



Whitepaper:

## **Profits on tap:**

**How pubs with a fun factor  
are more likely to be profitable  
2024-2025**

This paper is prepared by  **saturn**

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## Executive Summary

**Saturn Visual Solutions** commissioned a piece of research with 2,000 UK-based, adult full-time and part-time workers. They were asked if they would be likely to spend more time and money than they'd originally planned if they were having a fun time in a bar, and if so, by how much.

- On average, people said that they would be likely to spend an extra 49 minutes and an additional £18.83 (per visit) if they were in a fun place and enjoying themselves.
- Over half (53%) said they would return at least on a monthly basis to a place (with a bar) that they thought of as being fun.

The research also found differences in perceptions between people in different demographic groups.

- Men are more likely than women to spend more than planned when having fun, and also likely to spend a larger amount than they'd originally planned.
- Those of retirement age are likely to spend the most when having a good time.

The research also asked the survey respondents what they thought made somewhere feel boring and what made somewhere feel fun.

### **More than half said that a fun place was somewhere visually interesting.**

Just under half defined a fun place/experience as somewhere that encouraged them to feel specific emotions (e.g., anticipation, excitement, happiness).

Whilst having a cohesive and attractive interior design is important, this research has shown that the overall aesthetic of a pub shouldn't overshadow the importance of creating a space that feels fun. In order to maximise profitability, pubs must make patrons feel excitement from the moment they enter, to the moment they leave.

Pubs that adopt a 'fun first' approach to the customer experience, are likely to increase their profitability.



# 1. Introduction

Pubs hold a cherished place in the UK's national culture, serving as vital community hubs. However, most would agree that the UK's pub industry has had a 'volatile' time over the last few years. COVID-19 lockdowns and behaviour restrictions caused staff shortages and changes in consumer behaviour. Since then, there have been energy price hikes, rising inflation and interest rates. There has also been supply chain disruption, and increases in the cost of food which have meant that pubs have struggled to balance rising overheads and affordable prices for customers. Customers have been struggling with the increased cost of living and have subsequently been paying fewer visits to bars and leisure venues and/or spending less when they do visit.

Whilst some measures have been introduced to alleviate the impact of these economic issues, it is essential that pubs, bars and social clubs maximise their profitability by broadening their customer base and increasing customers' average spend.

## 2. Our research

According to research by Saturn, people will spend more time and money in pubs, bars and licensed leisure venues that feel fun. This answers the question why some pubs in close proximity are more successful than others, and suggests that many bars are, in effect, leaving money on the table.

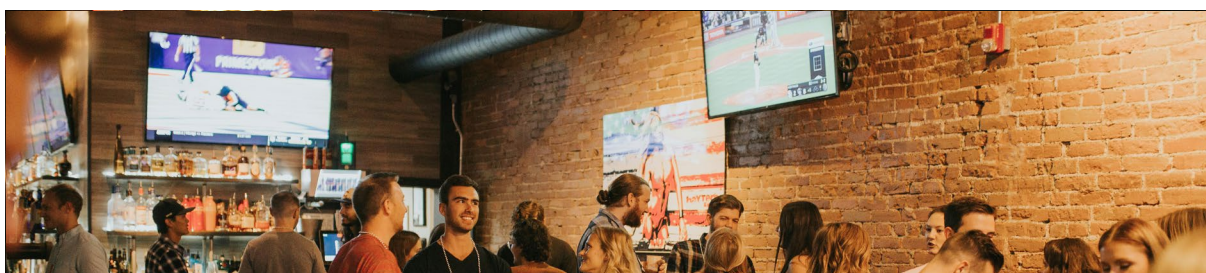
### 2.1 Additional time

41 per cent of people involved in the research said that they would be likely to spend between 30 minutes and two hours+ extra than originally planned in a bar, pub or licensed leisure venue (e.g. bowling alley) that they were having fun in.

This suggests that people will substantially prolong the length of their visit to a pub to avoid a pleasant experience ending. In doing so, they are much more likely to make additional purchases.

There were clear differences between the demographic groups in whether they would spend extra time in a bar they were having fun in, and how much longer they would stay.

- 59% of men said they would stay longer if having fun in a pub, but for less than an hour extra, whereas 45% of women said the same.
- On average, more than a third (35%) of those aged 18-44 said they'd spend 30-45 minutes extra, as opposed to just over one in five (21%) of people aged over 45.
- Six per cent of people aged over 45 said they wouldn't spend any extra time, whereas just one per cent of those aged 18-44 said the same.



