

DESTINATIONS ON-LINE

Unmissable.com

Selling experience

When Unmissable.com launched in September 2000, it described itself quite deliberately as 'the first website for the experience economy'. The flagship website of Unmissable Ltd, Unmissable.com's mission in life is to bring consumers 'unmissable experiences'. How do you define an unmissable experience? According to co-founder, David Dobson,

'Unmissability means different things to different people so the chances are that, when trawling through the site, you may not consider every item to be unmissable. However, we've applied quite strict criteria to everything we sell on Unmissable.com. Throughout, the emphasis is firmly on what you can experience rather than just where you can go – from active adventures to tuition, immersion or celebrity experiences, unique events and utmost luxury. The company is dedicated to the sale of extraordinary, exclusive, exceptional and exhilarating experiences – be they holidays, events, activities and/or corporate entertainment'.

Unmissable Ltd spent the year before the website's launch researching and aggregating 'an unrivalled range of unique events, activities and holidays characterised by their exclusivity, desirability and scarcity'. Among the hundreds of experiences to be found on Unmissable.com are opportunities to cruise up the Amazon, trek to Base Camp on Everest and travel to witness the next total solar eclipse in Africa. Of course, the more exclusive the experience, the more exclusive the price. At the more affordable end of the range, you will be able to pamper yourself in a luxury

hotel for a few hundred pounds, while at the other extreme, £67,000 will buy you a place on one of the first commercial passenger flights into space.

The internet has given computer users unprecedented opportunities to take direct control of their choices in the purchasing of so many things, from books and CDs to food, drink, travel and holidays. So why choose Unmissable.com to act as a middleman? The website is quick to explain its value to potential customers:

'There are hundreds of amazing experiences in the world that often you either don't know exist or cannot find a supplier for. Unmissable.com is a UK-based website dedicated to finding and delivering those experiences of a lifetime. We've done the hard work for you in advance by finding and vetting the best operators and the best packages for each particular experience and destination. Unmissable.com has relationships with over 100 suppliers. We have selected them for their quality and unique expertise in specialist areas of travel, event management and hospitality. We sell all of our experiences at exactly the same price as you would get if you purchased them directly from the supplier. We strive to offer value for money but do not attempt to compete on price alone. There may be some destinations or similar itineraries that you could find cheaper elsewhere, but that doesn't mean the quality of experience will be the same.'

It is hard to argue against this value promise: if you are in the market for an unforgettable experience, surely the idea of using a one-stop shop is infinitely more appealing that



than spending hours on-line and on the telephone, tracking down suppliers and negotiating a whole series of deals. Unmissable.com undeniably succeeds in promoting the notion that an unforgettable experience should include unforgettable service from the very beginning.

The website offers users two ways of finding the experience they are searching for. A quick, easy-to-use search facility allows you to explore five elements of your target experience: country, date, duration, price range and availability. In case you can't find precisely what you are looking for on the site, you also have the option of creating your own tailor-made experience. This is done

'by adapting an existing product that may have inspired you, or by building a package based on your specific interests and requirements. Just tell us what you're looking for and our team of experienced consultants will research your request and get back to you within 48 hours with some suggestions.'

This level of individual choice also applies to Unmissable.com's excellent array of cross-referring links, designed to maximise users' exploration of the site's many sections. Indeed, content is so plentiful that space is at a premium, yet information is presented clearly throughout.

Unmissable.com is a model for any web-based concern selling the hottest product on the market: *experience*. Hot on its heels, other Unmissable-branded websites will be rolled out in 2001.