



VISITORS' WELCOME VISITOR SERVICING AND READINESS



VISITOR SERVICING AND READINESS

A meaningful, positive, and memorable experience is pinnacle to ensuring successful visitation to our region, and especially to your businesses. When we think about visitor servicing, we think about the entire journey or do we?

Beyond the activity of the experience, it's how we inspire and convert a customer from dream mode to an actual booking. While they are in our care, we greet them, extend a friendly welcome, tell stories with engagement, and deliver an amazing experience. Finally, when they depart our goal is to leave them with a feeling of satisfaction, a feeling of fulfillment and wanting to not only return, but to tell their friends and family about their visit, with enthusiasm.

The sense of arrival is the validation of choosing and returning to a destination and to your business. The only way to achieve the best sense of arrival is to take practical consideration of visitor servicing and readiness and back it up with building consumer relationships and confidence.

In the age of customer empowerment, it is especially challenging as consumers are enabled by digital technology with added inspiration through content. Drive visitor servicing messaging that will reach their channels that ensure a focus on readiness and anticipation of their arrival.

Visitors Are at The Core of Our Thinking

When we think about visitor servicing, we need to think about the entire journey – not just the point of engagement at your business or a visitor centre. To better understand where our visitors engage with ‘content’ and for what purpose, let’s look at the journey itself.

We know that the best way to engage to reach audiences where they live, where they search, whereby receive content that inspire them for consideration. If you are only providing brochures in the typical visitor spots, you are not reaching the vast potential of audiences. The benefits of digital reaches the audience before they arrive and not just during as with print. Imagine a visitor planning to stay longer, access to what they can experience in the pre-arrival phase would enable them all the information to plan their best itinerary.

Breakdown our visitor audience into segments that are based on primary drivers or motivations for visitation. The point of this exercise is to help us find the right media environments through which to invite potential visitors to our destination.

In-destination visitor servicing is an “all-in” engagement prospect. Each touchpoint is an influencer that helps the visitor make the decision about the where and what, during the visitor journey planning, execution, service-experiencing, and advocacy on the post-visit stage.



Customer Service Standards

Good customer relations can leave a lasting positive impression that leads to increased visitation and return visits. This is fundamental to the success of your operation

- Follow-up on all enquiries and sales opportunities efficiently
- Guarantee to deliver
- If changes occur, be upfront and inform client of any changes the product or experience as soon as you realize these changes
- Confirm all details of contract or service prior to start date. This will prevent confusion and disappointment of something that was expected but not delivered.
- Have handy checklists ready and refer to them prior to activity to eliminate oversights.
- Develop a client information sheet that is complete with such things as names, ages, origin, language spoken, medical conditions, experience level, special needs, and contact numbers.
- Make sure your communication system, schedule and equipment are failsafe and meets industry standards.
- Be on time, in fact be early!
- Welcome your clients in a professional and confident manner.
- Brief clients on protocol, safety, expectations, time needed, preparation of what to wear/bring before they arrive and before activity starts.
- Be aware and follow all licensing and legislative guidelines.
- Share knowledge and storytelling in the areas of culture, history, land, and other pertinent information as often as possible

Customer Service Training

Take every opportunity to develop and provide your staff and volunteers with customer service training whenever possible. HHBRTA offers training periodically throughout the year and it is good practice to work with us to ensure that you are aware of programs and availability. Other industry and government programs may also be available, especially those that relate to customer service.

Good service leads to customer loyalty, which leads to business success: it's a direct link and especially true in tourism, where it's the experience – as much as the product or service – that keeps people coming back. Many tourism businesses train their front-line employees, not just in the practical aspects of their jobs, but also in specific customer service skills.

Three Customer Service Elements:

- Communication
- Emotional intelligence
- Problem Solving



Mapping The Traveller's Journey:

Visitors want to be engaged differently with the destination at all stages of their travel journey.

Pre-Visit

INSPIRING

Dreaming – Customer is actively deciding on where to go on their next vacation.

Planning – They are working to confirm the destination of choice, including the many tourism activity options, based on their expectations and interests.

Consider the benefits of visitor servicing in the “Inspire” stage and provide information

The World of Digital

In an age of customer empowerment enabled by digital technology, it is our overall goal is to support our regional tourism industry and address the trends of a far more complex tourist in today's environment. Visitors are seeking services and experiences that match what they have come to now expect. Most of us expect to be able to self-serve via our smartphones and other digital devices, and smart retailers are increasingly anticipating the customer needs and intercepting with the right information or offers via digital channels – at just the right time.

