


Whitepaper

A practical guide to digital transformation
in the tours, activities, and attractions space



**From offline to online:
How experience providers
and small travel companies
can boost their revenue by
selling activities online**

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1. About this White Paper

Turpal, a leading travel tech company, has partnered with a research firm to publish a series of white papers designed to help supplier of experiences and travel businesses navigate the evolving tours, activities, and attractions industry. These insights explore how technology can drive success in a rapidly transforming market.

2. Executive Summary

The travel industry is rapidly evolving, with consumer expectations shifting toward instant, personalized, and digital-first experiences.

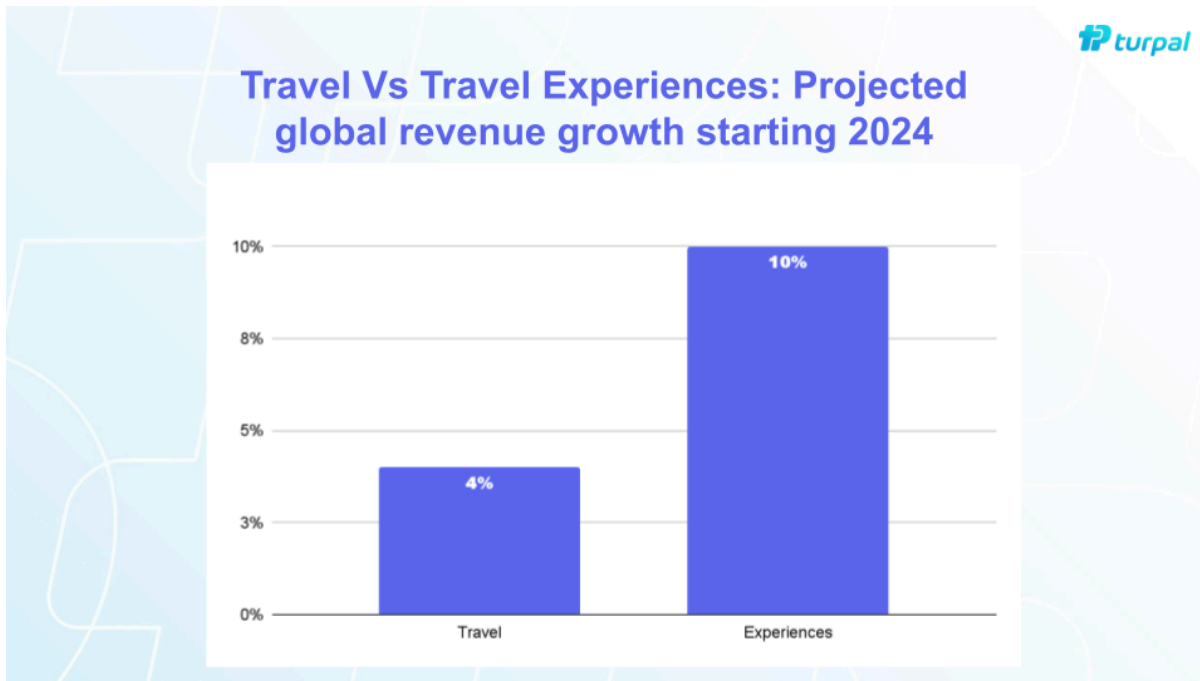
For experience providers and small travel companies, OTAs, DMCs, tour operators, embracing digital transformation is no longer optional. It is essential to boost revenue and remain competitive in a fast-changing market.

This paper explores how to sell activities online to unlock growth opportunities by expanding reach, accelerating bookings, and enabling data-driven decision-making. With the help of SaaS solutions for small and mid-sized travel companies, businesses can streamline operations, automate workflows, and improve the overall customer experience.

The travel experiences sector is growing at a rate of 10% per year, more than twice the growth of the broader travel market, as travelers increasingly prioritize immersive and memorable activities over traditional tourism offerings¹. This rapid expansion highlights the urgency for travel businesses to embrace digital transformation, enabling them to scale efficiently and meet the evolving expectations of today's experience-driven travelers.

