Orienting Communities to Tourism

A guide for rural communities and businesses to make the most from tourism

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Introduction

This guide outlines a range of actions and approaches that rural businesses and communities can take to better orient themselves to tourism. This includes attracting tourists, retaining tourists for longer, and maximising the economic and social contribution of tourism in rural and regional communities. The guide draws on community experiences and feedback in southwest Queensland involved in a project conducted by South West Regional Economic Development and funded by the Queensland Department of State Development.

Tourism has long been an important sector of the Queensland economy. Over 24 million domestic and international overnight visitors come to Queensland each year. The industry directly and indirectly employs 225,000 Queenslanders - 9.5% of people employed in the state (Queensland Government, 2018). In 2017, tourism contributed approximately $25 billion to the Queensland economy - 7.9% of gross state product (Queensland Government, 2018).

Tourism is one of four major sectors in the Queensland economy accounting for 3.5% and 5.6% of the state’s economy by output and employment respectively (table 1).

<p>| Table 1. The main sectors of the Queensland Economy (Queensland Treasury, 2018) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Output $ billion</th>
<th>Share of Qld Economy</th>
<th>Employment Number</th>
<th>Share of Qld Economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>130000</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>57700</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>64400</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>216600</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Much of this tourism activity is centred on major tourism centres such as the tropical north (and Barrier Reef), the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Brisbane. However, tourism is becoming increasingly important to the economy of regions and rural communities. Many rural communities retain their economic base of agriculture and small business, but their economy is diversifying with tourism joining these traditional sectors.

In the rural regions of southern and western Queensland for example, tourism visitation and expenditure has consistently increased (table 2).
Table 2. Tourism industry trends in southern and western Queensland (Tourism and Events Queensland 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>3 year trend (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Queensland Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic overnight</td>
<td>1,898,000</td>
<td>+6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International overnight</td>
<td>42000</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1939000</td>
<td>+6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outback Queensland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic overnight</td>
<td>806000</td>
<td>+11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International overnight</td>
<td>25000</td>
<td>+0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>830000</td>
<td>+10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenges and Opportunities
How then might people in rural communities‘ best develop the growing tourism sector to diversify local economies? How might rural businesses make the most from tourism? What can businesses and communities do to orient themselves to tourism?

These questions involve many challenges and opportunities for rural communities such as:

- Many diverse businesses and people are involved in tourism such as transport providers, retailers, accommodation providers, tour operators, and community organisations. They are often spread across a large geographic area and this can make it difficult for them to collaborate.

- Many businesses don’t see tourism as a key part of their income when in fact it often is. While many of these businesses may not be directly involved in tourism, they often derive a considerable proportion of their custom from tourists and from direct tourism businesses.

- Businesses and communities can often improve their cash flow from tourism such as offering good customer service, maintaining opening hours, sharing information about local activities, and improving the appearance of businesses.

- Investment needs to be made in local infrastructure and services such as roads, and telecommunications. Private investment needs to be encouraged in accommodation and in the development of local tours and activities.

- Tourism is often seasonal and extending the winter season is a key challenge in many regions.

- The most common form of tourism in many rural communities is “Grey Nomads”. This is an important sector but other sectors needs to be encouraged such as family tourism (during school holidays) adventure tourism, fly/drive options, and domestic and international package tours.
• Tourists often need more things to see and do in rural communities and the development of viable local tours and activities is important.

• Marketing of regions and local attractions often needs more coordination. Many tourists are faced with “a thousand brochures” rather than clear coordinated marketing messages.

• Social media and word of mouth is crucial to tourism. Tourists rely on this to make decisions about communities to visit and businesses to deal with. Having an effective social media presence and responding to reviews can have tourists effectively marketing businesses and communities themselves. Equally, poor reviews and social media comments can have a major negative impact on businesses and communities.

• Becoming more “tourism-friendly” includes having infrastructure and facilities for tourists and locals, developing a tourism culture, town beautification, improving streetscapes, having local people appreciate local tourism assets, and cross-selling attractions.

• There needs to be a better understanding of the process of community transition involved in growing tourism so that tourism can be well managed and developed in line with community values and aspirations.

• “Enablers” of tourism need to be effective such as local and regional tourism organisations, Visitor Information Centres and local government.

• Events are big tourism attractions in rural areas but they often be better leveraged so that businesses can better capture event tourism income.

Relatively simple changes can make a big difference to a business and to a community. For example, improving customer service and getting more familiar with social media may really influence tourists’ choices to patronise a business.

Unlike agriculture or mining, tourism really is everyone’s business in rural Australia. The impression that a whole community makes - the friendliness of people, the appearance of towns, the facilities for tourists, and the local activities and “characters” – determines the prospects for people to build their local economy through tourism.

This guide outlines key practical ways for rural people to orient their community to tourism. These are inexpensive, straightforward suggestions based on extensive engagement and feedback from business operators and community members in rural communities across southwest Queensland. The guide covers ways of attracting tourists, how best to market and promote communities, how to improve customer service, the use of social media, ways to measure and evaluate tourism, and how to make the most from tourism-related events.

References


Attracting tourists to your region

Before you can attract tourists to your region, you need to know what you have to offer, what other tourists have said about your region, what tourists like to do, and where your region’s strengths are. When a tourist asks the question: “What is there to do in this town?” you need to have an answer and a list of potential options for them. Just one or two things will be enough. A visitor to your region or town should never hear this as the answer to this question: ‘I don’t know’ or ‘There’s not much to do here’. Positive, friendly responses are essential to create a good first and then lasting impression. This list of options is often called an inventory of tourism assets and it’s the first step in this three step process.

Step 1 – Create an inventory of tourism assets

The core inventory of your region should of course include natural attractions (lakes, cliffs, sunsets, rivers, sand-dunes; wildlife etc.) as well as outdoor recreational activities that people can do in these settings – fishing, hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, painting, bird watching for example.

This is only the start. Think about other things that make your region a great place to live – friendly people, safe environment, clean air, important history and/or culture. These assets are also valuable to tourists as well as residents. When you are conducting your inventory of tourism attractions also consider the region more broadly than just your town. Tourists, and those travelling through, do not see town, shire or even state boundaries. Think about how you might leverage nearby attractions or even attractions that are similar to yours where tourists can get ‘more’ of that great experience.

