

TOP FIVE TIPS for collecting consumer information

Tourism businesses gain a competitive edge by taking a greater interest in visitors and acquiring a few details about them. It makes good business sense to know your customers. Just a few short questions can uncover helpful facts. For example, if improving your marketing strategy is a priority, asking customers how they heard about your business can help determine the best use of advertising dollars. To determine strong target markets, knowing where visitors are from is necessary. Here are a few tips on how to gather and use consumer information.

1. WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU ALREADY HAVE?

Determine if important details already exist within your business. Look for valuable customer data (e.g. where they live, party size, visitor feedback) in sources like guest books, comment cards, ticket sales information or reservation forms.

2. WHAT DO YOU NEED?

Identify information that will benefit your business. Consider these basic questions:

- What brings you to the area? (e.g., visiting family and friends, vacation or leisure, business)
- Where are you from? What is your postal code?
- How did you hear about us? (e.g., social media, website, print, television, radio, word-of-mouth)
- How many people are travelling with you?
- Is this your first time visiting? (yes/no)

3. ENGAGE STAFF IN THE PROCESS

Bring staff on board early on. Explain the importance of gathering the data. Establish a simple tracking system. An easy way to track and analyze information is to use an Excel spreadsheet. Build it into the business routine and update the spreadsheet on a daily or weekly basis.

Date	Postal Code	Reason for Visit	First time visitor?	Party Size	How did you hear about us?
14-Jan-19	X0X0X0	Business	Y	2	Word of Mouth
14-Jan-19	H0H0H0	Visiting Friends and Family	N	1	Social Media
15-Jan-19	S0S0S0	Visiting Friends and Family	N	2	Social Media

4. COLLECT POSTAL CODES

Many retail outlets ask shoppers for their postal code at the time of purchase. Why? Because postal codes are links to a wealth of information about markets and customers. There are a number of user-friendly tools available to analyze postal code data, including:

- PRIZM5, environicsanalytics.com/en-ca/PRIZM5
- SuperDemographics, superdemographics.com/loadFileMain.php

5. KEEP INFORMATION PRIVATE

Ensure the confidentiality of customer information and responses. When people disclose personal information for any research purpose, they trust that details are private. Businesses have a responsibility to carefully maintain client data and prevent disclosure of information.