## 2.2 Revisits

Saturn's research found that nearly a third (31%) of the respondents said they would return to a specific bar, pub or licensed leisure venue three or four times a year if they thought it was a fun place to be.

According to the research, although older people are less likely to stay longer than originally planned if having fun, they are more likely to return to the same place. 62 per cent of people aged over 65 said they would return to a fun pub/bar/licensed leisure venue at least once a month. The only group that scored higher was 18-24 -year-olds where nearly two thirds (65%) said they would revisit at least monthly.

Male and female respondents said they were equally likely to return to a bar they thought of as being fun at least three times a year (85%), but men said were more likely to return more often, with 59% of men saying they would return on a monthly basis whereas less than half of women (48%) said the same.



## 2.3 Additional Spending

Two thirds of all the respondents said they would spend more than they'd planned to on food, drinks and merchandise in a pub, bar or licensed leisure venue if they were having fun.

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**Over half (52%) of the respondents said they would spend more than £10 extra than planned if having fun. Nearly one in five (18%) said they would spend more than £20 extra.**

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Men are more likely to spend more than planned, and to spend a greater amount than women, with 58 per cent saying they would spend more than £10 extra. Less than half of women (47%) said the same.

People over the age of 65 were likely to spend the most, with a quarter of respondents in this category saying they would spend over £30 more than they'd originally planned if having fun.

Young adults are likely to spend the least, with more than half (53%) of 18-24-year-olds saying they would spend less than £15 extra, whereas (on average) only 38 per of people in all other groups said the same.

### 3. What is the fun factor?

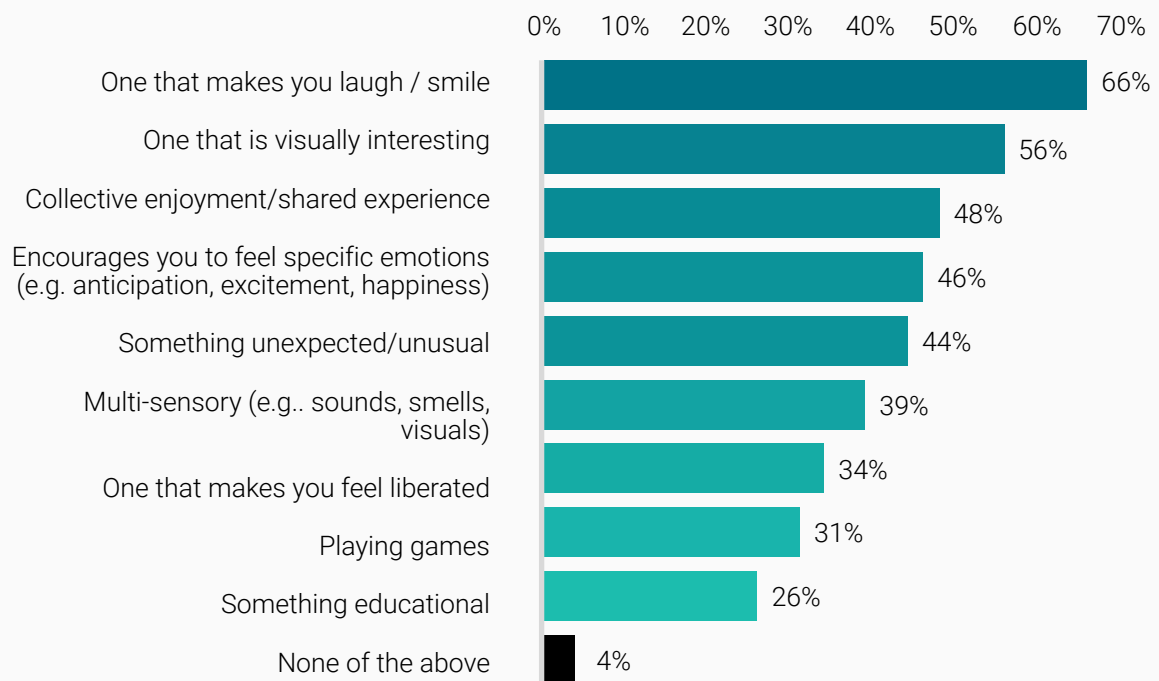
Although the concept of 'fun' is subjective, given the potential financial rewards, it is important to explore the distinction between what most people believe a fun experience is and what they think it isn't.