Drawing on Turpal's experience, we present a practical guide to digitizing operations, share strategies on how to sell activities online, and offer actionable steps for small to mid-sized travel professionals, whether they are starting their digital journey or optimizing existing systems. Our focus is on sustainable growth, particularly in dynamic markets such as the Gulf, the wider Middle East, Turkey, and Southern Europe.

¹ Arival (2023). <https://arival.travel/article/outlook-for-operators-in-5-charts/>



3. Introduction: the shift in travel behavior

Today's travelers expect more than just bookings—they want instant access, personalization, and seamless experiences across all digital touchpoints. Mobile apps and online platforms have transformed how people plan and book activities.

To stay competitive, small to mid-sized travel professionals must digitize their operations. This shift is crucial for meeting real-time demand and delivering the frictionless experiences that modern travelers expect. Adopting digital tools for the supply of experiences enables faster bookings, dynamic pricing, real-time inventory, and stronger engagement.

Social media now plays a pivotal role in shaping travel decisions². Platforms like Instagram and TikTok are driving discovery, increasing destination visibility, and influencing real-time bookings..

Additionally, operations management and automation tools minimize manual tasks, reduce human error, and free up teams to focus on crafting personalized journeys. From auto-confirmations and secure payment processing to CRM-powered follow-ups, these tools drive efficiency and improve service quality.

Travel companies that adopt a digital-first mindset benefit from greater reach, scalability, and customer satisfaction. Those that rely on legacy methods risk falling behind as traveler

expectations become increasingly tech-driven².

4. The Opportunity: selling activities online

The tours and activities segment is one of the fastest-growing parts of the travel industry. Experiences are now central to traveler satisfaction and loyalty. While large OTAs and tech-driven platforms lead the way, many small travel companies still underutilize this revenue stream.

According to Arival, nearly 60% of tour operators globally were founded in the past 10 years, and one in five day-tour operators launched just since 2022³, despite pandemic disruptions. This reflects a high-growth space increasingly shaped by tech-savvy entrepreneurs.

For small travel companies, learning how to sell activities online offers an opportunity to expand reach, diversify income, and compete with bigger players. By moving beyond manual bookings and adopting digital systems, travel companies gain real-time availability, automated confirmations, and instant payments—delivering smoother experiences for both traveler and operator³.

Using activity booking platforms empowers suppliers by increasing channel reach for suppliers, businesses gain exposure across sales channels, reduce manual coordination, and improve backend operations. These tools simplify inventory management, pricing, and communication with guests and partners.

A B2B travel booking platform for activities unlocks even more potential, allowing small to mid-sized travel companies to resell curated experiences from third-party suppliers and reach new customer segments, without adding operational overhead.

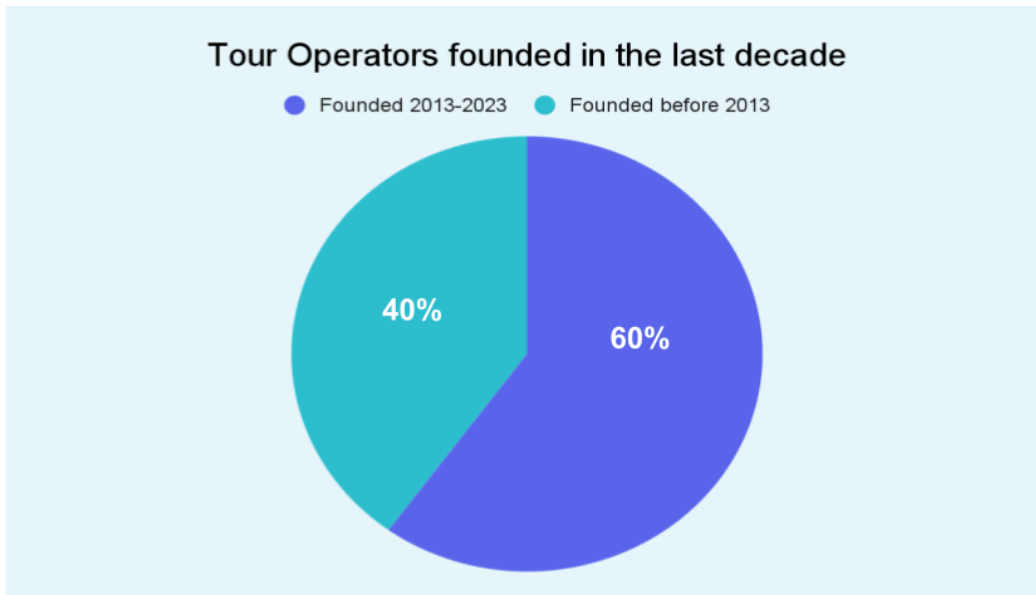
Crucially, knowing how to sell activities online is not just about launching a website. It is about building a digital infrastructure that supports the full lifecycle: syncing inventory, personalizing offers, managing availability, and analyzing data to optimize.