Finally, talk to the community (both old and young people) about why they love living in your region and things that their friends and family comment on as being special or attractive. Understand the needs and aspirations of your local community and explore how tourism can generate income and life for the town to allow it to become the sort of town/region they want to live in. Remember tourism needs people as well as places – it is not enough to just be a place, today’s tourists want to experience being like a local and to experience things that are different to their own lifestyle. Make sure you involve everyone to get a good feel for what you have to offer and then share this information with your community and your neighbouring communities so that when people are asked: ‘What is there to do in this town?’ Everyone has an answer.

Create a tourism inventory

Find the things in your region that will appeal to visitors including:

- Beautiful or intriguing things in nature, including geology, wildlife and scenery;
- Fun things to do outdoors;
- Places to get to know local history and culture;
- Chances to see and interact with local artists, people of note and people who produce food or other items of interest (whipmakers, coopers etc);
- Festivals and events that celebrate the local history, culture, harvest time, foods, music or celebrities;
- Built attractions, such as monuments, historic buildings or unique lodging options;
- Local business and retail stores where visitors can shop or be pampered;
- Transportation modes that are unique such as ferryboats, carriage rides, trains or four-wheel drive tours; and
- People in the town with interesting stories or history.
Step 2 – Evaluate and prioritise the inventory list

Once you have the list of options you then need to evaluate and prioritize them based on their quality, authenticity, uniqueness, value, and their ability to generate revenue and extended stay in the region by being attractive to tourists. Review your inventory through the lens of a visitor – what would they think about this? If you don’t know the answer to that question get out and ask some tourists. You don’t need a fancy and expensive questionnaire. Stop by the pub at dinnertime, or the local camping ground or café, ask tourists what they like about the region (also ask if there are any areas that could be improved!) and what might convince them to stay longer.

Evaluate the list of assets in terms of:

- **Uniqueness** – if it is not unique is there a way to make it so? If not how can you leverage off other similar attractions to make a trail or series of experiences rather than compete directly with similar attractions.
- **Authenticity** – if it is not authentic should you persist? If so what needs to happen to make it more authentic? How could you incorporate local stories or characters more?
- **Quality** – is the standard comparable with expectations of tourists (consider physical quality and service quality, opening times and the experience provided)? If there were gaps in expectations then what would need to happen to bridge this? Who would pay for this? Is the value there?
- **Drawing power** – Is this an attraction that people want to visit? Are they talking about this type of experience on social media and in other tourism channels? If not, why not? Is it because it is not known as an option? How to get it known? Is it something that is no longer popular? If so can it be revived using retro or other similar positioning?
- **Guest perspectives** - Ask guests what they think about your current assets. What is good and why? What needs improving and why? What is missing from the region that would make a difference and entice them to stay another night? What needs to happen to make the guest’s perspective and community needs align? Who needs to be involved? Are there business opportunities that could benefit the community as well as visitors?

Step 3 – Identify opportunities for future investment

Once you have completed your evaluation, make note of attractions that need some TLC or maybe some amenities (toilets etc.) to make them more appealing to visitors. Work with your local council/chamber of commerce to prioritise this list and have a plan for improving and extending your list of tourist attractions over the next 3 – 5 years. Local councils are a great source of assistance in identifying potential funders and grant programs that you may be able to use to assist with infrastructure needs. Work with your local chamber of commerce and maybe high school or TAFE to scope out opportunities for new business ventures such as guided tours or unique accommodation or food providers. These can give people in the community a chance to create a successful business with a little help and guidance.
Identify what level and degree of investment is required

Organise the list in terms of short and long-term opportunities for growth, investment and community participation.

- Make a list of what capital and social work needs to be done to bring the tourism assets up to speed.
- Prioritise the list with the support of local council and chambers of commerce or progress associations to assist with ideas for funding and support.
- Don’t try and fix everything at once – work on the top attractions first and then move to those that need more work and are less known over time – make a 3 – 5 year plan.

Useful links for potential funding opportunities:


Tourism and Events Queensland - [https://teq.queensland.com/industry-resources/how-to-guides/obtaining-a-grant](https://teq.queensland.com/industry-resources/how-to-guides/obtaining-a-grant)

Marketing your region

Once you know what you have to offer, the next step is to tell people about your region or town so that they can include you in their visitation plans. This is part of a 6 step process beginning with understanding your current markets.

Step 1 – Identify your current and potential tourist markets

The first step in marketing your region to tourists is to understand who is currently attracted to your region or town. You started this process when you evaluated your tourism inventory in the last section. Look again at your tourism inventory list, what sorts of visitors are currently attracted to your region or town for these assets? Are there tourists that you think might be attracted to these assets but who currently aren’t coming, don’t know about them or have special needs that you haven’t included yet? Also, think about types of visitors that you would like to attract (for example families) and ask what sort of services, facilities and attractions would they need and do you have them? What would it take to provide them?

Identify current tourists by asking:
- Who is currently visiting us?
- What do they do?
- Why are they coming?

Identify potential tourists by asking:
- Who might be attracted to our assets that are not now?
- Are there tourists we would like to attract? What do they need?

Step 2 – Identify the behaviour of your tourists

Once you know who you are attracting and who you would like to attract and why, think about their behaviour in both the planning and experience phases of their trip. How long are they staying, what sort of traveller are they, what time of the year do they travel, are there different needs for different groups and can you use this knowledge to smooth out your seasonality? Start by asking your existing visitors
some of these questions to get a feel for their behaviour. Find out how they plan their trip, what information sources they access, and whether they are repeat visitors or only a one off. The state tourism body (Queensland Tourism and Events) has lots of resources and research about tourist behaviour that you can access, as does your RTO. Make sure you include them in your research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask current visitors questions to understand their behaviour:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How far in advance did they start to plan their trip?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What information sources/people did they use to help plan their trip?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is this a repeat trip or a first time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What did they wish they had known then that they know now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How useful was the current information to their planning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are they regular travellers and would they come back again or do they like to visit new places each time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How long do they plan to stay in each place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do they like to do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 3 – Audit your marketing efforts**

Once you know who your markets are, you then need to audit your current marketing effort. Think about what you are currently spending on marketing and whether it is impactful or not? If you don’t know, then it’s possible you are wasting your money. All marketing effort should “build in” ways of measuring their impact. If you have bought advertising in a range of publications, which ones work and which ones don’t? Do you need all of these? Who are they targeting and how are they being distributed. These questions will help you to work out whether the investment is worthwhile.