Saturn's research explored the difference between people's perceptions of what made somewhere feel like a fun and, conversely, a boring experience, and how they would be likely to respond in a place that felt boring.

This information can subsequently be used by pubs to alter their customer experience to make it more fun and therefore profitable.

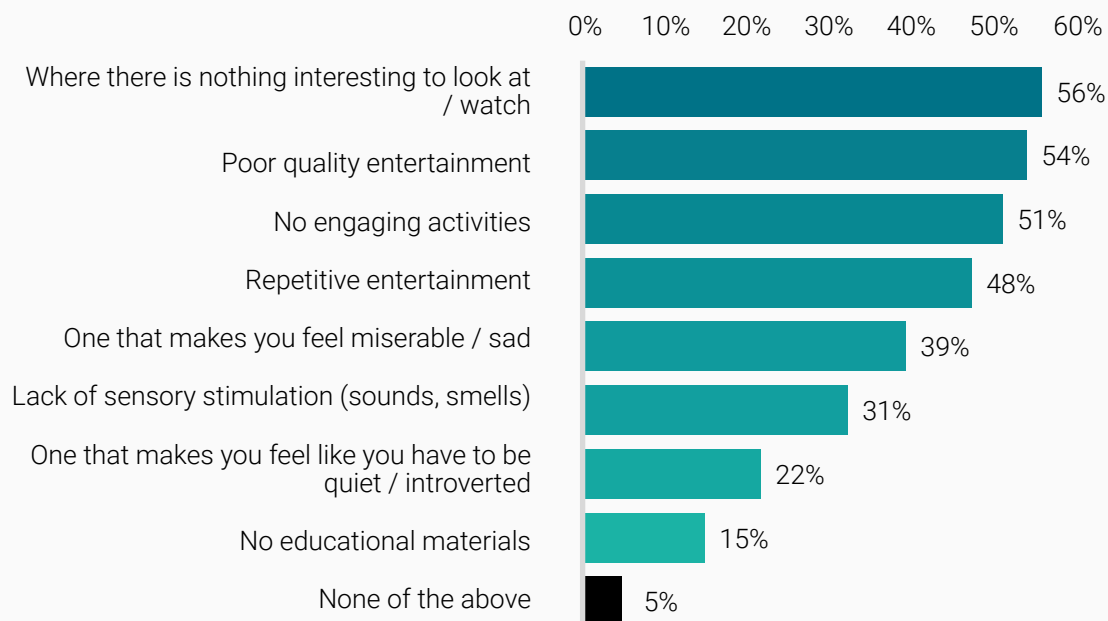
## Fun

The respondents were asked what made something feel like a fun experience



# Boring

The respondents were asked what made something feel like a boring experience



## Response to boring places

Respondents were asked if they avoided spending time in boring spaces when outside of the home. More than half (53%) said yes - this figure rose to 66% for those aged 18-24, and to 61% for the over 65s. Furthermore, a quarter said they were 'not sure' (as opposed to saying they would not), suggesting that **more than three quarters of people may avoid places they perceive to be boring.**

Respondents were also asked how long it took them to start feeling bored to the point where they felt they had to entertain themselves (e.g. using a mobile phone).

- 25% said 60 seconds or less
- 15% said 1-2 minutes
- 13% said 3-5 minutes
- 19% said longer than five minutes

*NB: 11% said they wouldn't entertain themselves, and 17% said they weren't sure*

These results suggest that more than half of people (52%) are likely to lose interest in a pub, bar or licensed leisure venue and think of it as being a boring place within 5 minutes, if it's not actively stimulating or entertaining them.

## 4. Solutions

The research indicates that there is a clear financial imperative to create a sense of fun and/or a fun atmosphere in pubs, to encourage customers to linger, spend more and return frequently.

Bar managers can take steps to foster a sense of fun to encourage patrons to stay longer and return.