Visitor Journey Touchpoints

Touchpoints are both person-to-person and digital. This chart will help you determine gaps. Tourism business can reach the traveller as they are dreaming and inspiring to move forward through their planning process.



Mobile/Online

- Social Media activity and engagement, hashtags, social platforms including YouTube videos
- Website that is updated with experiences, beautiful imagery, content, stories
- Partnership through digital – kiosks, tourism websites – local, regional, provincial
- E-blast Marketing
- E-commerce accessibility making it easy to inquire and book – websites, apps

Person-to-Person

- Word of mouth – ambassadors and testimonials
- Information and product awareness/knowledge at your local and provincial visitor centres
- Frontline Staff partnerships with other tourism businesses including hotels, high-impact attractions and small to medium sized enterprises (SME)
- Mobile Technology apps, virtual reality, and mobile kiosks and city guides

CONVERTING

Booking – Confidently decide and confirm the base of their itinerary, and book major product (flights, some accommodation, some activities/attracts).

During Visit

SERVICING

Experiencing – Possibly a majority of attractions and activities will be pre-booked, depending on the product. Visitors will also continue to book experiences while in destination. The opportunity for DMOs and business operators is to facilitate the communication and functionality that ensures they can do just that.

Sharing - Share their experience

Post-Visit

ADVOCATION

Sharing - Post-trip, visitors tend to share their stories and experiences of their visit, highlighting the most amazing and memorable pieces of the trip. Whether it is a day visit, a weekend, or an extended-holiday in Ontario, visitors will focus highly on what made that lasting impression – tourist site, landscape, experiences, people.

Sharing - Share their experience

Principles of Visitor-Readiness

Whether you are targeting the inbound tourist, or you are appealing to the local audience, tourism is an import economic driver and supports the health and vitality of our region. Assessing visitor readiness for your tourism business should be a holistic approach that addresses the analysis of key elements that will ultimately present and deliver outstanding visitor experiences.

Visitor Servicing:

- Your approach to visitor servicing will be a game changer in standing above the rest.
- By focusing on your business visitor readiness will only enhance our destination as a place to visit, immerse, and return.
- Be committed to a sense of arrival plan and remember, if we are all committed to this approach to the visitor, we win.

Product Experience Enhancements:

- Aiming to deliver high quality experiences with a distinctive difference will go a long way to realizing your business potential for today's customer and the future of travel.
- Be open to the opportunities to create something extraordinary, remarkable, and most of all – memorable!
- Keep in mind that the word-of-mouth testimonial is key to loyalty and repeat visitation.

Being Visitor Ready

What is Visitor Ready for My Business?

1. How do I best approach the marketplace that I am operating in?

- Do I know the current and relevant trends that I should be focused?
- Are these key trends affecting our tourism industry to invite visitors to Canada, Ontario, and most importantly, in Hamilton Halton Brant Region?
- Of these key trends, how can I address the specific needs of the market in my business?
- Who are my direct and indirect competitors, and how are we preparing to serve visitor readiness?

2. Consider that step to understanding what I know about my existing customer?

- Identify my customer?
- Are they the type of customer I want to continue to attract, or need to be attracting?
- What are their specific needs and expectations from a tourism experience?
- What can I do to learn more about their needs, and what resources are available to get this information?

3. What are the current trends driving the market, post-COVID?

- Am I aware of the current trends of the traveller?
- What are the key emerging and changing needs, motivations, and behaviors of the market?
- What are the travel priorities and how are they now spending their travel budget?
- How can I adapt my business to serve these priorities and motivators?
- I don't know everything, but specifically, what are the overarching points I need to know to pivot my business?

Understanding Visitor Readiness Self-Assessment Checklist:

Communications:

- We maintain a staffed business location, displaying a set of operating business operation days and hours.
- We are able to accept reservations and address visitor inquiries by email, internet, or by telephone/fax year-round. Seasonal operation, see additional point.
- We can respond to all inquiries and/or provide confirmation of booking arrangements within 24-48 hours. It is preferable that the response turn-around be one business day but considering weekend inquiries may be necessary. Evaluate this standard based on your operation. Provide same-day or next day confirmations.
- We provide contact information that is available to the visitor, as well as an email contact.
- We display a current website that is user-friendly and displays current product and/or services.
- If we are a seasonal business, we display off-season closures, but offer an automated response through both voicemail and email.