Look at your image and logo, are they consistently used? Are you sending the same, simple message to your guests or have you used multiple messages and images that could be confusing potential tourists? Are you showing your future visitors what they can experience with your business – don’t focus on things like the rooms or the furniture, whilst this is important, it is the experience that will entice future guests and generate excitement and interest.

Think about what you are highlighting as the main message in your marketing. Are you emphasising the peace and quiet and beautiful wildlife, or maybe you can offer amazing local produce cooked to perfection, perhaps it is spectacular sunsets or even great local stories. Whatever your experience, keep it simple and stick to the one message for each target audience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audit your marketing efforts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List all publications and marketing efforts and then ask:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is it working and how would I know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who is being targeted with each publication?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is the message in each and does it align with the target audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How is the publication being distributed? Will it get to the target audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the brand image and message consistent? Is this clear for the target audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do I need to say to each target group – keep it simple and focused?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does my marketing effort align with branding from state and regional tourism bodies?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once you have worked out who you need to talk to, how to talk to them and where, then it’s time to think about what you say in your marketing.

**Step 4 – Find your travellers before they arrive**

Today’s travellers are much better informed and connected that ever before and it is important that you understand their decision making processes in order to know what information to provide to them.

Once you know who is coming to visit, and who you want to visit, try and find your visitors before they arrive. This means making information available to them that will assist them in planning a trip to your town or region. Answering questions such as: ‘How do I get there?’, ‘How long is the drive?’, and ‘When is the best time to travel there?’, ‘What is there to do when I get there and how long should I plan to stay?’

Try to identify where these tourists might look for this information. Certainly your Visitor Information Centre is an important start, however this will only be relevant for visitors who are already in your region. This is where collaboration with neighbouring regions and their visitor information centres as well as your Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) becomes important. Create a referral process within and around your region so that you, ‘hand off’ visitors to your neighbours and they to you to keep them in the region for longer.

Apart from your own websites and social media pages, local council websites, the RTO, State and other tourism websites and traveller information forums are all important places for your information to be hosted. If possible, create one source of the information and then share this as widely as possible so it is easier to keep it up to date.

**Step 5 – Active use of social media, but don’t forget the personal touch**

Having an active social media campaign is an important part of any marketing plan. However, you don’t have to use all possible platforms. Facebook and Instagram are probably the main platforms for tourists. Attend training and get assistance to ensure that you are maximising your impact in these channels. There is more about social media later in this guide. Even with the best social media presence it is important not to forget that people are critical to your marketing and to your tourist experience.

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**The most important thing to remember in your marketing is people. This means:**

- **Your customers** – give them an experience that is memorable and authentic and then encourage them to share this with their friends and family and on sites like trip advisor;
- **Your staff** – make sure that your customer service is five star so that the experience is memorable and share-worthy;
- **The people in your town or region** – invite local businesses and other tourist operators to visit you so that they can provide recommendations and information to tourists about what you offer and do the same for them;
- **The people in your neighbouring regions** – invite them to visit and experience your offering so that they can also be ambassadors for you; and
- **The people in your regional and state marketing offices** – ensure that your RTO and STO know what you have to offer so that they can tell even more people about you.
Don’t forget online travel agents such as Trip Advisor, Expedia and Booking.com. Some people grizzle about the commissions that these businesses charge but remember if you are paying commissions then you have guests at your place! It’s worth it, just make sure that you cover your costs so get some assistance from your accountant to help work out your break-even prices and then what margins you need to make a profit. Then add on the commission so everyone wins.

**Step 6 – Train and plan for negative feedback**

In spite of your best efforts, not all your guests will be happy. Negative comments and critical feedback should always be seen as an opportunity to connect with your customers on a personal level. It gives you a chance to really have a conversation with them and it shows that you care enough to take an interest. This is always a positive even if you cannot satisfy or pacify the complainer. Frankly, that is not the point. If you think about negative feedback and complaints as positives, then you are less likely to take it personally when it is provided. It is always important to remember that some people are just never happy, whilst others may have legitimate issues.

Make sure that you address negative comments posted in social media and on your website immediately. When people read reviews and see negative comments, they are less likely to be concerned if you have responded and addressed the issue appropriately and without being defensive. Future visitors like to see that you are open to constructive criticism and feedback and everyone can spot haters or people who are being unreasonable.

Always be polite, acknowledge the complaint, thank the guest for the opportunity to do better, explain what you are doing about remediating the problem and offer an incentive to make up for the mistake or for the guest to come back. The most important part of handling negative feedback is to keep your response concise, stick to the facts and provide a solution and never be defensive. Even if the complaint is unreasonable, make sure your response is not negative.

Next, train your staff in how to handle feedback in person, on the phone and on your electronic platforms. Make sure everyone sees this as a learning opportunity and a chance to do better and not something to be frightened of. Discuss complaints in your staff meetings so that everyone can see that they are taken seriously and that you are not looking to blame people, rather you are seeing to do better.

**Useful links**

https://blog.capterra.com/9-dos-and-donts-for-handling-customer-complaints/

https://thetaylorreachgroup.com/elevating-the-customer-experience-through-social-channels-infographic/

http://www.dontpanicmgmt.com/handling-customer-complaints-social-media-grace/

Handling negative feedback means:

- Don’t take it personally
- Be polite
- Be courteous (even if the complainer is not)
- Be gracious – thank the complainer for the opportunity to do better and to learn
- Make sure you provide a solution
- Offer an incentive and invite the guest to come back and see the solution if possible
- Train your staff
- Never be defensive

Don’t let this be your business!

