

Is Your Product Internationally Ready?

Have you considered whether your product is suitable for the international market?

A number of issues need to be considered when promoting your product internationally.

Ask yourself the following questions:

Accessibility - is your product close to a regular air/bus/train service?

Usually overseas visitors are limited in the amount of time they can spend in any particular location; therefore access to your product is vital. In certain circumstances investment in a transfer facility should be a major consideration.

Service - does your establishment or product reflect high levels of service expected by international visitors?

High service standards have become synonymous with the tourist industry in Australia and constant reviewing and training is essential to maintain these levels.

Distinctive - does your product reflect an Australian experience to the customer?

Visitors to Australia want to experience our way of life. Ensure that there is as much "Australiana" as possible in your product. However, you must differentiate between "Australiana" and "Ocker".

Credibility - is your product already established in the Australian domestic market?

It is important that you already have a customer base, which illustrates your product's credibility. Remember, not all tourism products are suitable for marketing overseas on an individual basis. It is important to arrange your product as part of a package of attractions, then contact Inbound Tour Operators and sell them your product or package.

Have you selected a specific target market?

Don't try to enter every market at once, for it is far more important to select your market carefully. An overview of the international markets is included in this publication.

Are you a member of the local Regional Tourist Organisation?

Your local Regional Tourist Organisation can assist you in promoting your product and keep you abreast of invaluable opportunities as they occur. They are also an excellent source of information and advice.

Is your current domestic brochure and website adaptable to the overseas marketplace?

Make sure that when producing a brochure/website you are aware of the experiences or key selling points of your product for both your domestic and international markets. Experiences in the domestic market may not be appropriate for the International

market and while it is important to retain the Australian flavour in your prose.

Ensure that your property, attraction or service is well presented. The overseas traveller is accustomed to seeing informative, well-conceived and attractively produced material whereby decisions are often made. If you are planning to distribute your brochure to both the trade and consumer, the following information is essential in brochure design:

- A concise description of the product
- Where it is located (include a map with Australia, Queensland and the Region)
- When it operates (use months, as seasons are reversed)
- How to get there (use both miles and kilometres)
- How to book (your full address, telephone, fax numbers (with area codes), email address and web address)
- How much it costs (use Australian dollars and approximate local currency equivalent or exchange rate at time of printing).
- Allow space for the travel agent's stamp and sticker - usually on the back of the brochure.
- Ensure your brochure conforms to appropriate envelope sizes (this can bring down your costs considerably)

If you plan to distribute your product through wholesalers, it is not compulsory to have your prices in local currency. Your product may be featured as a component in the wholesalers' brochures.

Have you considered a sales visit to meet the Inbounders, major wholesalers and agents in the relevant markets?

Maintaining regular contact with your distribution system and providing them with updated information on your product is very important. There are several do's and don'ts when conducting business with international wholesalers:

Dos

- Source information about the market you wish to target and the type of product that is saleable in your target market
- Do your research and have your prices fully prepared for negotiation
- Expect to negotiate - buyers invariably have a choice of product
- Take advantage of the opportunity to meet buyers at the annual trade shows held in Australia, such as the Australian Tourism Exchange
- Pre-schedule all appointments (well in advance) and reconfirm the visit a day or two beforehand
- Make your presentation brief and to the point
- In Japan and Asia - ensure you have a basic understanding of the local customs before you visit. For instance, dress conservatively, be willing to adapt, be prepared and carry bi-lingual business cards, don't be shy about giving gifts to the management and staff, ask advice and return hospitality.

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- Ensure your sales materials contain plenty of factual and collateral information as well as a good quality images. DVDs also should be part of the collateral.
- Be flexible - impress your target operator that you are able to accommodate adjustments in product, booking procedures and incentives to secure their business
- Follow-up and honour everything committed

Don'ts

- Don't visit during the public holiday periods, including Christmas and New Year
- Also avoid visiting when large major travel shows are being held elsewhere in the world
- Don't arrive unannounced
- Don't play one operator off against another
- Don't commit to rates or services without keeping written records

You will have to allow for levels of between 20-30% to cover an Inbound Tour Operator, an overseas Wholesaler and Retailer to deliver and sell your product internationally. You must also be prepared to quote firm prices well in advance - up to 18 months ahead and ensure it is fully understood that your rate is gross or net.

Be careful that your international pricing is not higher than your domestic rate or advertised online rate and be flexible but realistic when setting your price levels.

Trade and Media Familiarisations

Famils target 2 key groups:

Trade - includes wholesalers, travel agents and inbound tour operators

Media - includes journalists and writers for print, broadcast and online media outlets.

In the tourism industry, trade and media are key third party proponents of your product and story. Famils offer trade and media a taste of what's on offer. They're your chance to educate and win over the people who influence consumers in making their holiday decisions. If trade partners and travel writers know your product and like it, they can do a lot to sell it through their respective channels. Building trade and media relationships is an essential part of doing tourism business. After all, your product competes not just on a regional level, but with tourism destinations and products across the globe. Famils are a relatively low cost way to promote your product to larger networks of trade and media.

