the price of what the tourist to Ireland consumes is largely determined by domestic economic factors. There is an imminent danger that the weakness of the euro will mask domestic cost increases as they add to tourist price inflation.

It is undoubtedly the case that the tourist is receiving significantly better value for money since 2009, when one in four visitors stated that the high cost of living here was a disadvantage. However, **Ireland remains an expensive location in which to do business**, relative to some of our key competitors.

How Visitors Rated Their Holidays to Ireland as 'Value for Money'

	2009	2012	2015
Good	29%	41%	58%
Fair	31%	40%	34%
Poor	41%	17%	8%

Source: Fáilte Ireland surveys (latest available data)

Counting the Costs

Three cost factors are of particular concern to the tourism industry – labour costs, local authority commercial rates and VAT.

Labour Costs

Labour constitutes a significant cost input for businesses in tourism. The absolute level of pay, wage inflation and labour regulations are key determinants of the competitiveness of the sector.

Currently, Ireland's minimum wage is the fourth highest out of 21 countries, at €9.15 per hour. Unlike in many other countries, there is no cap on employer social security cost or a reduced rate above a certain income threshold in Ireland. The flat rate charge on the full salary effectively erodes Ireland's competitive position as salaries increase.

Local Authority Commercial Rates

The revenue collected through commercial rates doubled over the period 2002 to 2014, as local authorities relied increasingly on businesses as a source of income to compensate for a decline in funding from central Government. Commercial rates grew as a proportion of revenue from 24% in 2002 to 36% in 2014. The bill to tourism enterprises, particularly to hotels, has become a hefty burden.

VAT

Ireland's standard VAT rate is 23% – the seventh highest within the European Community. Despite a drive towards harmonisation, the standard rate of VAT across the 28 member states ranges from 17% (Luxembourg) to 27% (Hungary).

VAT as a consumption tax is recognised as an important determinant of visitor behaviour and most governments across Europe have applied a reduced rate of VAT to spending by tourists on accommodation, eating out and admission to cultural services. The current rate of 9% applied in Ireland has restored our competitiveness among European tourist destinations. Any increase would place Ireland at a serious competitive disadvantage.

Fig. 7: VAT Rate in Selected European Tourist Destinations

	Netherlands	Portugal	Germany	Poland	Ireland	Finland	France	Italy	Spain	Czech Republic	UK
Standard Rate	21%	23%	19%	22%	23%	24%	20%	22%	21%	21%	20%
Hotels	6%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%	10%	10%	10%	15%	20%
Restaurants	6%	23%	19%	8%	9%	14%	10%	10%	10%	21%	20%

Source: European Commission

What Policy Actions are Needed?

- Enhance labour cost competitiveness with the reform of income tax
- Change the social insurance structure for lower paid workers
- Reform the regulatory framework
- Maintain the 9% VAT rate for tourism services
- Improve education and training programmes
- Improve access to finance