Business Operating Standards:

- We are in possession of a current business license in compliance with Ontario Business Registry.
- We are in possession of current and adequate business insurance, including liability, and the policy/policies are in good standing and adhere to Ontario provincial guidelines.
- We meet Provincial and Federal Health & Safety Regulations for our business operation, where required, and by section regulatory measures.

Steps to Adopting a Visitor-Focused Approach

What Is Customer Journey Mapping

Customer journey mapping helps your business and brand to determine in detail the customer experience process by evaluating all the customer touchpoints with your company/brand.

To build a customer journey map and apply it to your operation, you should walk the way of interaction with your company, walking in the customer's shoes. This exercise will help you gain of understanding of how the customer experiences the process. The goal will be to find insights and identify areas to improve the journey. Remember, a consistent customer journey will help you to enhance a consumer's overall experience from awareness to loyalty.

Benefits of the customer journey is that it provides a story of how a customer will move through the sales funnel. Adopting this principle supports the circle of visitor journey (inspire, convert, service, advocate) and simply applied to your marketing strategy.

Customer Journey Map

Stage	Awareness	Consideration	Decision	Service	Loyalty
Customer Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ View online add ▶ See social media campaign ▶ Hear about from friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conduct research ▶ Research competitors ▶ Compare features and pricing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Make purchase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Receive product/service ▶ Contact customer service ▶ Read product/service documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Make another purchase ▶ Share experience
Touch Points	Traditional media, social media, wordof mouth	Word of mouth, website, social media	Website, mobile app, phone	Phone, chatbot, email	Word of mouth, social media, review sites
Customer Experience	Interested, hesitant 	Curious, excited 	Excited 	Frustrated 	Satisfied, excited 
KPIs	Number of people reached	New websites visitors	Conversion rate, online sales	Product reviews, customer service success rate, waiting time	Retention rate, customer satisfaction score
Business Goals	Increase awareness, interest	Increase website visitors	Increase conversion rate, online sales	Increase customer service satisfaction, minimize wait time	Generate positive reviews, increase retention rates
Team(s) Involved	Marketing, communications	Marketing, communications, sales	Online development, sales, marketing, customer service	Customer service, customer success	Online development, customer service, customer success

Visitors' Information Needs

Focusing on the visitor as a customer, we inspire and encourage visitors to explore Hamilton Halton Brant through the destination information that we provide at the regional level (i.e. leisure website, opt-in consumer e-blasts, and social media). We are driven to continue to strategically market and communicate tourism industry partner experiences that are delivered by each tourism business, that encourage visitation.

Visitor Services Pillars

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Information

Information is the currency of visitor servicing and must be accessible during all stages of the journey.



2

People

Visitor servicing involves the entire community and it's critical that all stakeholders are engaged and aligned.



3

Experiences

The experiences available as the catalyst driving visitation and those experiences need to be aligned with visitor expectations.



Definition of Sense of Arrival

Simply put, sense of arrival is the way visitors are greeted once they arrive. It sets the tone for their entire visit. How visitors are greeted and treated should reassure them that they have made the right choice to visit our destination in Hamilton Halton Brant. Our goal is to have them feel like home with a strong sense of promise of our brand.

- Motivates visitor interest to learn more
- Encourages the visitor to experience and go deeper in our story
- Drive a sense of excitement and happiness, like they belong – because they do!

All touchpoints should adopt a sense of arrival in their customer service planning. This means that every point of interact through inspiring, converting, servicing, and advocating. If one of these links is broken could mean the path to purchase will not be completed.

- Gateways and entrance points
- Wayfinding signage and communication
- Destination marketing and brand tone
- Business operator visitor and market readiness; export-readiness
- Provide basic arrival information – parking, where to enter, etc.
- Acknowledging and welcoming tone upon arrival and expecting their visit – call them by their surnames
- Share social channels and hashtags
- Storytelling and connections
- A sense of appreciation and gratefulness for their business
- Exit touchpoints – airports, transportation receptions
- Post-visit outreach – thank you messages, feedback/survey, social sharing

