



PACIFIC TOURISM
ORGANISATION

Sustainable Tourism Training in Samoa

SPTO Toolkits and Industry
Codes of Practice

3rd March 2022





SPTO SME Recovery Toolkit

What?

[The SPTO SME Recovery Toolkit](#) is a handbook providing practical guidance to support the recovery of small, micro and medium tourism enterprises within the Pacific, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic

How?

The development process consisted of a thorough desktop review as well as online consultations with stakeholders from the 5 countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Tuvalu) which formed the Regional Working Group for this project

Who?

The toolkit was developed through a partnership with the Travel Foundation and the funding support of the US Embassy in Fiji. It is intended for Tourism SMEs in the Pacific.

When?

The toolkit was developed within one year and virtually launched in October 2021.

Where?

The Toolkit can be accessed from the SPTO Website under the Sustainability Tab

Purpose

The SPTO SME Recovery Toolkit aims to:

- Support Tourism SMEs in the Pacific through their entire product development journey
- Support the Recovery of Tourism SMEs by adapting to the economic changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought
- Provide insights on how to identify emerging market trends and build your products sustainably around them



SPTO SME Recovery Toolkit

TOOLS



Knowledge booster:

More information to support knowledge and understanding of a topic



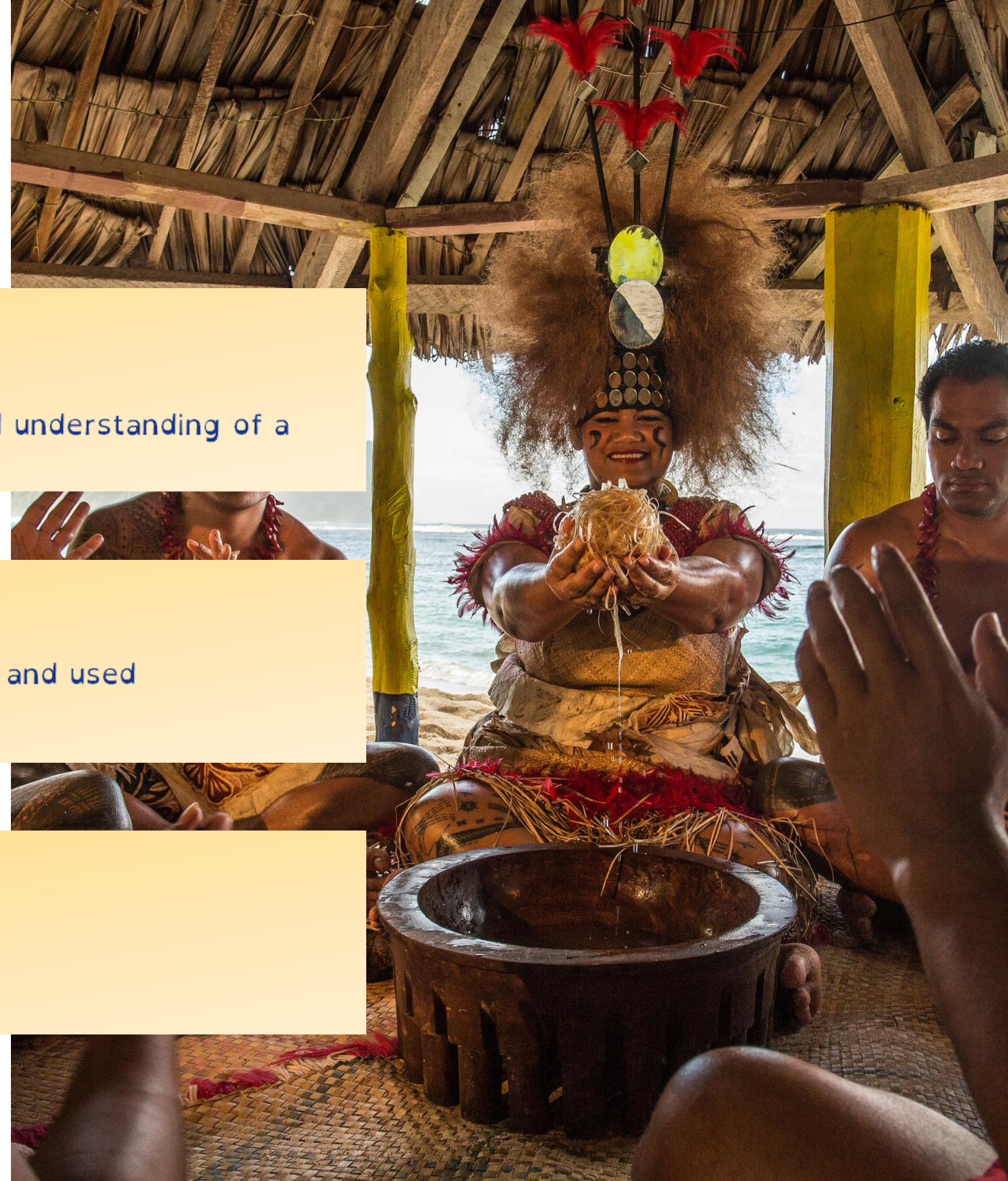
Checklist / template:

Documents that can be downloaded and used



Case Study:

Illustrative examples .





Chapter 1

Understand appeal

Understand the tour operating landscape and the different types of tourism. Which types of activities and experiences appeal to visitors?



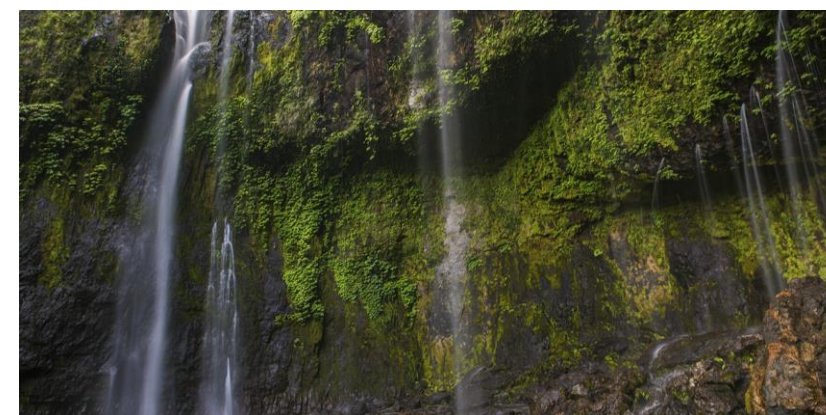
Know trends

How are visitor trends evolving globally? Get to grips with trends in demand for increased safety, sustainability, authenticity and equity.



Reflect

How can you respond to trends with your product and service offerings?
Continue with research and build on your product concepts.



Responding to visitor trends

Understanding what tourists are looking for starts with looking at the different types of tourist activities that appeal in general terms followed by a deeper dive into trends.

- Smaller groups and outdoor activities
- Sustainability – environmental impacts
- Sustainability – social impacts
- Authentic cultural / immersive experiences
- Gastronomy
- Nature and adventure
- Local markets

Understanding Tourist Appeal

What are tourists looking for?

The rich cultural heritage, landscapes and immense biodiversity of the Pacific Island Countries hold great appeal for tourists seeking a range of experiences. There is significant opportunity to create high quality tourism products that protect the environment and culture whilst bringing economic benefits and opportunities for local communities. To do this successfully it is vital to firstly understand what tourists are looking for.

Nature-based experiences

Tourists are looking for experiences where they can be surrounded by nature or engage in physical activities set in beautiful landscapes. Seeing and learning about wildlife and ecosystems such as coral reefs and forests are also sought-after activities.

Activities can range from passive (simply enjoying the surroundings through to adventure sports. Typical experiences include:

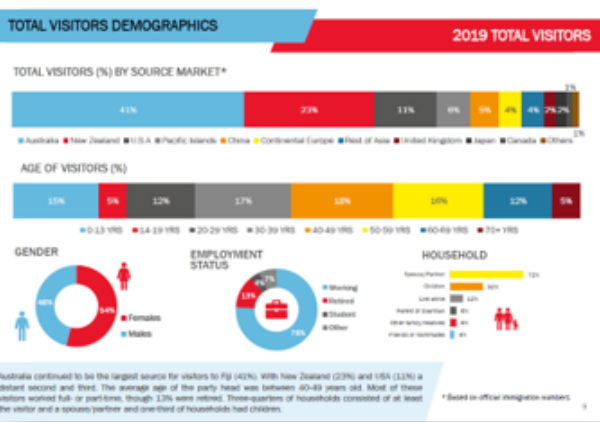
Passive activities	Meditation, yoga retreats or other relaxing pastimes that benefit from natural surroundings, staying in traditional village accommodation
Gentle activities	Walking, swimming, wildlife watching / safari / boat tour / farm tour
Soft Adventure (specialist skills not required)	Hiking / trekking, kayaking, snorkelling, rafting, cycling, zip lining
Hard Adventure (More strenuous, technical support required)	Mountaineering, white-water rafting, other sports

Tool 1.1.1: Understanding Visitors

Visitor profiles

Understanding the profile of visitors to your destination will also help you in understanding types of activities that are in demand and the different consumer trends that may influence their purchasing decisions and expectations. Here are some snapshots from several destinations.