2. Investing for Growth

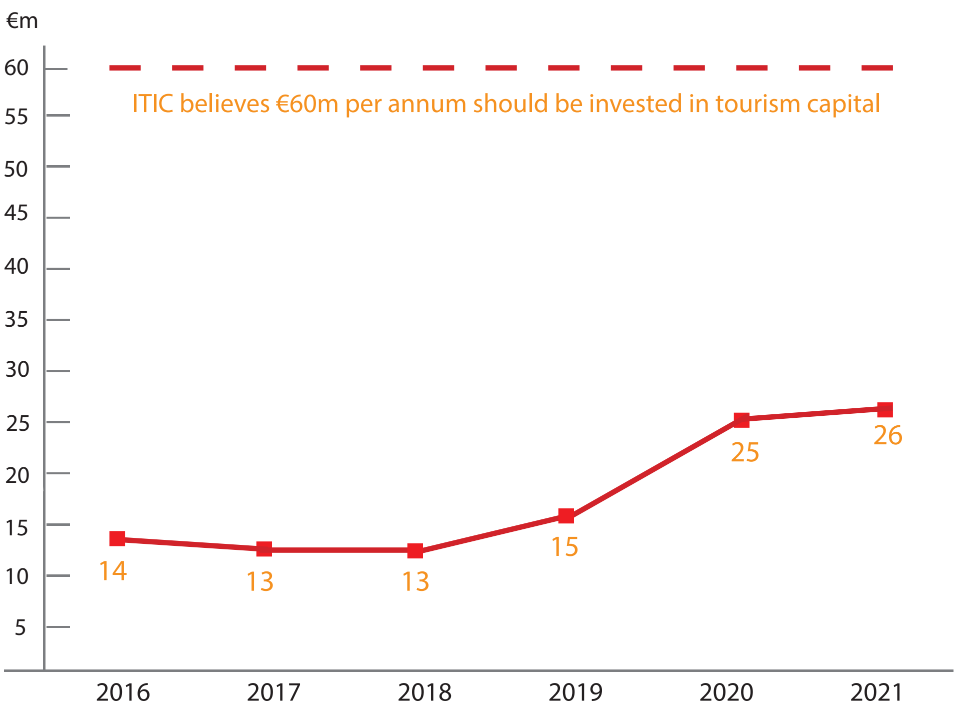
Product differentiation, innovation and investment are key factors in maintaining a competitive positioning for Ireland in the international marketplace. This requires continuous investment in product renewal and innovation to ensure that Ireland's tourist offering keeps pace with changing tastes and global competition.

The national economic development strategy is highly dependent on FDI for growth in employment and exports. It needs to shift focus to indigenous business sectors with export growth opportunities in order to ensure longer-term sustainability. Agri-food and tourism, two sectors that complement each other, are recognised as the top two indigenous sectors with export potential. **Currently, state capital investment in tourism is approximately one-tenth of that invested annually in the agri-food sector.**

State Investment in Tourism in Steady Decline

The case for capital investment in tourism is compelling. It is urgently needed if Ireland's tourism industry is to continue to generate increased earnings from overseas visitors and achieve the Government's target of 10 million overseas visitors spending €5 billion by 2025. Capital investment by the Government in tourism infrastructure and visitor attractors through the Office of Public Works (OPW), local authorities, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Fáilte Ireland and other state agencies can provide a powerful stimulus to wider economic activity across the Irish economy. ITIC believes a minimum of €60 million per annum needs to be invested in tourism capital and infrastructure over the next five years.

Fig. 8: National Infrastructure & Capital Investment Programme 2016-21: Allocation to Tourism (€m)



Source: The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

The historic and cultural environment has a significant impact on people's decisions to visit Ireland, according to Fáilte Ireland research. The OPW, which manages, maintains and presents approximately 70 national monuments and historic sites for visitors, has suffered cutbacks to its capital programmes over the past ten years. The annual capital investment programme dropped from €17 million in the mid 2000s to just €350,000 in 2014 and 2015. This has serious implications for the sustainability of tourism demand throughout the country.

Design: Freepik.com

Need for Enabling Infrastructure

For the tourism industry to continue to grow strongly, the Government must invest in enabling infrastructure including transport, communications and other public services. Failure to do so will lead to significant bottlenecks. Priorities include runway capacity at Dublin Airport, Ireland's top gateway for tourist arrivals; a modern inter-modal public transport network; and the availability of high-speed broadband throughout the country.

Investment in Visitor Experiences

The recent deep and prolonged recession has taken a significant toll on the wear-and-tear of existing tourist attractions, due to understandable underinvestment over the past five years. The most recent Product Development Strategy for tourism, produced in 2007, is largely redundant and a new Product Development Plan 2016-2020 is urgently needed. **ITIC is proposing that a capital budget of not less than €300 million be provided in a multi-annual fund for tourism-specific projects over the period 2016-2020. This averages out as €60 million per annum – just 1% of tourism's annual export receipts.**

Investment in People

Tourism, as a service industry, relies heavily on people. A culture of hospitality and quality service is crucial to the competitiveness of the sector. Growth in tourism requires an expansion of the skilled labour force. However, career paths and skills progression are not always apparent to prospective entrants or current employees. Training policy for the hospitality and tourism sectors needs to be reformed to focus on continuous education, up-skilling and equipping people for career progression.