**Key principles highlighted for improving pubs, bars, social clubs and licensed leisure premises are:**

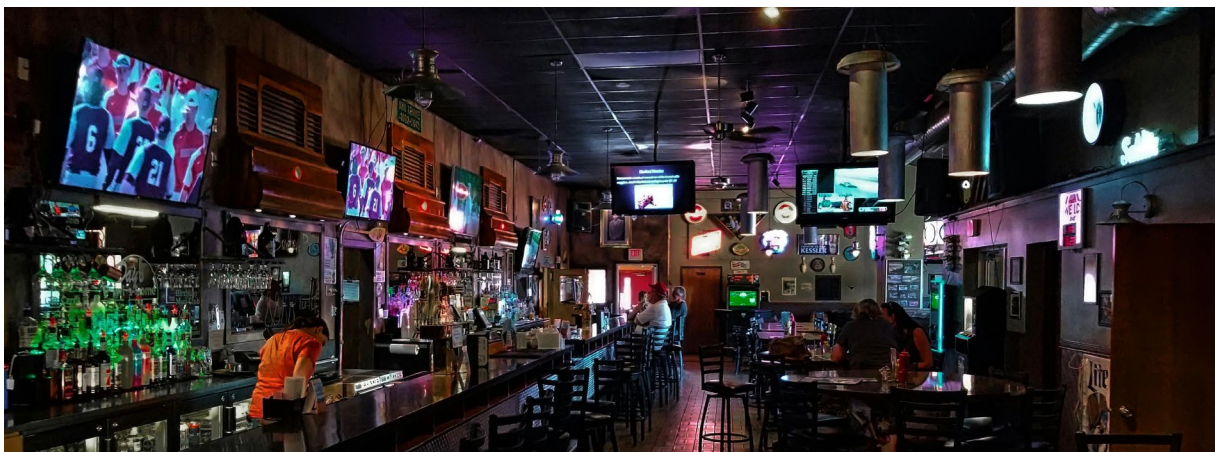
- They should be visually interesting places.
- They should stimulate customers making them laugh/smile, feel excited, and/or anticipate a positive experience.
- They should feel like lively spaces.
- They should foster a shared notable, positive experience, this could be within an existing group, or bring strangers together.
- They should be unpredictable.



Whilst this is a long list, it is entirely possible to deliver all of these elements in a cost-effective and repeatable way if digital signage displays and a good content management system are used.

This is because digital displays are dynamic and create a vast amount of 'airtime' which can be used in a variety of ways alongside standard drinks/food advertising materials and the promotion of special offers.

There's no doubting that investing in a pub full of large displays is expensive. But thankfully that isn't necessarily what's required to make a customer's experience more interesting. Even a single well-thought-out display can go a long way if it has good engaging content on it.





## 5. Content to create the fun factor

### Low content budget

#### Competitions

Using a little imagination and some clever content you can bring national or bar-specific competitions or pub quizzes to life and make them feel much more fun and inviting to join in with. You could do this using competition prize photos/videos, previous quiz questions as examples, photos of winners with prizes.

#### Challenges

Use the escape room approach and encourage people to solve puzzles or answer questions, and those that successfully solve one can be given a discount code that encourages them to buy more food/drink or merchandise (this could be supplied by drinks manufacturers).

#### Community

Don't just advertise events, promote the potential benefits of joining in, such as making friends and/or learning a new skill. You can also highlight the opportunities for people to join in with other community initiatives that take place inside or are linked to your establishment that they wouldn't necessarily be aware of or feel invited to join in with.

#### Segmented content

Pubs can feel like they're buzzing or boring at different times of the day/week, depending on who else is around. Every customer should feel 'made a fuss of' no matter when they go to a pub. This can be done by creating content specific to the time of day or week ("e.g. Tuesday lunchtime 'newspaper and a pint' people - you're our kind of people").



### Medium/high content budget

#### Social media feeds

Most good content management systems will give you the opportunity to show social media on a digital display (posts can be filtered to avoid inappropriate material appearing). A display showing your pub's social media feed (e.g. Instagram) gives customers something to look at that is unpredictable and encourages them to generate and post fun content to appear on the social media feed and feel part of the pub community. This creates anticipation and excitement to see if their post appears on the feed - it also promotes your bar as a fun place to your customers' social media followers. Ideally this should be on a dedicated display, hence why it is categorised as medium budget, but it could appear intermittently on an existing display in between promotions. Pub goers can be encouraged to post content which can be turned into a competition. For example; the best 10 word review of a drink or food product could win a branded prize (ideally this would be supported by partners to provide prizes).