With the global tours and activities reservation market projected to reach \$264.4 billion by 2030⁴, digitization is not just a trend—it is a smart growth strategy.⁴

² Mize Tech, *Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media on the Tourism Industry*,
<https://mize.tech/blog/positive-and-negative-effects-of-social-media-on-the-tourism-industry>

³ Arival, *Global Operator Landscape*
https://lionventures.se/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Arival-Global-Operator-Landscape-3rd-Ed_-Oct-2024_Summary.pdf

⁴ Research and Markets. *Tours and Activities Reservations – Global Strategic Business Report*.
<https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5310766/tours-and-activities-reservations-global>



5. Barriers for small Travel companies

Despite the clear benefits of going digital, many small to mid-sized travel companies still face roadblocks when moving from offline to online.

A major hurdle is the lack of tech knowledge. Many still manage operations via spreadsheets, phone calls, or even paper notebooks. Without guidance, adopting new systems feels risky or overly technical.

Outdated, manual offline processes also persist, like phone-based reservations and handwritten confirmations. These limit scalability and make it hard to respond to customers in real time.

Another challenge is system fragmentation. Without a centralized CRM for travel companies, teams struggle to understand customer needs, follow up effectively, or personalize communication. Similarly, the absence of inventory sync tools for travel resellers can result in double-bookings and miscommunications across partner platforms.

There is also hesitation around the complexity or cost of adopting travel booking software for resellers. But the cost of not transforming—lost bookings, operational inefficiencies, and lower competitiveness—is often much higher.

Understanding these barriers is step one. The next step? Choosing smart, scalable solutions aligned with your company's size and growth goals.



Fortunately, overcoming these challenges is more achievable than many assume, especially with modern, travel-specific tools designed for small teams.

6. What digital transformation looks like for SMEs

For small and midsize travel companies, digital transformation does not require overhauling everything at once. It is about taking strategic steps to modernize key areas while preserving the human touch that travelers value.

Based on Turpal's experience working with OTAs, DMCs, and experience providers in the Gulf and Europe, here is a practical framework to guide the process:

6.1. Build a Digital Storefront

Your website is your 24/7 storefront. With a travel website builder for small to mid-sized travel companies, you can quickly launch a mobile-optimized booking platform—no coding required. This improves discoverability and enables bookings around the clock.

6.2. Implement CRM and Client management

A centralized CRM for travel companies helps track traveler behavior, preferences, and past purchases. It allows for more relevant follow-ups, upselling, and long-term customer loyalty.

6.3. Sync Inventory and Bookings

Real-time availability across your website, partners, and OTAs prevents missed opportunities. Multi-day experience management tools and inventory sync tools for travel resellers ensure consistent availability, avoid double-bookings, and streamline coordination with partners.

6.4. Personalize the Traveler experience

Modern travelers expect tailored journeys. With personalization tools for travel companies, companies that invest in the right tools can suggest relevant add-ons, create dynamic itineraries, or offer exclusive deals based on past behavior, boosting both loyalty and spend.

6.5. Automate payments, confirmations, and communication

Automation minimizes repetitive tasks. The best online booking system for travel startups can send instant confirmations, process payments, trigger reminders, and collect post-trip feedback with minimal manual effort.

This five-step approach empowers SMEs to scale without a large IT team. With the right tools, they can shift from manual operations to delivering seamless, tech-enabled travel experiences.

7. Choosing the right tools

Once a company commits to digital transformation, choosing the right stack is crucial. The ideal tools should be scalable, easy to use, and tailored to the needs of small travel businesses.

