

Online Resources for Visitor Servicing

A Tourism & Hospitality Case Study

Visitor Centre workers and tour guides need to undertake continual professional development to adapt to visitor trends. Online education resources for people to self-teach is a valuable option

Visitor Centres and Tour Guides provide local information

Digital disruption has significantly altered how travellers access visitor information. It has also provided an opportunity for workers to become skilled, and ultimately improve how they engage with visitors.

Online booking sites, review sites such as TripAdvisor, and destination information or self-guiding tour directions on smartphone applications, are now ubiquitous and allow travellers to take control of their bookings. However, travellers are increasingly pursuing unique bespoke experiences. To uncover these unique places and novel activities, travellers seek exclusive insights. This information may not be published online, and if it is, it could be perceived to contain unreliable information. This means that Visitor Centres and tour guides have an advantage as the official providers of local information.

Online Professional Development Resources

Visitor Centre staff and volunteers are no longer passive, human “brochure stands” but are being trained to get out from behind the counter and engage in a way that gives visitors information they cannot obtain from other channels.¹ Tour guides have also had to adapt how they deliver their activities and commentary to meet the changing needs of visitors.

Visitor Centre workers and tour guides therefore need to undertake continual professional development and upskilling training to adapt to visitor trends. Given the nature of these roles, and the high incidence of casual work and volunteering, there are barriers to accessing formal qualifications. Online education resources for people to self-teach good tour guiding and visitor information servicing skills is therefore a valuable option. Examples of good online resources for Visitor Centre staff and volunteers or tour guides is provided below.

- The Tourism eSchool - a range of online professional learning opportunities for the Australian tourism industry. Currently offerings include Destination Marketing and Visitor Servicing Bootcamp, Tourism Operator Training, Destination Marketing Strategies and Tourism Plans, and the Tourism Marketing Academy and Mastermind 6-month online digital marketing mentoring program.² The Tourism eSchool website also hosts a Learning Hub of free online advice. Topics include “12 Things Successful Visitor Centres Do Differently” and “Visitor Trends, Destination Marketing and Visitor Servicing Reality 2019”.³
- Open Colleges – Certificate III in Travel⁴ - provides online training in making and managing reservations, and selling travel products, leading to the job role of Travel Consultant or Sales Agent.
- Be a Better Guide⁵ - The Be a Better Guide Project and Online Tourism Academy are online resources dedicated to tour and activity leaders from around the world. The Be a Better Guide Project is a collaboration of tourism businesses, with free online resources including training videos and free online workshops. The Online Tourism Academy is a paid online training program specifically for tour operators and individual guides.

- Better Impact⁶ - is a software program managed and updated by staff to provide access to real-time updates and information, ensuring everyone has the information and tools needed to service visitors.
- Business Essentials for Tour Guides⁷ - TAFE NSW in partnership with Austrade, delivered the Business Essentials for Tour Guides in 2018, for freelance guides that provide services to Chinese-speaking visitors. This program was built on Excellence in China Inbound Tour Guide Education (EXCITE) program, which focussed on increasing the long-term professionalism of the Chinese tour guide market.

References

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