Demographics include information about tourists such as age, gender, income and employment status as illustrated in the extract below from the International Visitor Survey from Fiji. You can request this information from your NTO to understand the demographics better for your destination.



Source: [Fiji International Visitor Survey, 2019](#)

Online and corporate

Research conducted in demand for There are great oppo as the corporate se Educational instituti international travel at for opportunities to i

Businesses often orga building events or re employees. In the all travel there has been a surge in demand for experiences. For ex purchasing a cooking group of employ ingredients list wou advice and the whe lasts for approxima

Intrepid T group adv world. 1,000 ESC

Whilst you m companies a produce digi content is k Although the content and pandemic d Here are so


- Quality
- Guides
- Lighting
- Ensure advert

Sustainable products and experiences

The pandemic has accelerated the demand for s that was already gathering pace before the COV

In 2019, 10 million travellers using the online booking platform Skyscanner selected a "greener choice" option when booking.

Booking.com reported that 72% of travellers think travel companies should offer more sustainable choices



Authentic experiences incorporating Indigenous knowledge (IK)

An International Visitor Survey conducted in Australia, reported that there was a 5% increase each year for the six years prior to the pandemic in visitors taking part in indigenous tourism experiences. Whilst this data was recorded for Australia it does show a trend amongst international visitors.


When thinking about visitors to embrace indigenous knowledge, the UNWTO¹⁴ advise to embrace indigenous knowledge. For example, of nature, natural medicine and plants, how to look after the environment. Bringing this knowledge to life for tourists is an important direction to take when creating cultural tourism experiences.

"Embrace the great diversity of the revitalized Indigenous knowledge (IK) during the pandemic, as it will feed in the authentic Indigenous tourism experiences of the future, bringing market innovation and valorization of the IK for the generations to come."

Source: UNWTO Inclusive Recovery Guide

REFLECTION

- Are you providing an authentic or unique experience? If so, make sure you tell this story.
- How does your product/experience stand out from the crowd?
- What makes it unique and special? For example, if it is a family business, say this, and let people know how long the business/land/hotel has been in your family. People love personal stories and this may make your business more appealing than a similar one nearby that doesn't have a family history or unique anecdote attached to the business.
- Think about other changes or personal touches you can make to your product that will make it more unique and help it to stand out from similar activities or experiences.



Chapter 1: Activity

How to adapt your product to respond to emerging trends

Think about your product, does it correspond to any emerging trends? If so, how? Which aspect of your product aligns to the trend?

Trends

Smaller groups and outdoor activities
Sustainability – environmental impacts
Sustainability – social impacts
Authentic cultural / immersive experiences
Gastronomy
Nature and adventure
Local markets
Online and corporate markets

Once you have recorded your reflections on this first chapter of the manual it is recommended that you follow up by conducting research.

This could include speaking with other tourism professionals, businesses, associations and agencies, meeting with community leaders to assess what may be feasible in terms of product development and researching online to look at other experiences on offer locally as well as in other international destinations.



Chapter 2

Understand ‘value’

Understand the concept of added value and essential product components that add up to great tourist experiences that are differentiated, interactive, authentic and responsible.



Product basics

Thinking through the practicalities of how the product will actually be delivered is essential to making sure it will all work, meet customer expectations and conform to market requirements.



Embed sustainability

It is critical that all product development takes place through the lens of sustainability. Ensuring the well being of people and planet is a key principle for businesses and customers.



Designing and adapting products

By the end of this chapter, you will understand how to create a product that responds to tourist demand and know the practical steps for embedding sustainability.

Tools included:

- Sustainable accommodation
- Sustainable experiences
- Sustainability checklist

The essential elements of products

Before thinking about the details of your product it is important to understand firstly, the essential elements or building blocks that must be present as well as the concept of added value. The following two pages explains these critical aspects of product development.

All tourism products should include the following elements, weighted differently, according to the types of **product** being offered. However, being safe and enjoyable for customers, as well as respectful to the environment and local communities should always be at the heart of your product.

fun

learning

value

interactive

Safe

memorable

unique

Respectful

In addition to these essential elements, you need to design a product that meets your customers' needs and shows that you understand what they value. This will ensure that your product is attractive both to tourists and to tour operators.

