

# Identifying Your Target Customers and Why It Matters

By Jeannette Lye, Director of Planning and Research, Tourism Saskatchewan

Understanding and identifying target customers is essential for effective marketing, as it ensures that messaging and tourism experiences align with the right audience. Without a clear understanding of their customers, tourism businesses risk wasting time and resources on broad, unfocused marketing and development efforts that fail to generate meaningful results.

By defining specific customer segments based on demographics, interests, behaviours, and needs, businesses can develop personalized marketing campaigns and tourism experiences that strongly resonate with their audience. This targeted approach enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty while also improving brand visibility and competitive advantage.

## WHY UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE MATTERS

Focusing on the right customer audience ensures:

- Efficient Resource Use – Avoids wasted time and money on uninterested customers.
- Stronger Connections – Builds meaningful relationships through tailored messaging.
- Increased Visibility – Helps stand out in a crowded market.
- Better Results – Leads to higher engagement and improved sales.

## AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION & TARGETED MARKETING

Segmenting customers allows for more personalized marketing. Main segmentation methods include:

- Demographics – Age, gender, income, education, household composition.
- Psychographics – Interests, values, behaviors, motivations.
- Behavioural – Buying patterns, online habits, brand loyalty.
- Geographics – Country, city, rural vs. urban.

## KEY STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING TARGET CUSTOMERS

- By using a combination of these research methods, businesses can gain a deeper understanding of their target customers and create more effective marketing strategies.

### SURVEYS & POLLS

- Online surveys (using platforms like Google Forms or SurveyMonkey) allow businesses to collect customer feedback quickly and efficiently.
- Surveys can provide quick insights on trends, customer opinions, preferences, pain points, and buying behaviours.
- Best Practice: Keep surveys short (under 10 minutes) and ensure questions are clear and unbiased.

### FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

- In-person or virtual discussions with small, targeted customer groups offer in-depth insights on customer motivations.

- Limitations: Can be time-consuming and expensive to organize, and responses may be influenced by group bias.
- Best Practice: Keep focus groups to 6–8 participants for meaningful engagement.

## COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

- Studying competitors helps identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the market.
- Businesses can analyze competitor messaging, pricing strategies, customer engagement tactics, and customer reviews.
- Identifying underserved customer segments or areas for differentiation is key.
- Best Practice: Regularly track competitor marketing campaigns and customer feedback to adapt your strategy.

## SOCIAL MEDIA & WEB ANALYTICS

### DEVELOP CUSTOMER PROFILES

- Creating detailed customer profiles and personas helps businesses gain a deeper understanding of their target audience, allowing for more effective marketing strategies.

### CREATE DETAILED PROFILES

- Use segmentation data to build profiles that include demographics, preferences, and behaviours.
- Profiles should include details such as age, income, lifestyle, purchasing habits, and values.

### IDENTIFY NEEDS & PAIN POINTS

- Understand emotional and practical motivations (e.g., affordability, convenience, exclusivity).

### TEST & VALIDATE SEGMENTS

- Conduct pilot campaigns and analyze customer feedback to refine target segments.

## OPTIMIZE & PERSONALIZE MARKETING EFFORTS

- Once customer profiles and segments are defined, businesses must tailor their marketing efforts to maximize effectiveness.

## CUSTOMIZE MESSAGING

- A one-size-fits-all approach to marketing rarely works. Each customer segment has unique preferences in communication style.
- Messaging should reflect the values, needs, and pain points of each group.

## SELECT THE RIGHT PLATFORMS

- Engage customers where they are most active.

## A/B TESTING

- A/B testing helps businesses determine which elements of their marketing campaigns are most effective. This involves creating two variations of an ad, email, or website page and analyzing which performs better based on engagement and conversions.
- Testing different imagery, colours, and messaging styles ensures that campaigns are optimized.

## MEASURE & OPTIMIZE

- Data-driven decision-making is essential for continuous improvement.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs) should be monitored regularly to assess campaign effectiveness.
- Adjustments should be made based on KPI trends to refine strategies.

By implementing these strategies, tourism businesses can attract the right customers, maximize marketing effectiveness, and increase overall visitation.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeannette Lye is the Director of Planning and Research for Tourism Saskatchewan. Her team provides market research and data analysis for marketing campaigns and destination development initiatives. In addition to her work at Tourism Saskatchewan, Jeannette serves as 1st Vice-President of the Travel and Tourism Research Association Canada Chapter and is the current chair of Destination Canada's Research Advisory Committee.