

3.11 Developing your product

Tailoring your product to your market

Developing your tourism product is all about tailoring it to your market. It is a process, first, of analyzing and inventorying your ideas, resources and the resources/attractions of your area and, second, of analyzing your marketplace. Based on this research, you can begin to develop a product that is both within your capacity to offer, and that meets a market demand.

Satisfy the demand

A viable tourism product is one that satisfies a *want* that a potential tourist has. Products are far more than physical objects. For example, a tourist who buys a *river trip* receives transportation, food and beverages, equipment, a guide and other provisions. What is being satisfied, however, is the tourist *demand* for adventure, excitement and companionship with people who are like minded. Satisfying the *visitor demand* will depend on *all* of the tourism components required to make up the river trip, both physical and experiential.

Yukon itself satisfies a demand

When you begin your inventory of resources and attractions, start with the Yukon itself. The great majority of tourists interviewed in the Yukon Visitor Exit Survey (2004) indicated they were pleased with their visit to the Yukon. Scenery is identified as one of the top motivators for coming to the Yukon, with wildlife, gold rush history and outdoor activities also very popular motivators. Clearly, a wilderness, wildlife and historic experience are some of the fundamental demands in the marketplace today and Yukon bodes well in this regard.

Start with an area inventory

For you, the individual tourism business operator, these basic attractions of Yukon are valuable but they are only a starting point in developing your tourism product. You should begin with a formal assessment of your area’s resources. This inventory can include scenic attractions, cultural events/activities, accommodations, infrastructure, interpretive services and the like. At left is one

example of an inventory work sheet that can help you focus your efforts.

RESOURCE	number	unique features	quality	potential low, med, hi	description/problems
Natural, scenic attractions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bird species • climate • fishing • geology • hiking trails • lakes • mountains • parks • wildlife 					
Historic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations • gold rush • museums 					
Cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • festivals • events • other 					
Accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B & B • campgrounds • hotels • lodges 					
Restaurants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fast food • specialty • fine dining 					
Interp Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bus tours • guided walks 					
Human Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first-aid personnel • guides • support staff 					
Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medical services • police stations • communications 					

Assessing your product

If you were developing a river trip product, your inventory analysis may determine that a major waterfowl nesting area lies within easy reach of your proposed trip. You analyze this apparent opportunity and determine that it would add two days to the trip plus related costs. You would now turn to market research to see if there is a demand for this type of experience, and structure your trip to that demand. You may find that river trippers themselves are not interested in such a side trip but that an entirely different market segment might be interested in an inexpensive weekend trip specifically to watch birds. Your research indicates that your bird watchers usually travel as couples, are in their mid-50s, and want a high-quality, comfortable experience. You will want to know whether the market segment is large enough, and what it is willing to spend. Now is also the time to determine if your competitors are already offering this kind of service/product, at what cost and to what percentage of the market. You would then take all you have learned and try to develop a unique, reliable product that is within your capacity to consistently deliver, and that is specifically tailored to the needs and demands of this market segment.

Adapted from "The Business of Eco-Tourism," C. Patterson, Explorer's Guide Publishing

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Be creative with your product

A creative approach to your product design is essential. Potential tourists are comparing your product to many other Yukon products, Canadian products, to Alaska products and to products of other countries. Your product must be different enough from the others to stand out. Establish a theme for your product, something that will express an image of the type of experience you are offering. Ensure that your product is of a quality and reliability that will make it attractive to the travel trade (that group of tour operators and others who sell tourism products to travellers). Remember too that the motivation to travel is no longer merely escapism but enrichment – tourists want to experience something unique and different. They want to participate, not just observe; see the animals, not just be told about them; run the river, not just look at it.

Fully describe your product

You can describe your product in several different ways to your potential customers. Make sure you are clear on the market-demand which your product is aimed at satisfying so you can relate your product descriptions to markets where demand exists. The description should include:

- what markets the program is aimed at (existing and potential)
- a general description of the product highlighting its key components either in the description or itinerary
- where it is located, point of departure and what other locations will be included
- transportation involved from start to finish (arrival to departure)
- risk factors involved and waiver requirements, if any
- minimum and maximum number of persons required to operate, if applicable
- optional activities outside of inclusive and scheduled components, if applicable
- and of course, your booking and cancellation terms and conditions.

Be precise

When you describe your product, it is important to be precise. For example, *adventure travel* is a very general product description – too general to be useful to the business operator. *Wildlife viewing* is more precise but you can aim at even more precision by getting to the level of bird watching, caribou watching, and bear watching. For most businesses, this level of detailed product description will be required to make the description realistic to your identified markets.

Service delivery of your product

There is a strong link between tourism training and product development. Tourism product always involves delivery of a service and these services are always delivered by people. The quality of the service will depend on the skill level, enthusiasm and commitment of the operators and their employees. So, product development almost always includes people development. Check with the Yukon Tourism Education Council (YTEC) or Yukon College to find out about tourism training and industry certification.

No end in sight

Product development for your business starts when you first conceive of your business idea and it should go on as long as your business operates. Tourism is a dynamic, evolving and constantly changing industry, and it is critical that your products and service evolve with it. For your continued success, you must stay abreast of changes and trends, communicate with your customers, actively seek their feedback, and monitor growth or decline within your sector.