Here is a checklist of what you need to offer to meet tour operator and customer requirements when selecting accommodation and experiences:

- ✓ Provide something unique and different.
- ✓ Include all of the essential elements and be clear which ones stand out e.g., interactive, fun, unique.
- ✓ Cater for different ages and needs within your target markets.
- ✓ Provide authentic experiences that will create special memories.
- ✓ Ensure your product has a positive impact on the environment and local communities.
- ✓ Accommodate different group sizes.
- ✓ Communicate how your business is adhering to health and safety protocols to ensure the customer feels safe.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

An important way to add value to your product is by creating opportunities for customers to contribute to local communities. Care should be taken to ensure that this is done in consultation with community leaders and that any arrangements are positive for everyone involved.

School or children's homes visits should not be included as they disturb learning and can have a negative impact.

Further guidance is provided later in this chapter

Each of these will be addressed throughout the handbook

Tool 2.2: Sustainable practice checklists	
Accommodation & Catering	
Environmental Sustainability	✓
Hotel rooms - energy reduction procedures in place	
Laundry request system	
Automatic electricity cut when rooms not in use / Guest signage	
Refillable dispenser for in-room toiletries	
Toiletries provided in reusable/refillable containers	
Water provided in glass bottles and glasses rather than plastic	
Additional vanity kit items (shower caps, combs, toothbrushes) only available on request	
Plastic bin bags in bathroom bins only - not required in bedroom bins	
Catering	✓
Food waste monitoring system in place	
System for donating excess food to local schools/charities/homeless shelters/community events	
Straws only given on request for drinks	
Plastic straws replaced with paper or metal straws	
Plastic takeaway containers replaced with biodegradable/reusable/recyclable alternatives	
Water provided in glass bottles and glasses rather than plastic	
Water coolers/refillable stations in place so guests can refill reusable bottles	
Policy in place for maximising local sourcing/procurement of food	
Communications to customers pre-departure, on arrival and during trip on how to minimise their impact on the environment	

Tool 2.0: Sustainable accommodation practices

Energy use

Can you take steps to stop electricity being wasted? For example, a switch which means that all electricity in the room (lights, TV, aircon) is off when you leave the room. If you are unable to implement an automatic switch, use key cards that are not in place. If you are unable to implement an automatic switch, use key cards that are not in place. If you are unable to implement an automatic switch, use key cards that are not in place.

As stated in the previous section, there is a growing demand for businesses to be more sustainable so most guests will be happy about using signs to remind guests to switch off appliances when they leave the room. This will result in immediate cost savings for your business.

Also, think about where you source your food? A business' carbon footprint.

Do you compost organic food waste such as vegetable scraps? Locally sourced food will have a lower carbon footprint.

Plastic: Plastic waste is a large problem for many businesses. It is important to try as far as possible to reduce single-use plastic in general.

Tool 2.1: Sustainable experiences

Environmental policies

Always ensure that you are up-to-date with local environmental policies and behaviour guidelines for the area in which you are operating, particularly if you provide tours in conservation areas or national parks.

Make tourists aware of any rules, regulations and guidelines so that they understand what is expected of them and how they can help. For example, let them know if glass bottles are banned in certain areas, advise them where they can dispose of waste, and provide guidance on how they should behave around wild animals.

Food and drink

Do you provide food and drink to customers as part of the tour? If so, can you make sure this is done as sustainably as possible? You should avoid using single-use plastic cups, plates and cutlery and think about serving food and drink in reusable receptacles such as china or glass or more natural products. If it is not possible to use reusable items, then think about switching to paper plates and cups rather than single-use plastic.


Tourists from most source market countries can purchase water bottles with good quality filters built in. Recommending that tourists bring these with them on your website and pre-departure communications would really help to cut down on waste.



Chapter 2: Activity

Once you have worked through each topic in this chapter it is recommended that you now create a description of your product ensuring that you include all the essential elements covered:

- Describe your product in basic terms
- Explain how it adds value (stick to a few key points otherwise the messages will become diluted)
- State your practices for managing environmental impacts and any codes of conduct that you will adhere to
- State your activities / actions for supporting communities and any specific protocols that you will adhere to.





Chapter 3

Understand Importance

Understand the importance of international and local legislation. Get clear on customer and tourism industry requirements for safety and security.



Follow protocols

Know where to find useful resources about COVID-19 protocols. Familiarize with good practices in relation to safety, security, human rights and animal welfare.



Manage Health & Safety

Follow the simple steps and use the templates to carry out risk assessments and put measures in place to reduce risks and keep customers and staff safe.