Utilising Social Media

Social media is an important part of every marketing plan and there are few simple rules that will get you started. Whilst it may seem overwhelming, the most important point to remember when using social media is that content is the key. Regardless of what platform you use, if you don’t have new and interesting content on your site all the time, guests will tune out and your efforts will be wasted. Today’s travellers go online to research their future travel destinations and 89% of “Millennials” plan travel activities based on the reviews of their peers and what others have posted online. This is why it is important for your presence to be current, relevant and interesting. This behaviour also means that online customer service is just as important for building a positive brand as is interpersonal customer service.

59% of people access social media every day or most days
And over a third...
check social media over five times a day
The other thing to remember is that you do not need to engage in all social media platforms. Pick those that you are comfortable with and then make them work for you. Most tourism businesses need to have at least a Facebook page, a presence on TripAdvisor, and if possible, an Instagram account. If possible, get some training early on so that you can maximise your presence, learn how to manage your presence sustainably and how to avoid common pitfalls and traps for new players. Figure 1 provides a great summary that might help you make sense of the various social media options and why you might use each.

**Figure 1. Social Media Explained**

![Social Media Explained](image)

Today’s tourists love to share their experiences via photos and video. Cash in on this trend by inviting your guests and visitors to share their positive experiences and images on your sites so that you can leverage the good word-of-mouth, and attract new visitors. Ensure your hashtag and other social media handles are obvious, create competitions or other novel ways for your guests to provide you with authentic content and imagery for your business. This approach will ultimately build an influential web of peer-to-peer content that will inspire potential guests as well. Once your guests have tagged you on their images and videos – make sure you then share these with your RTO and other tourism organisations to really leverage these opportunities. This is such a powerful trend that people are even doing this with their private experiences like weddings as the example here shows!
You can even go so far as to provide portable frames or photo booths for guests to use to ensure you get your branding front and centre in all of their photos.

When thinking about photo opportunities, it is not much use if no one can quickly see where the image is from. Spend some time at your business looking for unique and creative photo opportunities for your guests. Then mark these with signs inviting guests to take photos, make sure your business name and location are obvious and that your social media handles and hashtags are also provided. You will be amazed at how many people will be only too happy to tag you if they know this information. Provide internet hotspots so that guests can upload their images and once again advertise this to make it obvious for them.

Having photo sites with hashtags allows tourists to easily share their experience (and how great your region is) on social media

If you offer food and drink then your social media options become even greater. Invite guests to check in to your place and to photograph and share their food. 51 percent of customers trust the reviews and images posted by people on social media - more than formal restaurant reviews. But don’t stop there. Take people on a virtual back stage tour of your restaurant and post the video on your site. Encourage your staff to post their favourite recipes and meals, create competitions for your guests to guess menu items such as the example below. Encourage your suppliers to join you by posting video or images of their fresh produce being grown, harvested or just delivered to make the dining experience even more engaging for your guests.
Another important point to remember with social media is to respond quickly to comments, questions or complaints. Use the same techniques as mentioned earlier when handling complaints: Don’t be defensive; don’t argue or fight with the poster; find a solution and offer compensation. These comments give you a great way to measure your customer service and your business success so make sure you embrace this part of social media.

Social Media Dos and Don’ts

**DO**

- Scope out great photo sites, signpost them and invite guests to shoot and share
- Make sure your social media tags and addresses are obvious everywhere
- Invite guests to check in, document and then share their experiences of your business
- Engage with guest generated content to keep your social presence current and exciting

**Don’t**

- Attempt to control or censure what guests post – deal with negative comments politely and efficiently and leave them for others to see how you handled things
- Leave your social media sites unattended for more than a day (even that’s too long)
- Forget to share guest photos and videos with other tourism operators – your RTO, the state and national tourism bodies and even your local council
- Leave photo sites without an obvious label – people need to know where the photo is.
Customer Service

One way to ensure that your guests have a great experience, leave happy and tell everyone they know how wonderful your business is, is to provide great customer service. The essential components of great customer service are empathy and authenticity. Empathy means putting yourself in the shoes of your customer and asking the question, ‘what would I really like in this situation?’ People may forget what service you provide, but they will always remember how you made them feel.

Genuine caring cannot be faked. It is important that you and your staff really do care about your customers and wanting to make their interactions with you as positive as possible – this is the authentic part. Make sure that you employ people who actually like people, like talking to people and who are smart enough to be able to really listen to your customers and to help them.

There are ten key attributes that top customer service people have. These are:

1. Patience and a calm manner
2. Attentiveness – being alert to a customer’s needs and being a good listener
3. Good communication skills (verbal, written and non-verbal – body language)
4. Great product knowledge
5. A positive attitude and happy disposition
6. Great time management skills
7. Empathy and ability to “tune in” to customers and their feelings and needs
8. Quick thinking to be able to handle surprise situations and find a solution
9. Tenacity – not giving up until the customer is satisfied
10. A willingness to learn.

Once you know who your customers are, you can then think about what would constitute great customer service for them. It doesn’t have to be expensive or showy, simple things can make all the difference to your customers. Staying open if a customer calls to say they’ll be arriving late, offering to assist a customer with a task, providing a cup of coffee or tea at check-in time for those who want to relax and making check-out quick for those who want to get going, are all simple customer service solutions that will reap long-term rewards.

‘People may not remember what you did, but they will always remember how you made them feel’

Great customer service often starts with asking questions and being observant. Guests who are harried, having a bad day or are just irritable for whatever reason, want quick, efficient and competent service. They want outcomes and not a relationship. The very next customer might be happy to chat, to hear stories about the cat sitting on the porch and to take their time with your staff. They want a relationship more than the outcome. Train your staff to know the difference and to adjust accordingly.
Being able to observe what approach to use, and to alter the way service is provided, should be the main goal of any customer service training. This flexible approach to customer service and allowing your staff to take control to provide outcomes that customer’s want will result in happy customers and empowered staff.

Remember that your customers are people, and when you and/or your staff put in extra effort this will return ten-fold to your business. Never cheat your customers with lazy service.