7.1. Focus on business fit

When selecting digital tools, resist the temptation to chase the most feature-rich or hyped-up platforms. Instead, prioritize business fit — meaning, choose tools that directly address your company's daily operational challenges.

Actionable steps:

- Conduct an internal audit: Identify 3–5 key pain points in your current workflow (e.g., manual booking confirmations, fragmented payment systems, or poor customer communication).
- Map these issues to software features: Look for tools that specifically resolve those problems.
- Involve your team: Ask front-line staff what they struggle with most — their input will help you avoid costly mismatches.

Example: If managing availability across multiple tours is a headache, prioritize a system with real-time inventory tracking and blackout date controls.

Tools that align with your business model will significantly improve adoption rates and ROI compared to generic or overly complex solutions.

7.2. Integration vs. All-in-one

You have two main options when building your tech stack:

- Integrate separate tools: Use best-of-breed platforms (e.g., one for bookings, another for payments, another for email marketing) and connect them via APIs or third-party services like Zapier.
- All-in-one SaaS platforms: Choose a unified solution designed for small to mid-sized travel operators that bundles essential functions into one interface.

Approach	Pros	Cons
Integrations	Highly customizable, flexibility to pick top tools	Higher maintenance, potential data silos, longer setup
All-in-One	Faster implementation, centralized support, lower learning curve	May lack advanced features, limited customization

Actionable steps:

- Start simple: If your team lacks technical expertise, begin with an all-in-one platform.
- Evaluate integration needs: As your business grows, assess whether adding specialized tools (e.g., CRM, dynamic pricing engine) could unlock value.
- Check compatibility: Ensure any new tool has open APIs or built-in integrations with your existing systems.

7.3. Understand the real cost

Subscription fees are just the tip of the iceberg. To truly evaluate cost, consider the total cost of ownership (TCO) — including time, labor, and hidden inefficiencies.

Hidden costs to watch for:

- Onboarding and training time
- Manual workarounds due to missing features
- Error correction and customer service fallout
- Downtime from bugs or poor support
- Opportunity cost — what you are not doing because your tools cannot handle it

Actionable steps:

- Calculate labor hours: Track how much time your team spends on tasks like double-checking reservations or reconciling payments.
- Compare efficiency: Before buying a tool, ask vendors for benchmarks or case studies showing time savings.
- Trial wisely: Use free trials not just to test features, but to simulate real workflows over a week or two.
- Consider scalability: A slightly more expensive tool today might save thousands in labor costs tomorrow.

Example: A \$50/month tool that reduces manual booking entry by 10 hours/month (at \$25/hour) pays for itself and improves accuracy.

7.4. Plan for growth

Your digital tools should be able to scale with your business, whether that means doubling your monthly bookings or expanding into new markets.

Key indicators of scalable software:

- Handles increased volume without performance drops
- Supports multi-language and multi-currency setups
- Offers robust reporting and analytics
- Can integrate with enterprise-level partners (e.g., wholesalers, GDS systems)
- Provides role-based access control for growing teams

Actionable steps:

- Think ahead: Choose tools that support at least 2x your current capacity.
- Test peak load handling: During busy seasons, monitor how well your system handles spikes in traffic or bookings.
- Review roadmap: Ask SaaS providers about future features and updates — are they investing in growth-oriented capabilities?
- Document processes early: Build repeatable workflows now so scaling does not create chaos later.

Red flag: Avoid tools that require constant custom development or manual intervention as you grow.

7.5. Prioritize User experience and adoption

Even the best tool won't deliver results if your team doesn't use it effectively. Implementation success hinges on user experience (UX) and change management.

Actionable steps:

- Evaluate UX during trial: Have non-tech team members try the tool. If they struggle, adoption will be hard.
- Provide structured onboarding: Create short tutorials or “cheat sheets” tailored to your workflows.
- Appoint an internal champion: Assign someone to lead training and troubleshoot issues.
- Gather feedback regularly: After implementation, check in monthly with users to identify friction points.

Bonus tip: Look for platforms with in-app guidance or embedded help centers — they reduce reliance on external support.

7.6. Leverage Data and Analytics

Digital tools give you access to valuable data, from booking trends to customer preferences. Use this intelligence to make smarter decisions.