Health, Safety & Security

By the end of this chapter, you will understand the importance of health, safety and security to **staff, communities, customers, business partners** and **know to follow good practices.**

- International and local legislation
- Covid-19 Safe Operation Protocols
- Human Rights
- Risk Assessments
- Health & Safety management practices

Why is health & safety so important?

National and International Laws and Protocols

In the top source market countries health and safety is taken very seriously. As a service provider to tourists from these countries you must pay particular attention to it. What matters most?



National laws and protocols

Contact the relevant authority in your country to access information about the health and safety laws and protocols that apply to your business.

International Law and Industry Standards

International Tour Operators will generally be members of trade associations that exist to support outbound travel providers. They will therefore follow the guidelines and recommended best practices set by the associations. Here are some examples:

Australia	CATO: Council for Australian tour Operators
New Zealand	TAANZ: The Travel Agents' Association of New Zealand
USA	USTOA: United states Tour Operators Association
UK	ABTA: Association of British Travel Agents
Europe-wide	ETOA: European Tourism Association

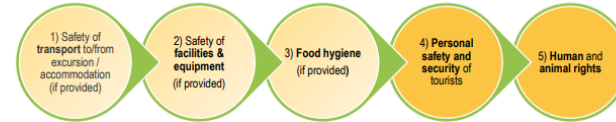
How does it work?

The way the guidelines are interpreted and enforced depends on the tour operator: the bigger the tour operator, the less flexible it will be.

Large tour operators will usually ask the ground handler or a company specialising in H&S audits to run safety checks on suppliers and ensure compliance with their standards. Audit documents represent proof that they have shown duty of care.

Safety of activities and experiences

Source market tour operators are sometimes reluctant to contract small excursion and attraction entrepreneurs due to concerns over health & safety standards. Demonstrating health and safety awareness and good practice really increases the chances to sell your product to the international tourism industry.



Tool 3.5: Health & Safety Management Templates

Below is an example of a risk assessment matrix and form.

For each aspect of the customer journey identify the possible risks. This could include, for example crossing a stream whilst on a walking tour. For each risk assess whether it high, medium or low using the matrix below to help.

	Level of Harm		
	Serious	Moderate	Minor
Likelihood of occurrence			
Very likely	High	High	Medium
Quite likely	High	Medium	Low
Unlikely	Medium	Low	Low

Once the level of risk is determined identify precautions that must be taken to remove or reduce the risk. Not all risks can be fully minimised and can even be a feature of the experience, however precautions must still be taken. See the example below.

Sample Risk Assessment Form

Name of Assessor:		Date of assessment:			Signature:	
Site description	Activity / Facility	List of risks to tourists	Risk level			Precautions in place to manage risks
National park	Walking tour	Slipping / falling during river crossing	High	Med	Low	
						1. Guides to brief tourists 2. Offer walking stick / aid 3.
						1. 2. 3.



Chapter 4

Pricing Principles & Pandemic

Understand the principles of pricing and how the pandemic is affecting tourism businesses. Familiarize with pricing terminology and the practical steps to pricing profitably and competitively.



Price it up

Calculate costs and breakeven points for different group sizes / occupancies. Calculate mark-ups and arrive at wholesale prices.



Safeguard

Plan how to build resilience during the pandemic and beyond through pricing policies and strategies that will help you to remain competitive and financially secure.



Pricing

Pricing your tour product

The process for calculating price using the 'cost-plus profit' pricing strategy. This approach is illustrated in the 5 steps shown below and explained throughout this chapter of the handbook.



Follow the worked examples to calculate your own costs, margins and prices.

Use the pre-prepared excel templates to input your own values.

For tour providers and accommodation:

- Calculating costs
- Determine break-even points
- Calculate profit margin and mark-ups



Calculating fixed and variable costs			
Step 1:	\$ Cost per trip / tour		Notes
Fixed costs			(regardless of how many tourists)
Overheads e.g. rent, insurance	40		
Salaries	20		
Total Fixed Costs (a)	60		
Step 2:	\$ Cost per person		Additional items that are charged per person
Variable costs			
Free gift e.g. handmade souvenir	3		
Snack	4		
Drink	1		
Total variable Costs (b)	8		
Step 3: Determine capacity limits		10	Maximum number of people that can be safely accommodated at one time

Breakeven points		
This is per person from previous page	Fixed plus variable costs	The point of balance between either making a profit or a loss. It is where the cost and revenue (money in) are equal (Breakeven point)
Total Variable costs (b)	Total cost for group size (c)	Total cost per person (Breakeven point)
16	76	38.00
40	100	20.00
64	124	15.50
80	140	14.00