Useful Links:


https://www.helpscout.net/blog/customer-service-skills/

Developing Local Tourism Initiatives

Tourists are looking for things to see and do while visiting rural communities. They want to meet and talk with locals, walk along the riverbank, talk with people about local history and get out of town to see local sights. At the same time, community members are challenged about how to turn local assets into tourism products and activities, and how to develop viable tourism businesses. Having local attractions and activities, not only attracts tourists but can also cause them to stay another night. While many communities have “traditional” static attractions such as museums, viewpoints and picnic areas, many tourists are looking for active experiences such as music, fishing, walking, bike riding and interacting with people.

People often have many ideas for local attractions and experiences but developing local attractions, activities and tours, and establishing consistently profitable tourism businesses, is not easy. It is often difficult to attract venture capital (invested at a higher risk), and to establish profitable businesses when tourism is very seasonal. There is also a “chicken and egg” situation where it is difficult for an entrepreneur to invest in a new tourism business without consistent demand from customers.
So how might your community develop tourism initiatives? There are many suggestions of ways that small regional centres can enhance the experience of their visitors without having to invest in fancy marketing, expensive brochures or even major infrastructure investment. Here are a few things to consider.

Audit Local Assets
An audit of assets and experiences, mentioned earlier in this guide, is an important first step. By looking at existing activities, identifying gaps and also listening to feedback from tourists, you can identify prospects. You are likely to be able to identify free or low cost community-based tourism activities and experiences (such as self-guided town walks) or potential viable businesses such as local tour operations.

Consider what local resources and assets may be turned into experiences. For example, local “characters” may be ideal tour guides, historic houses or landmarks may be able to host tourist visits, a tag-along tour to local landmarks could be organised. See the case study of the Farm tours at St George as an example of turning what you have into a tourist attraction.

Case Study: Farm Tours at St George.
The St George district has been built on agriculture and cotton growing and processing is an important local industry. People who work in businesses in the town, and staff at the Visitor Information Centre were often asked about the possibility of tours of local farms and the local cotton gin. The local tourism community, working with farmers, organised guided cotton farm tours for tourists. For $50 per person tours are organised by the Visitor Information Centre, using a council bus. Volunteer guides take 5 to 15 visitors to several farms around the area for about 4 hours. These tours are so popular in the winter season that farmers had to develop a roster of participating farms to ensure that farm work was not interrupted too much. Profits from the tour are donated to local charities and community organisations. This venture cost little to establish but has relied on a lot of local organisation and goodwill. It has encouraged tourists to stay longer in St George and the district resulting in greater tourism income for the community.

Feasibility
The next step is to seriously assess the feasibility of potential activities and attractions. It is not a matter of “build it and they will come”. It’s important to develop a business plan and to assess the real economic situation of any new tourism activity or attraction.

Consider the following:

- What is the likely market for a new activity or attraction? How many people might be attracted to it? What sort of traveller would you be targeting?
- What might people be willing to pay? At what price point would people think twice about doing the activity?
- What would be the fixed costs (overheads) and the operating costs?
- What is the continuity of the market? Is it highly seasonal and if so, how might you manage things in the off-season?
- How long might you be able to operate in break-even or deficit mode in order to get the activity or attraction going?
- How might you leverage visitors from other activities in the district or from other regions?
• Compliance with regulations and insurance can be disincentives. What help might be available to assist with these?
• What funding might be available to support either a community or private activity?
• Visitors can self-promote your activity or attraction on social media. A good reputation on social media is crucial so consider how to build this into your plan.
• Cancelling activities is a major disincentive. Consider what to do if you don’t have sufficient numbers.

Low Cost/Input Activities
For many small communities, low cost activities can add a lot to tourist experiences. For example providing a guided local tour experience can be done inexpensively and will open up opportunities for tourists to stay longer and to really experience what it is like to live like a local in your region. Even self-guided walking or driving tours can be entertaining activities for visitors. Your local environment, things you see every day and take for granted, can also be great low cost tourist attractions. Kangaroos in the park, Emus in the main street, birds and the stars are all novel and interesting for visitors from urban locations. The case study of the Roma sale yards tours is a great example of low cost tourism making the most of what you have.

Case Study: Local Experience Success Story – Roma Saleyards
Roma Saleyards are the largest cattle selling facility in the southern hemisphere, selling over 400,000 cattle a year. An idea to offer tourists guided tours of the saleyards has been developed into a very popular attraction. This has re-invented an everyday facility for local people into a key attraction for tourists that benefits the whole region. Volunteer guides offer free tours on sale days on Tuesdays and Thursdays and tourists can see a real sale take place, understand more about the beef industry and agriculture in general, and hear stories and anecdotes about local incidents and characters. The guides are retired local graziers giving the tour authenticity and detailed local information.

The tour is very popular with up to 150 people doing the tour each day. It has very good reviews on social media and has led to many visitors staying an extra night in Roma in order to connect with a tour on a sale day.

Alternative Business Models
There are alternative business models for tourism ventures that can spread investment risk. For example, a community-owned business is based on local shareholders buying a share of a local enterprise. A common example of this is a community bank, but a community-owned enterprise can be anything from a café, caravan park, motel, to a tour operation. These businesses operate like any other, but profits are shared with shareholders and also provided back to the community.
Making the most from Tourism

As already outlined, there are many things that local businesses and communities can do to attract tourists. However, once you have tourists in your town or region, you need to be able to maximise the benefits that can be derived from them. This involves a range of things that enhance tourism experiences and that allow your business or town to be presented in the best possible way. Here are some examples of how you can make the most from tourism.

Appearance and welcome

Visitors to regional towns love the quaintness of the towns and the closeness of communities. Ensuring that lawns and gardens are well tended, that parks and common spaces are tidy and inviting and that houses and businesses look clean and well cared for are important elements to attract and retain visitors. Tidy towns not only attract visitors but they also give the local community a sense of pride in their community. Towns do not need to be necessarily modern or wealthy, but they do need to be neat and well presented. The Queensland tidy town’s accreditation program is a great way to engage the community. Visit [http://www.keepleaguebeautiful.org.au/programs/tidytowns/info](http://www.keepleaguebeautiful.org.au/programs/tidytowns/info) for more information about this initiative.