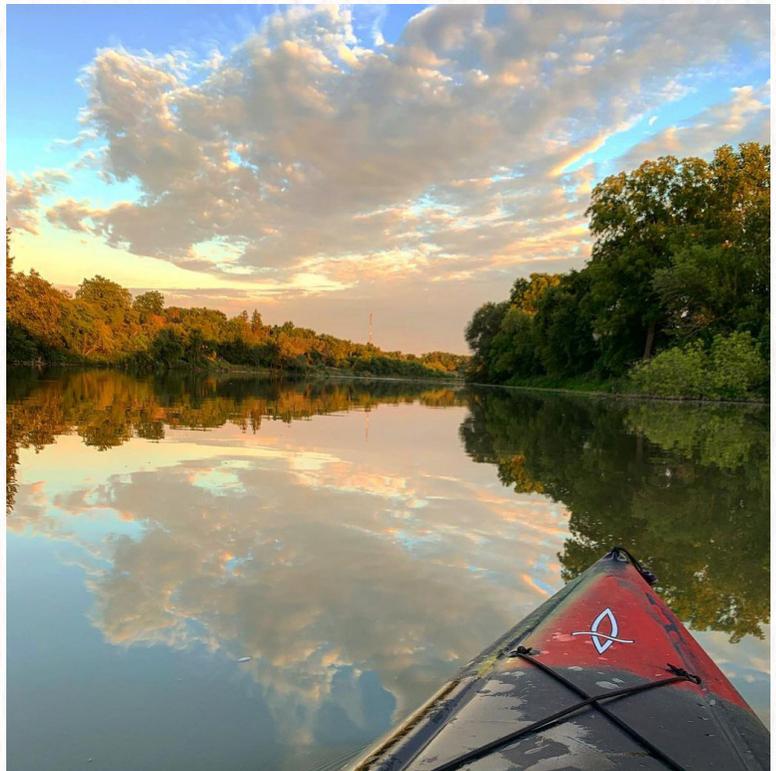
Build Moments of Delight

Sneak in moments of delight that are unexpected and appreciate. This will enhance the customer experience and, in most case, convert customers into fans and advocates.

Ten tips to delight your guests:

- Greet every guest with a smile and a hello
- If you cannot provide an advertised service for some reason, offer an alternative
- Deploy basic manners such as please and thank you
- Treat your guests how you would wish to be treated
- If you make an obvious mistake, admit it, apologize, and offer to rectify it
- Surprise your guests with a small gift or gesture
- Follow up when your guests leave with a thank you email, letter or phone call
- Be friendly but not overly familiar
- Remember your guests' names and special anniversaries or events
- Offer assistance with other activities, outlets, and operators in your destination

Source: experience development, Queensland Tourism



Being Market Ready

What does that mean?

From the moment a visitor researches and considers a destination or experience, tourism operators and organizations need to consider the tone and emotion they evoke – the leap that drives a visitor to explore further and commit to the booking.

A sense of arrival is the way visitors are greeted while exploring your website to once they arrive to your country, destination, region, place of business. It continues to set the tone and pace for the visitor's time and experience.

Meeting and greeting a visitor is an essential component and reassures them that they have arrived at a place that values their time, money, and interest in your offerings. Our goal as a tourism organization is to strongly advise this and communicate this component of the visitation.

Where Should Our Sense of Arrival Live?

- Website
- Social Platforms
- Gateway to your Destination/Exit points
- Physical arrival to your destination or business

Feature Goals:

- Re-enforcing that they have made the right decision in visiting our destination, your business, etc.
- A strong sense of arrival delivers on our brand promise... "Find Your Way to the Heart of Ontario". Once they have found us, they feel at home.
- All entry gateways should share the same sense of arrival vision.
- Pledge to set a positive, welcoming tone for your business or destination

Benefit Goals:

- Stimulates a visitor's interest and excitement that then encourages them to want to experience deeper, more meaningful discoveries of our natural assets and attractions, our unique Canadian culture, and our abundant history and heritage.
- Positively impact the opportunity for repeat visitation, longer stays and expenditures.
- Happy visitors tend to share, reviews and provide positive feedback, influencing others to experience what they have experienced.

Strategies for Creating a Welcoming Environment, A Sense of Arrival

1. Meet the visitors' basic needs at the onset
2. Make people understand why they are here
3. Prioritize information
4. Create a "pride of place"
5. Make them want to stay

Guidelines for Market Readiness

Communities

Communities, neighbourhoods, and districts are faced with a great opportunity to develop a baseline tone of their own welcoming sense of arrival.

- Creating the ease of location – wayfinding signage with visitor in mind
- Support tourism businesses in promotion and inclusiveness – present how their services can impact a visitor's experience
- Encourage longer stays by featuring where to stay, accessibility
- Create a welcoming environment