- Invest in tourism infrastructure with a capital expenditure budget of €60 million per annum in each of the next five years
- Prioritise those capital investment projects that have a clear market focus on boosting visitor export earnings
- Stimulate investment from indigenous enterprises and FDI in the tourism sector and introduce measures to enhance productivity, innovation and R&D
- Include tourism enterprises in eligibility for capital supports currently available to export businesses in other sectors
- Ensure the supply of essential skills to enterprise through structures that provide better high quality, flexible and responsive education and training programmes
- Redefine regulatory frameworks in the context of changing consumer behaviours and the growth of the shared economy

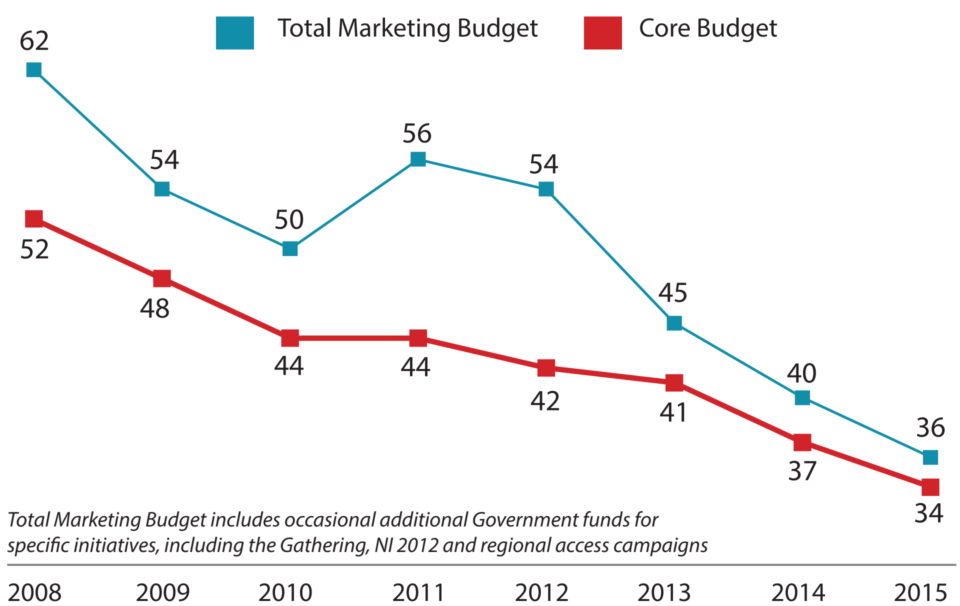
3. Destination Marketing

Severe Cuts to Ireland's Destination Marketing Budget

Ireland's spend on destination marketing has almost halved over the past seven years, despite an increasingly challenging trading environment and more competition in the marketplace. This year, an estimated €36 million will be spent by Tourism Ireland on marketing the island of Ireland overseas, compared to €62 million in 2008. The budget allocations to Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland have been subject to continuous cutbacks in recent years.

As well as this, the purchasing power of the marketing budget in Britain and the USA has been further eroded by currency exchange rates over the past 12 months.

Fig. 9: Tourism Ireland Marketing Budget (€m current terms)



Source: Tourism Ireland

Destination Marketing is an Investment

Destination marketing represents an investment, not a cost, to taxpayers. Every €1 invested by the state in destination advertising in the top source markets resulted in a visitor spend of €34 in the country.

Ireland is Losing its Voice

The cuts to Tourism Ireland's budgets have significantly reduced Ireland's 'share of voice' in the marketplace. Furthermore, many of Ireland's competitors have invested more and increased their visibility.

As a result, Ireland's presence has diminished in most source markets compared to five years ago; its share of voice has fallen in its three top source markets. Startlingly, in Britain, it is just 20% of what it was five years ago.