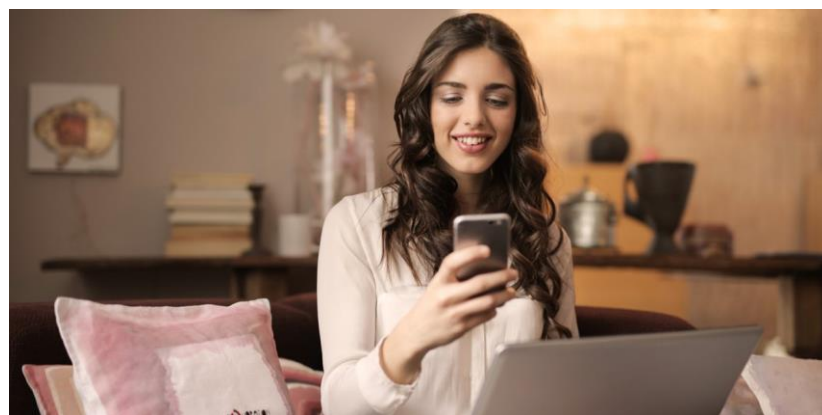
Profit Margins / Mark-ups			
Net rate + mark-up %	Net / wholesale rate	Mark up % for value chain	Final Price as advertised
25%	47.50	50%	71.25
25%	25.00	50%	37.50
5%	19.38	50%	29.06
5%	17.50	50%	26.25



Chapter 5

Access to market

Understand the different routes to access the tourist market. Learn in more detail how the different types of tourism businesses work and what they expect from SMEs.



Pros & Cons

Know the benefits and different challenges in working with different businesses as well as selling directly to tourists. Work out what mix is best for your business.



Get Ready!

Contact tourism businesses with confidence and professionalism. Get your paperwork in order and prepare your pitch to impress with your attractive product offer.





Chapter 6

Customer Journey

Understand the customer journey and how to deliver thoughtful and caring customer service.



Good Practices

A warm welcome, inspirational guiding and delivering activities and food are all covered.



Quality in the pandemic

Reassure customers and continuously review delivery standards and policies to keep standards high during recovery and beyond.



Customer Service

Every interaction with customers is critical!
By the end of this chapter, you will be familiar with the entire customer journey and how to create a special experience for every guest and how to support your staff in their development.

- Bookings and enquires
- A warm welcome
- Transport and equipment
- Activities and food
- Guiding Practices
- Building reputation and trust
- Delivering quality during the pandemic

Good Guiding Practices

"Guides are so important and beneficial for your business. You really need to make them feel loved and important"

General Manager, Intrepid

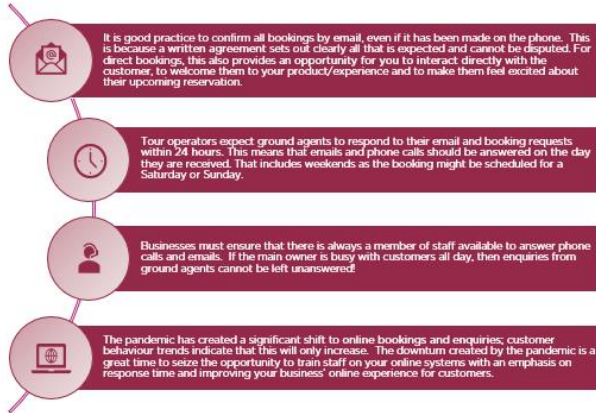
Guides are incredibly important to your business as they are in front of the customers and can make or break the tourist experience. Guides should be knowledgeable and act as 'engaging interpreters' for customers and use storytelling to create interest. Good guiding is about connecting customers with what they are seeing and experiencing.

Guides must be alert to customer needs and interests and respond accordingly rather than sticking to a set speech every time. The diagram below illustrates quality aspects to guides and guiding techniques.



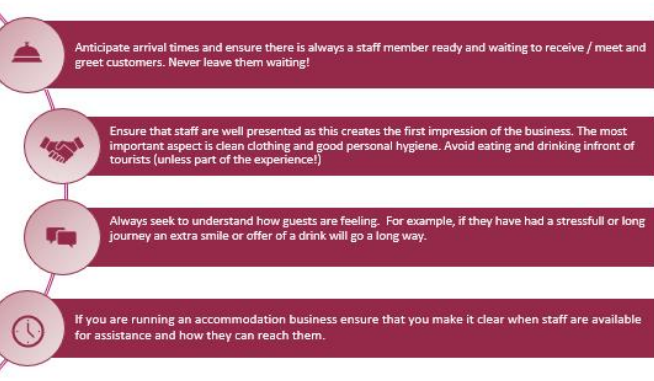
The quality of guiding and interpretation can make the difference between a good experience and an outstanding experience.