If there are vacant business premises in the main street, think of ways to make them appealing rather than look like things are abandoned. Some examples might be: using the windows to showcase local art or school projects; invite local artists to decorate the buildings with murals or other art forms; provide the buildings at low cost to emerging tourism businesses; or allow the local historical or progress association to use the buildings to showcase historical photos or other artefacts.

Loops and itineraries

Tourists who drive often plan their trip as a loop rather than as an “out and back” journey. This occurs in many inland rural areas where there are long distances to travel. Developing and promoting logical loops for travellers, such as the Natural Sciences Loop in Southwest Queensland, can attract more tourists because they are convenient, ready-made trips, and they can develop their own identity and perhaps become a “bucket list” item.

Itineraries provide a ready-made set of activities and sights for people for different lengths of stay. Consider developing a 1 day, 2 day or 3 day or longer itinerary for your region and neighbouring regions. This encourages people to visit because it does the trip planning for them. The Natural sciences loop map and itinerary is a great example of this done well.
Infrastructure and Services

Tourists need particular infrastructure and services to even consider staying in your town. This includes:

- Accommodation of various styles and ideally enough quality accommodation to host a coach of people;
- Good quality food options, particularly in the evening and on weekends and public holidays;
- Fuel, particularly with out of hours access; and
- Ideally, mobile phone and broadband internet connection.

Infrastructure can enhance tourism such as: walking paths; seating; gardens; shade and/or clean toilets.

Roads need to be maintained with comprehensive up to date information about road conditions. Physical maps can be out of date so for unsealed roads, which can be a particular deterrent for tourists, it’s important to have information on how many kilometres of dirt road there is and what condition the unsealed sections are in. Some communities are lobbying to remove discouraging messages such as removing the word “Development” from inland roadways such as the Bulloo Development Road. This gives the impression that the road is still under development or that it is rough.

Signage

Some tips for signage are:

- Make sure your community is on map signs. It is surprising how some obvious communities can be omitted from maps.
- Have a consistent theme on signs such as a logo or colour scheme. The size and style of road signs is strictly managed by transport authorities but there is scope for themed tourism signage.
- If your community is off the highway, make sure there is good signage leading up to, and at, turnoffs, with information about what you offer and a reason to pull in.
- Signage needs to be well presented and clear. Signs should grab attention, not to convey a lot of information. “Amateur” or faded signs can detract from a community, however quirky signs like the one on the right can make great photo opportunities and encourage visitors to stop.

Local Awareness

The experience that visitors have of your community relies on them knowing what is happening and what they can do. Everyone who interacts with a tourist (the baker, the council gardener, the pharmacist and even the petrol station attendant) can be tourism “ambassadors” informing tourists of local things to see and do. They all need to know what there is to do and how to do it. Many regional areas are currently undertaking the host program where hospitality and tourism workers will be certified in providing information about their district including history, facilities and activities.
“Front line” businesses such as caravan parks, motels and museums need to be updated about local activities such as a guitar player at the hotel or a tai chi class in the park for instance. They can pass this on to tourists, adding a lot to their experience. This avoids comments like, “There is nothing to do in this town.” Some communities (such as Cunnamulla) have started an “Ask a Local” effort where local volunteers are available to chat with tourists.

Local people also need to be informed about activities and attractions. Ironically, many people who live in rural communities often don’t really know what local attractions and experiences are like. Having a “Discover your Own Backyard” event or a road trip to attractions in the area can be a great social way for locals to get to know tourism assets. Communities can also have a day where local people have free admission to paying attractions. This helps to inform local residents helping them become great “word of mouth” promoters of their own community.

Other ideas are to have an up to date town map of where to eat and encouraging businesses to cross-promote.

Being RV Friendly

Being “RV Friendly” is a way to encourage RV and caravan tourists. This means have infrastructure and facilities that suit RVs such as long parking bays, signage, dump points, picnic areas, out of hours fuel access and high quality caravan parks. You can arrange to have your community designated as RV friendly which can be used in promotion. These facilities allow you to maintain good word of mouth and social media reputation in the “Grey Nomad” community.

The provision of “free” camping is a controversial issue in rural communities. On one hand, a proportion of caravan tourists seek out free camping sites and providing these sites attracts these tourists to at least stay overnight and spend in your community. Some local councils provide free or low cost sites to encourage local spending. By not having a free option, vans often stay illegally in gravel pits and other locations.

On the other hand, caravan park operators see free or low cost camping as unfair competition that erodes their business. These business object most to sites that are: free and still offer some additional facilities (such as toilets or showers): public sites (such as showgrounds); close to paid caravan parks, and where some communities have free sites and others don’t. In reality, most caravan tourists that look for free camping will also stay some nights in a paid caravan park.

The challenge is providing options for different segments of the RV and caravan market and having a consistent policy that balances the needs of travellers and commercial businesses. A possible resolution is for free camping to be “no facility” or “low facility” sites, for them to be physically separated from caravan parks, and for public facilities to be used for camping only where there are no paid camping businesses.
Collaboration

Businesses, community members and local government need to work together to encourage tourism. This collaboration can be helped by informal business/tourism networks or formal tourism development groups. Many communities have organisations that collaboratively plan and coordinate tourism promotion, investment and activities. It is important for communities not to expect the local council to do all of the heavy lifting when it comes to tourism opportunities. Local council is certainly an important player and can be invaluable when it comes to attracting funding or identifying grant opportunities. It is important that the community, through chambers of commerce, progress associations or other organisation work together and take on some of the initiative when it comes to developing tourism opportunities.

Businesses making the most from tourism

This guide includes many ways in which businesses can benefit from tourism such as customer service and use of social media. Some other simple things are:

- **Maintaining opening hours.** Tourists often want to access businesses such as cafes, supermarkets, and bakeries outside normal working hours. However, it is difficult in many family based or single operator rural businesses to maintain long opening hours or to afford to employ staff to cover shifts, particularly on weekends. In rural communities, you often cannot be sure that longer hours will mean more customers. However, it is important that businesses reliably open and close at their publicised hours. If there is “creep” where businesses open late, word easily spreads and people move on to other towns. Some small communities have found that a roster of opening hours gives everyone a break and still provides essential services for tourists.