What to track:

- Booking conversion rates by channel
- Top-selling experiences and time slots
- Customer demographics and behavior
- Seasonal demand patterns
- Revenue per booking and profitability per activity

Actionable steps:

- Set KPIs: Define 3–5 key metrics aligned with your business goals.
- Automate dashboards: Use tools with built-in analytics or export data to Google Sheets/Excel or BI tools.
- Train your team: Equip staff to interpret reports and adjust strategies accordingly.

- Optimize dynamically: Adjust pricing, inventory, or promotions based on real-time insights.

Example: If data shows weekend tours sell out faster, consider raising prices or adding more slots.

7.7. Evaluate Vendor support and reliability

Your relationship with your software vendor matters, especially when things go wrong or you need help scaling.

What to look for in a vendor:

- Responsive customer support (live chat, phone, email)
- Clear SLAs (service level agreements)
- Transparent communication during outages
- Regular updates and improvements
- Community forums or knowledge bases

Actionable steps:

- Stress-test support: Reach out with a sample question before purchasing.
- Read reviews: Look beyond star ratings — pay attention to response times and issue resolution.
- Ask about uptime: Request historical uptime percentages and incident logs.
- Know your exit plan: Understand how easy (or hard) it is to switch providers down the line.

A reliable vendor can be a strategic partner, not just a service provider. As you evaluate tools and vendors, consider not only what the platform can do today, but also how it supports your long-term goals. Turpal is built specifically for small to mid-sized travel businesses, offering a scalable, user-friendly platform that grows with your needs, so you can focus on delivering exceptional experiences, not managing systems.

8. Marketing: The secret lever to achieving exponential growth

Digitizing operations is only half the equation—getting discovered by the right travelers at the right time truly fuels business growth. For small to mid-sized travel companies, marketing is not just a “nice-to-have” but a critical growth engine. With a smart strategy and the right tools, even small teams can compete with much larger players.

8.1. Digital marketing made for SMEs

Companies now have access to cost-effective digital channels—social media, email marketing, content marketing, and paid ads—that make it easier than ever to promote tours and activities. From Instagram reels showcasing your most exciting experiences to Google Ads targeting last-minute bookers, the options are diverse and scalable.

8.2. Automate for efficiency

Limited bandwidth means smaller companies benefit greatly from operations automation tools that streamline campaign execution. Email sequences, promotional messages, abandoned cart reminders, and social media scheduling can all be automated to reduce manual effort while maintaining consistent engagement.

8.3. Personalization builds loyalty

Standing out in a crowded marketplace often comes down to relevance. Personalization tools for travel companies allow you to tailor offers based on a traveler’s past behavior, interests, and booking history. For example, a customer who books a hiking tour in Georgia can receive follow-up suggestions for eco-lodges or multi-day experience management tools, creating a curated journey that feels personal.

8.4. Measure and improve

The beauty of digital marketing lies in its measurability. Tools like Google Analytics, Meta Ads Manager, and CRM dashboards help companies monitor key metrics like engagement, conversion rates, and return on ad spend. This data-driven approach enables continuous optimization, ensuring every dollar spent delivers maximum impact. People who are not

familiar with marketing are blown away by how easy and clear it is to measure the impact of marketing activities.

8.5. From awareness to action

Marketing is not just about visibility; it is the engine that drives action and conversion. It's about driving action. Well-executed campaigns boost direct bookings, grow repeat customers, and open new B2B channels. Some Turpal partners have seen up to a 15X return on marketing spend (ROAS) by pairing automation with personalized outreach.

In today's digital landscape, marketing is your growth multiplier. With the right tools and a data-driven mindset, small travel companies can expand faster and smarter than ever before.

9. An actual case study for an experience provider's digital transformation journey

An experience provider offering outdoor adventures and group-based activities in the Gulf region faced a common challenge: low search engine visibility, minimal online engagement, and a clunky manual booking process that could not keep up with growing demand. With the travel experiences sector growing at 10% annually—2.5 times faster than the broader travel industry—providers like this are under pressure to modernize in order to stay competitive and meet the expectations of today's experience-driven travelers. Recognizing this urgency, the provider partnered with Turpal to implement an end-to-end digital strategy tailored for small businesses in the experiences space. This enabled them to streamline bookings, improve customer engagement, and scale efficiently in a fast-moving market.