Bookings and enquiries



A Warm Welcome

A culturally appropriate greeting for both hosts and guests is really important for all parties to feel comfortable, understand and respect each other's culture. Ensure staff understand how to welcome customers and explain the cultural significance and meaning behind traditional greetings.

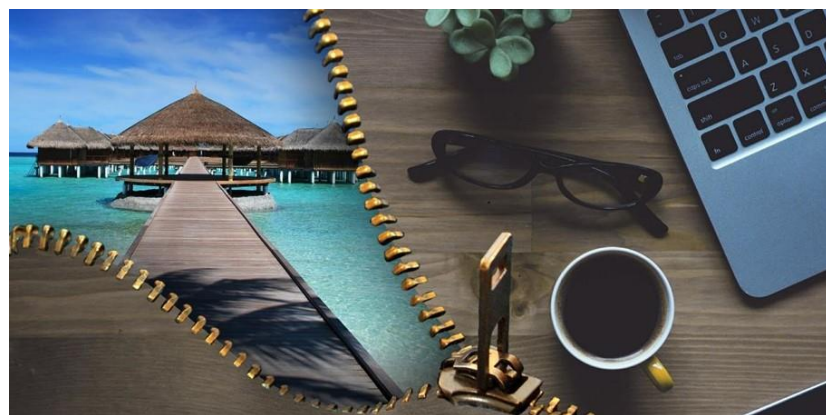




Chapter 7

Online Bookings

Understand the rise and rise in online travel bookings and the many different platforms available.



Get marketing!

Get started with branding and creating online content for different platforms and social media channels.



Review and optimize

Appreciate the value of reviews and learn how to harness the power! Strive to improve and optimize your online presence.



Online Sales and Marketing

The boom in online travel bookings has accelerated during the pandemic and it is more important than ever to ensure your business has an active and managed online presence. Enhance your branding and optimize your marketing activities with the guides in this chapter.

- Online sales and marketing platforms
- Search engines
- Customer review websites
- Online Travel Agents (OTAs)
- Social Media
- Website
- Branding and marketing
- Creating a marketing pack
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Harnessing the power of reviews

Top Tips for using your social media channels

When used correctly, social media can drive brand awareness, generate direct bookings, and become a key revenue channel for your business. General tips for posting content on all social media platforms.

- Keep text short, fun, and creative.
- Use good quality images that align to your brand identity.
- Engagement: interact with your followers.
- Relevance: ensure content is helpful and interesting.
- Authenticity: add real personality and stories behind what you are selling.
- Using the same content across all channels isn't advisable as audiences can be quite different. Think about how you use social media and tailor it to your audience.
- Add location information and relevant hashtags.
- Tag other people and organisations, where relevant.
- Share positive customer feedback and thank the customer.



Harness the power of reviews

- Customer reviews are extremely important to marketing your business successfully online
- They allow guests to leave honest feedback to which you can act upon and respond.
- The more positive reviews you have will increase your visibility on search engines and on OTA websites. This is shown in the diagram below:



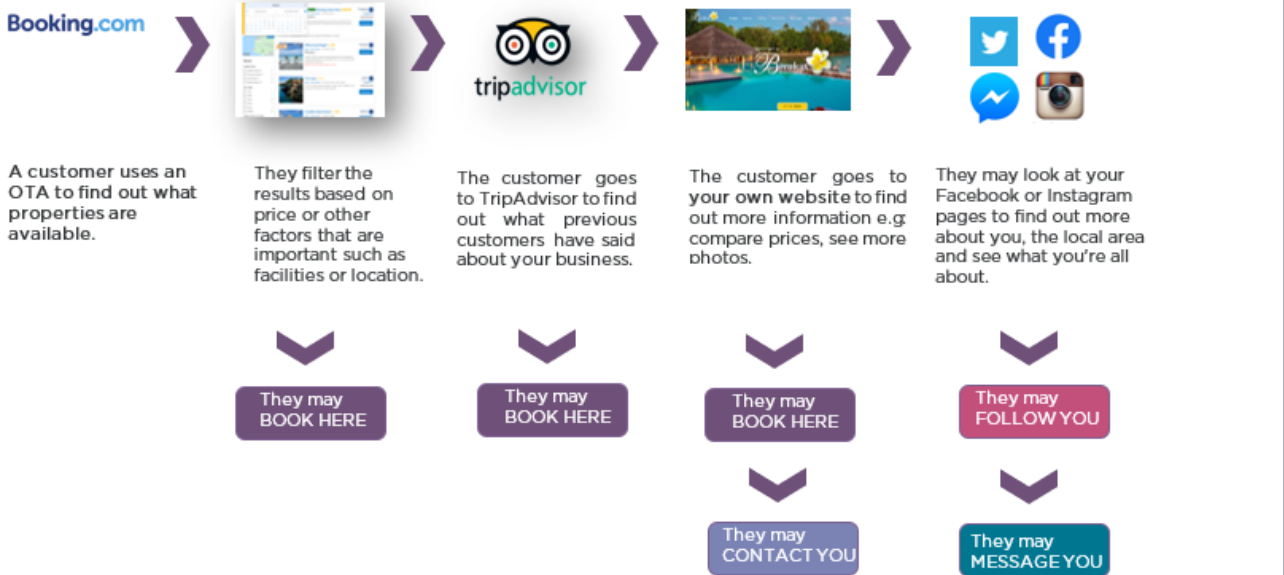
The better your reviews, the higher your rating and ranking, and the more visibility and booking queries you will generate.



- Encourage all customers to leave a review. 80% of customers who get asked to leave a review will do so. There are many ways to do this: ask at departure, or display a sign, make it easy for them by sending an email or message with a link.
- Minimise negative reviews by checking with customers during their stay / their experience that everything is going well and as expected. This gives you the opportunity to rectify any problems and improve their experience before they leave which will reduce the likelihood of negative reviews.
- Always respond to customer reviews to thank them, show that you care and how you intend to address any issues.
- Keep track of your number of reviews, scores and rankings. Set targets and reward your team for hitting them.
- Monitor your key competitors' reviews to learn what customers appreciate about them and where you can tweak your own offering to win more business.
- Hold regular meetings with staff / other suppliers to discuss reviews and how to improve.

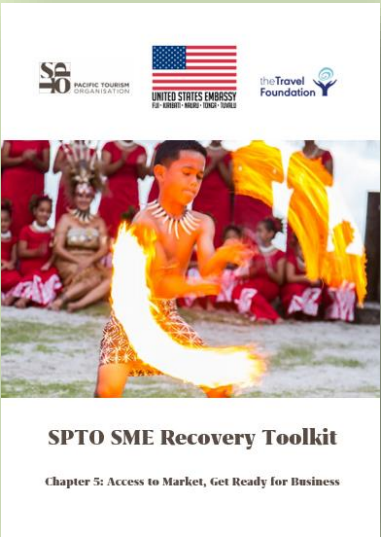
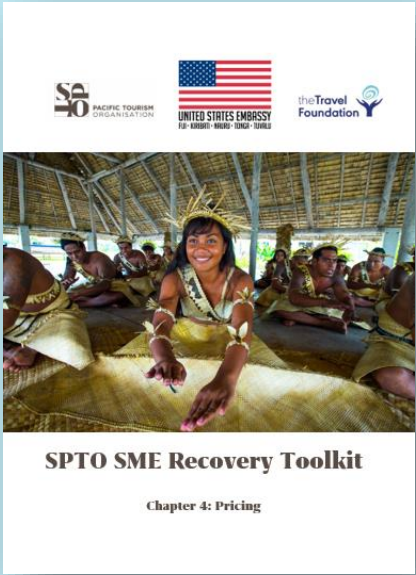
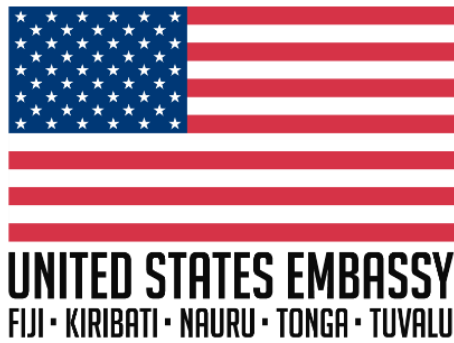
Online customer journey scenarios

The illustrations on the following 3 pages are sample scenarios to show the different ways in which a tourist may conduct an online search and find their way to making a reservation with your business.





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Thank you

NEXT STEPS....

SPTO is currently developing an Animated Explainer Video that will provide visual instructions and information for users of the Toolkit!
The video will be freely accessible via the SPTO YouTube page and Website