Fig. 10: Ireland's Declining Share of Voice Among Competitor Set in Top Source Markets

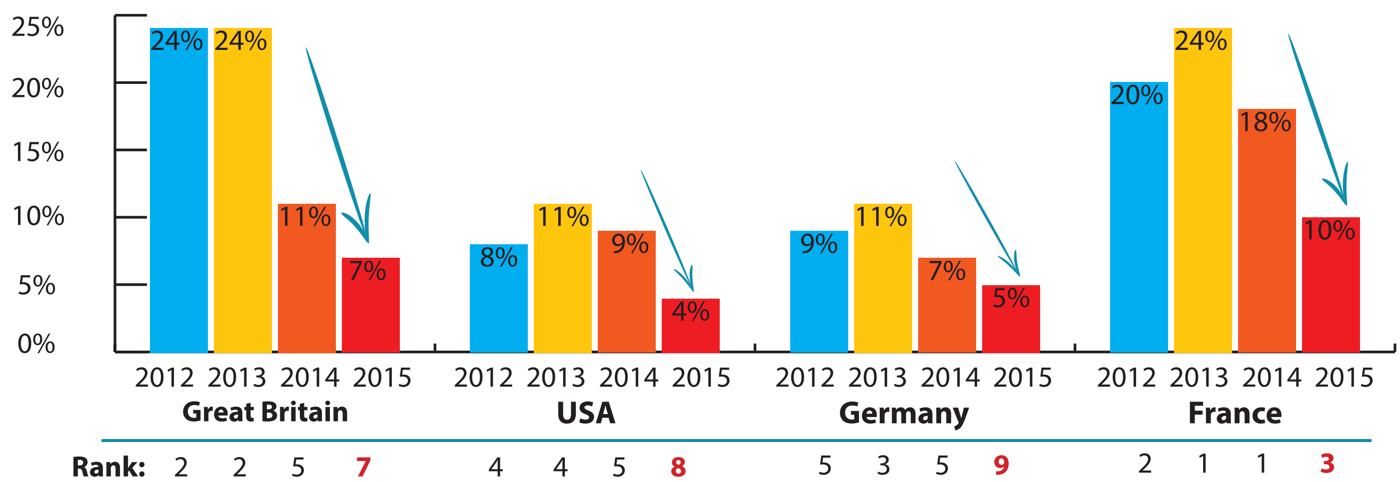
Market	2010	2014
Britain	10%	2%
USA	84%	55%
Germany	50%	36%

Source: 2014 Competitor Analysis, by Carat Global for Tourism Ireland (March 2015)

Awareness of Ireland is in Freefall

Spontaneous recall of advertising for Ireland has fallen in each of our top source markets over the past four years. Ireland has now dropped to the 7th most recalled holiday destination in Britain, 8th in the USA and 9th in Germany.

Fig. 11: Awareness of Ireland in Top Source Markets 2012-2015



The latest tracking research indicates that while the proportion of people interested in visiting Ireland has held steady in Britain, France and Germany, the choice of Ireland has been pushed further down the list of destinations being considered. The ambitious targets for visitor numbers and revenue set out in the Government's recent tourism policy document are at odds with the cuts that have been made to destination marketing budgets.

This downward cycle of underinvestment has already led to the loss of awareness of the destination in our top four holiday source markets. If the cycle continues, it will ultimately lead to a continued slide in awareness of Ireland as a destination among potential travellers. There will be an inevitable drop in visitor numbers, which will be costly and difficult to reverse.

Organisational Arrangements

As an island tourism destination, Ireland is totally dependent on reliable and competitive access by air and by sea. Aviation and tourism policy formulation should therefore be developed in tandem. 'Reuniting' Tourism with the Department of Transport in 2011 made practical sense, and should not be changed in the foreseeable future.

The current structural architecture of two state agencies with responsibility for tourism, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, has exposed some systemic weaknesses. As pointed out in *People, Place and Policy*, 'It is essential that the agencies work together, and with other state agencies where appropriate, to maximise efficiencies, avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, and provide the best possible service to industry and to the consumer in line with Government policy priorities.'

What Policy Actions are Needed?

- Reverse the cuts to the destination marketing budgets
- Institute a transparent measurement system to monitor return on destination marketing investment
- Retain Transport and Tourism as part of the same Government department, and maximise efficiency in the organisational arrangements for the delivery of destination marketing programmes

Harnessing Tourism's Potential

All around the country, new tourism enterprises are engaging visitors, creating jobs and boosting Ireland's profile as a desirable destination.