- **Recognising the contribution from tourism.** Many local businesses who are not directly providing services to tourists consider that they are not involved in tourism. However, visitors may actually be responsible for a good proportion of their turnover. Recognising the potential contribution of tourism to businesses allows operators to better serve tourists and improve turnover. The chemist and the newsagent in many small towns will find that they have considerable business from travelling tourists. This means that in reality, they are in the tourism business – even though they might not realise it.

- **Business presentation.** As mentioned earlier, it important that businesses are well presented, are clean, tidy and offer excellent customer service. Ensure your front line staff are trained to welcome customers and be genuinely happy that they are there.

- **“Coopetition” in small towns.** Coopetition is a combination of cooperation and competition. In small communities, with limited local and tourist customers, it is easy for businesses to see new products or business improvement by other operators as a threat to their business. Yet, it is really about “growing the pie” rather than dividing the same size “pie”. Improvements in business presentation or new products being offered, can allow the community to attract more people, have them stay longer and allow tourism to grow in the region as a whole. Business still compete but they can also collaborate to improve turnover for the whole community.
Businesses that “bring the others down”
In many rural communities there can be particular businesses that may not be operated in a way that leaves a positive impression on visitors. Even one business in a “front line” role with visitors can lead to poor word of mouth about a community. Business operators can conduct their business as they wish but if customer experiences are affecting tourism for the whole community, they can be respectfully approached to see what they might be interested in doing to improve the situation without telling them what to do. Some possible approaches are:

- Talk to the operator and mention what others are doing to improve tourism turnover,
- Arrange for customer feedback from locals and visitors about all businesses in town and allow each business to consider feedback on their business,
- Offer to help improve things such as helping with a clean-up or putting them in touch with business services,
- Recognise the assets that they have and their positive contribution.

Marketing
A lot of expertise and resources goes into marketing of tourism opportunities in rural areas. However, at the local level it is sometimes not well coordinated. Tourists are often faced with “a thousand brochures”. Businesses are often approached to advertise in various outlets with little information about likely returns. It may help to take stock of existing marketing and consider the best way to market your district in conjunction with tourism organisations (see the earlier section on marketing your region for more tips).

Making the Most of VICs
Visitor Information Centres (VICs) are crucial hubs for tourism in rural communities. Only a proportion of visitors go to a VIC but they can greatly enhance the tourism experience for visitors help leverage tourism spend. Modern VICs are looking to be visitor “Inspiration Centres” rather than just providing information. It is local advice about “hidden” gems that really interests visitors and this personal connection is engaging for visitors.

Diversifying tourism
Remember that tourists change with time and it is important to actively develop new experiences for alternative markets. Consider fly-drive, adventure, or family tourism as well as domestic and international package tours. Anticipate the change from Grey Nomads into more diverse tourism options for “Generation X” and “Millennials”. Councils need to develop and then clearly communicate their tourism strategy and processes with tourism businesses and residents.

Other regional tourism opportunities
There are many other opportunities in regional communities for tourism development. It all depends on the community and what you have to offer. Some examples of other opportunities are outlined next.
Indigenous tourism is one area that is very popular with tourists and where there is huge growth potential. Consider engaging with your local indigenous population to discuss how they might like to play a role in offering tourist experiences. Talking tours, telling stories, highlighting bush tucker are all ways that these members of your community can get engaged and share their history and heritage.

If you have a strong agricultural industry, then maybe consider agri-tourism and farm stays as an alternative tourism option. Engage your local farming community and see how they might like to work with those in the towns to offer opportunities for tourists to experience life on an Australian farm.

If your region has Paleo or dinosaur relics – paleo-tourism - then this is another great opportunity to find a difference and to offer a unique experience to visitors. Most people are fascinated by the whole dinosaur experience and it certainly provides a reason to visit your town or community.

Finally consider education tourism. There are many schools both in Australia and overseas that are looking for unique experiences for school kids. Many regional towns have underutilised town halls, or other centres that school camps could utilise. These tour groups are looking for interesting historical, cultural and environmental opportunities for up to a week for groups of school kids and they can be very lucrative for small towns. These groups also provide opportunities to highlight a different lifestyle to these youngsters and some just might be attracted back later in life.

Event-Based Tourism

Events are an important part of the tourism industry in rural Australia. There are three main types of events:

1. Major events draw people from a long way including from capital cities and coastal centres. Examples are the Birdsville Races, The Big Red Bash, Woodford Folk Festival, Gympie Music Muster, Carnival of Flowers in Toowoomba, Tamworth Country Music Festival or the Elvis Festival in Parkes.
2. Regional events draw people largely from the adjacent regions such as the Chinchilla Melon Festival, the Hell-of-the West triathlon, the Felton Food Festival and Music in the Mulga at Eulo.
3. Local events largely focus on attracting local residents and tourists who are visiting the broader region. Examples are local rodeos, historic festivals, sporting events, picnic races and arts and crafts exhibitions.

Local events can often be planned to “feed off” major or regional events. For example as tourists travel to the Birdsville races, communities on the route often hold local events to capture tourism activity.
What’s involved in event tourism?
Some considerations in developing event tourism for rural communities are:

- You need to consider what “niche” your event fills. There are many events across rural Australia and the calendar is full in many regions. Even for existing events, organisers need to assess how their event fits into a crowded schedule and how it stands out to attract participants. Don’t plan events in already busy times such as school holidays. Look for opportunities to fill gaps in the existing tourist season with your event.

- What is the target market for your event and how might it appeal to these people? For example, a country music festival would attract certain enthusiasts and a garden festival would attract a very different audience. Who might be the audience? How many people are in that audience? How far might they have to travel and how much money might they spend? Some investigation of the target market will help you decide about the best way to manage and market an event.

- How does your event coordinate with other events? Is it part of a route that tourists can take? How might it leverage from other events, particularly major iconic events? What competition is there from other similar events?

- Events need a lot of organisation and local “drivers” and volunteers are crucial to success. These people can easily become exhausted and lose enthusiasm. Drivers need to be supported and volunteering needs to be task-oriented, enjoyable and social.

- Events need to have a clear profile, a good reputation and positive word-of-mouth. Consider how your event is perceived and how people find out about it? How do organisers market and promote it?