The transformation began with a website delivered within 2 weeks, which was fully built using Turpal's web builder, enabling the provider to showcase offerings more effectively and drive direct traffic through improved content, navigation, and mobile responsiveness. All the must-have features were there: cart management, booking system, live inventory management, order management, SEO-optimized content, international payment gateway, and marketing automation. This allowed the team to manage leads, track inquiries, and personalize follow-ups, resulting in higher conversion rates and stronger customer engagement.

To boost reach, the provider launched targeted digital marketing campaigns focused on SEO, SEM, and social media. Inspired by the fact that social media now drives traveler decisions and booking behavior, Turpal guided the team to optimize visual content and run

influencer-led promotions. At the same time, operations automation tools were used to streamline both marketing and operations, freeing the team from repetitive manual work.

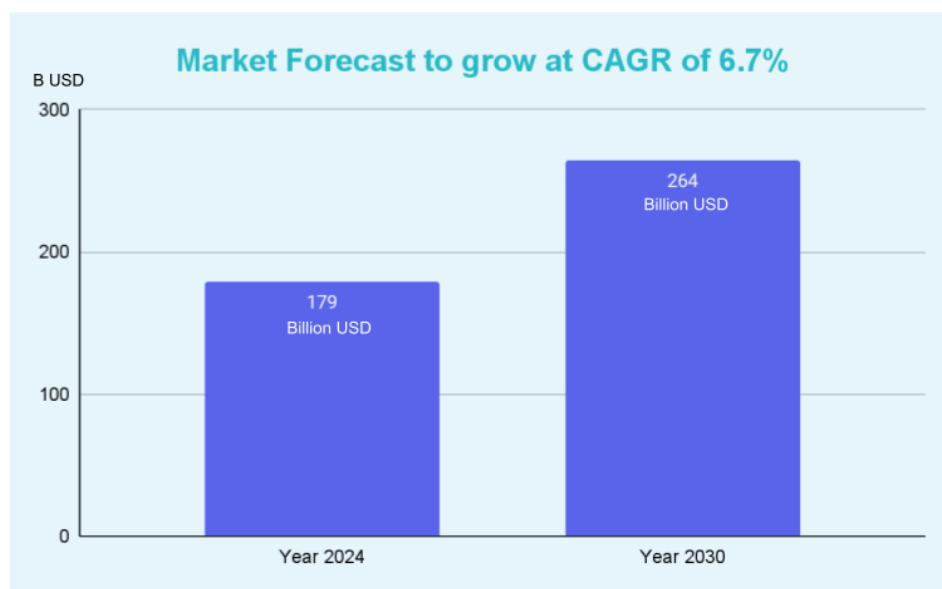
For distribution, the company adopted travel booking software for resellers and activated listings through a B2B travel booking platform for activities, opening up new sales channels and partnerships. Listings were optimized based on demand patterns—an essential tactic in learning how to sell activities online effectively.

The results?

- A 600+% increase in organic traffic
- 200+% growth in online bookings
- A stronger footprint across new customer segments and B2B partnerships

With the global tours and activities market expected to reach \$264.4 billion by 2030⁵, this transformation shows how even small experience providers can thrive by embracing digitization, scalable technology, and a clear growth strategy.

Tours & Activities reservation market



10. Conclusion

The travel industry has entered a digital-first era, and small to mid-sized companies that adapt quickly are already seeing the benefits: increased bookings, higher customer satisfaction, and more scalable operations. By selling activities online, leveraging



automation, and using traveler insights to personalize experiences, SMEs can compete and thrive in a space once dominated by larger players.

The journey begins with choosing the right technology and embracing a mindset of continuous improvement. From building an online storefront with a website builder for travel and experience providers to automating follow-ups and syncing inventory using inventory sync tools for travel resellers, each step moves your business closer to long-term growth.

At Turpal, we have seen firsthand how small to mid-sized companies can transform with the right support. Whether you are just starting or looking to improve your current digital stack, we invite you to explore how solutions like the best online booking system for travel startups or tailored travel SaaS solutions for small to mid-sized companies can make a measurable impact.

Want to see how this works in practice? Let us explore what is possible—together.

[Book a Demo now!](#)

11. Disclaimer

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