Copyright: Fáilte Ireland

Sheep's Head Finds its Own Way

The Sheep's Head and Bantry Tourism Co-operative was formed in 2013 to exploit the destination potential of the Sheep's Head Peninsula Way, an area with a fragile economy that is increasingly dependent on tourism to sustain it. Within its first year, it had created 11 new jobs and also increased demand for accommodation by over 10%.

The co-op represents almost 100 businesses and over 100 landowners along the 88km Sheep's Head Way walking route, which runs from Bantry out to the tip of West Cork's Sheep's Head peninsula and then back inland towards Gougane Barra. The co-op encourages collaboration and has successfully persuaded local businesses to promote the area as a whole, rather than just their own product, in order to extend length of stay and to increase yield for the area. Its 'Living the Sheep's Head Way' marketing campaign celebrates the area and its people, heritage, crafts and produce.

It also promotes the idea of responsible and sustainable tourism. Using both traditional and social media channels, it invites the 'culturally curious' and 'great escaper' tourist to 'explore, discover, connect' with the landscape. Innovative and marketable products, businesses and experiences have been created, including Cronin's Forge and the Sheep's Head Yarn Festival, as well as stone letter carving holidays, Wild Atlantic Way cruises and a 'Shoeniversity', where visitors learn to make their own shoes. Its efforts have garnered both press coverage and awards.

The success of the co-op exemplifies how a rural area can harness its tourism potential, while remaining true to its vision of sustainable development that is sensitive to the natural environment.

Copyright: Center Parcs

Center Parcs Gives Midlands a Boost

Center Parcs is to open a new holiday village in Co. Longford in 2019, bringing with it 1,000 permanent new jobs. The venture is one of the largest investments ever made in Irish tourism and will provide a massive boost to the area and contribute significantly to the local and regional economy. As well as this, Center Parcs also plans to employ 750 people during its construction phase.

The Centre Parcs Village will be set on a 375-acre site at Newcastle Wood and it will cater for up to 2,500 guests in 500 lodges. As with its other villages, it will provide a huge range of leisure activities and facilities for its visitors, including its Subtropical Swimming Paradise and Aqua Sana Spa, as well as restaurants, cafés and retail outlets.

This first-of-its-kind FDI project will outstrip in economic significance many other high-profile inward investments in Irish manufacturing facilities.

Brewing Up Tourism in Kilkenny

A €3.5 million investment brought major changes to the Smithwick's visitor centre in Kilkenny. Since opening in 2014, the Smithwick's Experience Kilkenny has welcomed an impressive mix of domestic (35%) and international (65%) tourists and is proving particularly popular with visitors from France, Germany, the United States, the UK, Canada and Australia.

Located in the old Victorian brewing building on Parliament Street, it provides a multi-sensory, interactive visitor experience. The tour draws from both the heritage of the Smithwick family and the history of brewing in Kilkenny. Visitors are invited to become completely immersed in the brewing process during the tour by turning the mill, stirring the mash and sampling some unfermented beer.

Stand-out technological features include the impressive life-size holographic monk who tells visitors about the origins of brewing on the site and the Harry Potter-style portraits of key Smithwick family members, who spring to life to narrate stories about their brewing legacy.

The Smithwick's Experience employs a total of 15 tour guides and retail staff members, with the majority working full-time hours. The company purposefully hired from the local area, in some cases from families with generations of employment in the old Smithwick's brewery.

By doing so, they created a real connection between the staff members and the site and have tour guides who can deliver a personal and compelling experience for the visitor.

In January, Lonely Planet featured the Smithwick's Experience as one of the 'top 26 new visitor attractions in the world to visit in 2015'; since then, more and more curious visitors have come through its doors. The city is benefiting as well – more tourists are visiting and they are staying longer and spending more.

The Irishtown side of Kilkenny city, where the Smithwick's Experience is based, was previously overlooked as a tourist destination, with many tour groups in particular opting to just stop at the castle. Today, things have changed. As a result of collaboration with Kilkenny Tourism and combination ticketing with other local attractions and hotels, footfall is being driven to the area and neighbouring businesses are making the most of the influx of guests.

“By 2025, the Government’s ambition is that overseas tourism revenue will reach €5 billion in real terms”

– PEOPLE, PLACE AND POLICY – GROWING TOURISM TO 2025
(March 2015)

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