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TOURISM MANAGEMENT SERIES

# How To PUBLISH PROFITABLE TOURIST GUIDEBOOKS

By Rob Tonge



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By ROB TONGE, Senior Partner,  
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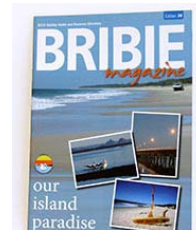
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## INTRODUCTION



The information in this manual has been compiled from experience gained producing guidebooks over many years, together with extensive research covering:

- The content, format, quality and effectiveness of a range of guidebooks produced in resort and regional areas; and
- The information needs and expectations of travellers.

This research has shown that in many cases guidebooks are based on a traditional approach, and the assumption that visitor attitudes have remained unchanged in the last decade, whereas, attitudes have changed dramatically in recent years.

Apart from this manual, guidelines for the production of tourist guidebooks have not been readily available, and as a result, many of these publications have been largely produced by trial and error - often resulting in large financial losses, or the production of ineffective publications that give little benefit to either visitors or advertisers.

In cases where tourism organisations undertake a guidebook-publishing project, usually the details are established by the committee together with a printer, neither of whom may have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of tourism industry publishing and visitor expectations.

For the inexperienced committee or person who has attempted to start a business in the field of guidebook publishing, it has often been a matter of guesswork before viability has been achieved.

This manual has therefore been prepared to provide intending tourism organisations and private enterprise with the practical information to do the job properly, to avoid most of the pitfalls, and to achieve maximum benefit for users and advertisers.

With the advances in printing technology in recent years the guidelines given in this manual focus on full colour productions and describe the 'ideal' publication, however, as circumstances surrounding the production of guidebooks can differ, some flexibility in approach is necessary.

The basic principles can be used anywhere there is:

- A sufficient number of businesses to support such a publication with advertising; and
- An existing visitor industry strong enough to justify the expense and effort.



## DEFINING THE OBJECTIVES

There must be a good reason to produce a guidebook - not just a decision to proceed based on the assumption that having the publication is a 'good idea'. The project should be carefully researched to identify the opportunity/need. Also, the objectives must be established from the outset.

Is the primary reason for publishing a guidebook:

- To promote an area?
- For profit?
- Or both?

In either case, the exercise must be treated as a business venture, and it is important to prepare a business plan. Equally, the correct production techniques are important to avoid financial loss.

Ideally, the objectives of the publication would be to:

- 1) Provide a comprehensive, up-to-date information resource for visitors to a region or local area.
- 2) Produce tangible results for the advertisers, thereby ensuring their continued support for future editions.
- 3) Return a profit or cover the costs with advertising.
- 4) Ensure the guidebook is of sufficient quality that it will be used as a souvenir item, thereby reducing wastage to an absolute minimum.

The visitor market of today is becoming much more mobile and selective, and research into visitor information demand trends indicates that generally, many travellers prefer to obtain their information from a good quality guidebook rather than a pile of brochures. In addition, the global tourism product is rapidly improving as a result of increasing competition and greater awareness by operators of the need to promote more effectively, and to take a more professional approach.



## GUIDEBOOK PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

The following checklist should be integrated with a time schedule:

- 1) Ascertain feasibility of project.
- 2) Decide the size.
- 3) Determine the number of pages.
- 4) Decide the print run.
- 5) Select the paper.
- 6) Calculate the advertising contract.
- 7) Obtain printing quotes.
- 8) Decide sub-contract requirements & obtain quotes.
- 9) Cost the publication.
- 10) Set the pagination.
- 11) Calculate advertising rates.
- 12) Prepare sample copies & sales material.
- 13) Prepare Rate Cards.
- 14) Confirm production schedule with printer & sub-contractors.
- 15) Sell the space.
- 16) Prepare editorial.
- 17) Obtain photographs & copy.
- 18) Prepare final artwork.
- 19) Proofread.
- 20) Ensure Advertisers sign-off on Proofs
- 21) Artwork to printer.
- 22) Check colour proofs.
- 23) Printing
- 24) Prepare final accounts.
- 25) Distribution
- 26) Send/deliver accounts.



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