Inbound Tour Operators

TQ works closely with the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) to organise and run ITO famils, often as joint ventures. They pull together the programs and invite the delegates from different markets based on particular marketing needs, strategies and activities.

International trade and media famils

TQ and Tourism Australia have international office networks and deal only in international trade and media famils. The key objective for the famils program is to match tourism product to meet the interests and needs of the international famil delegates. The international trade and media famils program plays an important role within TQ marketing activities.

Trade

Travel trade representatives come to Queensland to assess product, compare rates, see attractions and inspect local accommodation. Their itineraries cover many more operators than media in a single visit and are much more regimented. They need to know what they are selling and identify other product suitable to their market. Famils can also help the travel trade to:

- enhance their product knowledge and motivate the retail trade to sell Queensland tourism product
- demonstrate to wholesalers and inbound operators that Queensland has a broad range of saleable product.

Media

Media come here to experience our lifestyle and to discover what is special about Queensland. They then help sell our tourism assets to the world through publications, television programs and images. Media need facts and a clear idea of what the State has to offer their audiences. They will be inquisitive and ask many questions. Their itineraries need to be flexible to allow times for interviews and other story leads that may arise during their stay.

Media famils help to:

- generate favourable publicity about Queensland as a tourism destination
- create positive attitudes towards Queensland as a tourism destination in the hearts and minds of key decision makers or opinion leaders.

There are some nuts and bolts you'll need to have in place before you sign up for any famils program. As well as being prepared to host famils free of charge (FOC) or at a discounted rate, your product should be:

- in excellent
- order and run to high standards
- accessible and safe
- commissionable
- a member of your RTO - highly recommended
- registered with ATDW - highly recommended

Before you commit to hosting a famil, you should also make sure you do your homework:

- does the famil link to your target market?
- what organisation do they come from?
- what position do they hold in their organisation?
- what opportunities do they offer?
- do they have real potential to sell your product, i.e. trade - are you already included in their program or is there potential to be considered?

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- what value can they offer you, i.e. media – what coverage might you receive in return?

TQ provides you with much of this detail when it sends out its 'Trade Famil Request' or 'Media Assessment Details and Request'. However don't be afraid to ask questions and find out more if you're unsure about anything.

If you're planning for international famils, depending on which markets the participants are coming from, you may also need:

- translated marketing and information collateral, i.e. Chinese, Japanese, German, Korean, Arabic and/or others
- to provide services, facilities and menus that cater for differing needs be they dietary, cultural or religious. For instance, gluten free options, foods prepared according to Kocher or halal traditions
- policies and practices in place that observe cultural sensitivities, e.g. many cultures forbid the consumption of pork. If you serve a buffet, keep pork and its serving utensils separated from the other dishes.

Once you're ready, you need to contact TQ or your RTO to register your interest in the famils program. If either TQ or the RTO doesn't know your product already, they'll want to meet with you to discuss your operation and experiences to gain a clear understanding of how and where you fit the market. They'll point out any areas you might need to strengthen before you begin and they can brainstorm with you to come up with good story angles for media famils.

The Tell and Sell of Famil Success

You want to blow the socks off your media and trade guests because if they love your product, they'll tell others about it and nothing sells better than glowing referrals and recommendations.

The key is to prepare like you were being judged for a big award, because that's exactly what's happening. Your product and services are being summed up and compared with the competition.

To give your product a leading edge look for points of difference that will make your famil guests feel special. For example, if you're hosting a German famil and you have a German chef, introduce them and give them time to chat together.

Media are constantly on the lookout for a good story. To make the most of your media opportunities it's important to know what journalists will need during their stay.

Below, we've listed a few points to help make each famil worthwhile:

- do your research on the publication and what the journo is looking for, i.e. what is their story angle, story style, areas of interest
- plan an interesting and relevant itinerary
- allow time for interviews and filming/photography

- allow time for the journo to fully experience your product, i.e. schedule breaks and time to themselves.
- the best stories highlight authentic and unique experiences. Profile Australian personalities or characters or teach the audience something new about the destination
- For international media, highlight the 'Australian-ness' of your product in your press kits and make the most of your points of difference

Lastly:

Unless your product is geared up for it, you'll need to do some serious ground work before launching to inbound markets. Lots of research, planning and preparation are required to make a product internationally ready.

You need to:

- build your knowledge and contacts through advice from TQ, your RTO and local operators who already export their product
- know the inbound markets Queensland and Australia targets
- research these markets and what they're looking for
- identify your potential to sell to those target markets
- understand how the various distribution systems work
- develop your plan of attack, i.e. a marketing and distribution strategy for each market
- make the necessary changes to your business to account for the needs of each market.

On this final point, be aware that international visitors are restricted in the time they have to experience your product. You need to tailor experiences based on these constraints and make it feasible for customers to participate in your activities in relaxed and convenient ways.