## 6. Types of displays to create a pub with the fun factor

### Low budget

#### Small displays

Small displays tend to be the most cost-effective digital signage hardware and can be used to make a pub feel more dynamic and modern. By showing a variety of content they can bring a lacklustre bar to life. They can be used for showing live sport, promoting forthcoming events (e.g. pub quiz, live music) and for promotional purposes (e.g. showcasing food/drinks and special offers).

### Medium Budget

#### Video walls

Video walls are a great and affordable way to create a large, wow-factor display. They are made up of at least three screens of the same size and model, positioned next to each other using special brackets and are used to create the illusion of a single large screen. There's an almost limitless number of different video wall options, depending on the budget and space you have available. These can be used for showing live sport, promoting forthcoming events (live music, pub quiz) and for promotional purposes (e.g. showing special offers, drinks advertising).



### High budget

#### LED walls

LED walls are the next generation of digital signage. They provide a vibrant, continuous display that appears sharp to people in relatively close proximity and are easy to see at short and long-distance. Unlike a screen, an LED wall doesn't have set dimensions so they can be made in any size or shape, flat or curved and can be positioned almost anywhere (even on the ceiling!). They are more expensive than a traditional video wall, but they are also more efficient, using significantly less energy and have roughly double the overall lifespan. LED walls can be used for showing live sport, promoting fun regular activities (e.g. pub quiz) and one-off events (live music performances, charity fundraising nights) and for promotional purposes (highlighting special offers, food/drink options). Unlike projectors, standard displays, and video walls they are not affected by light, glare/reflections, giving excellent quality visuals wherever they are situated.

#### Outdoor displays

When it comes to creating an atmosphere of fun, there can be few things better than watching sport in large groups in a pub's beer garden in the summer. Displays can be installed within a robust enclosure making them weather-proof, vandal-proof and usable all year round (e.g. by smokers, dog-owners) showing food/drink options, special offers, advertising events, but also showing fun, entertaining videos. Alternatively, LED walls for outdoor use can be installed above head height for larger pub gardens making them vandal-proof and visible to large numbers of customers at once.

## 7. Software

Many pubs have domestic TVs for showing live sport, but commercial digital signage displays give bar managers the ability to change what appears on screen remotely throughout the day, whether it is live sport, advertising forthcoming events, promoting premium drinks (e.g. whisky, rum), food options or special offers. Whilst digital signage content management software can seem expensive, to get full value for money from digital displays we would strongly recommend that pubs use software with the following functionality:

### Basic

- Scheduling by time/day/regular intervals
- Content expiry dates
- Hashtags
- Remote management

### Advanced

- Split screens
- Screen synchronisation
- Capable of integration with social media
- Screen grouping (for pubs with more than one site/screen)

**SaturnVision is a digital signage software platform designed by Saturn specifically for use in the leisure and retail industry. It includes all of the above functionality and more.**

## Summary

Pubs and bars in the UK are facing a number of ongoing challenges.

Our research suggests that making pubs more engaging and fun can significantly boost customer spending and result in more repeat visits. Some pubs are capitalising on the 'fun factor', but many are assuming wrongly that a pub's atmosphere is solely created by the staff inside it and its interior design.

**Clever use of digital signage technology and great content can help pubs to feel more fun, helping customers to see the merit in lingering and returning more often.**

Digital signage solutions can do this by fostering communities and generally making pubs, bars and social clubs feel fun and far from the monotony of daily life.

The best way to get the right balance between costs and benefits is to work with a consultancy experienced in creating exciting digital touchpoints and content, and in working with different sized businesses with varied budgets. This will ensure that your bar gets the right hardware in the right place and with the right content.

## Next steps

Saturn Visual Solutions is a digital signage consultancy with 20+ years' experience in the leisure industry helping to make customer experiences engaging and fun.

We have worked with licensed leisure businesses of varying sizes from large, (e.g. Odeon Cinemas) to small (Urmston Social Club).

We use this collective experience to create fun, interactive visitor experiences, and to look for ways to improve the financial standing of our clients – e.g. through increasing the volume and profitability of food and drink sales.

We offer a range of complementary design, build, content and support services.

To learn more about Saturn can help your pub business, contact [sales@saturnvisual.com](mailto:sales@saturnvisual.com) or call **0161 222 0706**