- Consider a major draw for tourism events. This might be a celebrity guest, an anniversary or a special experience or occasion. Other aspects of the event can be built around this.

- Events are not just for tourists. Many local residents attend events and they play an important role in community-building. This happens through people sharing experiences and social interaction, together with showcasing and celebrating community assets.

- Motivation needs to be strong for people to travel specifically to an event. Often tourists attend regional events as a day or weekend trip from a major centre or by being part of a touring route that coordinates with the event.

How to have a successful event
A successful event that attracts tourists and ideally builds numbers each year depends on a range of factors including:

- Having a business plan that outlines the market, demand, costs and returns of an event.
• Continuously improving the event over time based on feedback from participants and volunteers. This allows the business plan to be revised and the event modified to remain attractive and successful.

• Everything needs to work well – activities, accommodation, food etc. It is not just a matter of having great activities or performances. The overall experience is crucial and participants need to experience good facilities, customer service, hospitality and local attitude in addition to the event attractions.

• An event needs to build and maintain a great reputation and profile. Social media is crucial to this and events need to have hashtags and actively encourage positive social media messages. Patrons will self-promote the event on social media but they can also readily share negative experiences as well. Word of mouth is also crucial to event reputation and promotion.

• Events need to have strong support from local organisations and residents and fit in with the values and interests of the community. It’s important to have the support of local government, key community organisations and local volunteers. Events need to minimise their impact on local residents such as parking, noise etc. and maximise local benefits such as having local suppliers and close business engagement.

• Events need to be financially viable. You will need to have a professional “offer” to potential sponsors, and consider whether a ticket charge is appropriate or whether to have a free event. What would be an affordable event for the target market? What would they be prepared to pay for food, accommodation, travel and the event itself?

• Timing – events need to be timed well to coordinate with other events, to avoid duplication or competition and to link with the target market such as having events on long weekends or during school holidays.

• Organisational capacity – consider the time and effort that organisers and volunteers have to put into the event. In many rural communities, “drivers” and organising committees are volunteers and it can be hard to keep effort going over a long period of time. Volunteer succession and support for drivers is important.

• Funding is available to support Tourism events in Queensland through the Queensland Destination Events Program. More details are at https://teq.queensland.com/events/events-support/queensland-destination-events-program
How communities can make the most from tourism events
Some tips to improve community benefits from tourism events are:

- Leverage major events. Consider how your community can capture visitors travelling to and from major events. For example, many communities in south west Queensland run their own smaller events to attract people travelling to and from the Birdsville Races.
- Assist businesses in being prepared and have them consider extended opening hours during events.
- Support event organisers and mobilise volunteers
- Help events have a “good neighbour” policy so impact on neighbouring residents or businesses is minimised.
- Make sure the event is active on social media.
- Have accommodation and facilities prepared well in advance so people can stay over in the community.
- Maintain a high profile for other attractions and experiences during the event.

Measuring & Evaluating Tourism

Access to relevant and timely data is essential for any community seeking to better their orientation to tourism. There are a number of local, state, national and international sources of data about tourism, most captured at the Tourism & Events Queensland (TEQ) Research and Insights webpage:

https://teq.queensland.com/research-and-insights

Through the Australian Government’s Destination Visitor Survey (DVS) program, Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) and Tourism Research Australia (TRA) jointly funded a research project to produce 2015-16 regional tourism satellite account (TSA) results for Queensland tourism regions. The TSAs evaluate tourism industry activity and performance, measuring both the direct and indirect impacts of tourism on the economy and include metrics such as gross regional product and employment. The results in the fact sheets for the Outback regional area (https://teq.queensland.com/research-and-insights/domestic-research/regional-summaries/outback) are updated on an annual basis.

Understanding the current role of your tourism sector is important if you are looking at attracting visitors to your area, and as information for businesses looking to locate in the area. It remains very difficult to get specific Visitor Information Centre (VICS) data for each Local Government Area, with most Local Governments not making their VICS visitor data publically available. However, through the Darling Downs & South West Regional Development Association (RDA) website, it is possible to get both tourism economic value and tourism workforce characteristics via economic profiles downloadable for each Shire.

Investing in customer feedback data collection and collation
Tourist feedback is the driver of progress and positive change. Few businesses have the capacity to get detailed feedback and responses from all visitors but providing simple and accessible means to offer immediate comment should be a priority. Utilising social media for this purpose is discussed elsewhere.
in these guidelines but even such basic steps as providing a welcome book for visitors to record their impressions ought to be strongly promoted. An openness to both positive and negative feedback can also enhance the integrity and authenticity of visitor responses, again by simply encouraging both in the form of direct feedback to the operator.

**Case study: Customer Feedback: Thargomindah**

Businesses operating in and around Thargomindah have proposed to design and support a local data gathering effort through local businesses across the whole shire for 1-2 weeks in June 2018. Businesses will offer a simple card for customers to complete three basic questions:

1. What attracted you to the shire?
2. What would attract you to stay longer?
3. Where are you going to?

This would effectively be a sample of the tourist population and achievable for businesses to collect. It will also offer a final ‘star rating’ (1-5) of their overall experience of Thargomindah.

**Conclusion**

This guide has provided you with an overview of how to make the most of tourism for rural and regional communities. The information is based on the experience of the researchers and on extensive community consultation processes. This is designed to give you ideas, hints and tips on how to get started and some information about where to go to find out more. The main thing to remember when looking to make more out of tourism for your community is that communities are made up of people and it is these people that tourists want to meet, get to know and listen to. It is therefore critical that you engage your communities as a first step in this process, talk about what you want to achieve, ensure you have a common approach and goal and then start working together. Remember tourists want experiences to share and to talk about and it is these experiences that enrich their lives and the lives of the communities they visit. Now go out there and make some memorable experiences to share with others.

**Useful references/websites**

Queensland Government 2018 Business Queensland: Tourism Market Profile:


Queensland Treasury 2018 Queensland Economy:


Tourism and Events Queensland 2018 Regional Snapshots:

[https://teq.queensland.com/regionalsnapshots](https://teq.queensland.com/regionalsnapshots)

Destination Marketing in Victoria: