



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

Marketing Community Based Visitor Attractions

For Community Based Tourism Organizations (CBTOs), visitor attractions are the heart of the product. They are the unique sites, skills, stories, and experiences that draw travelers to your rural community. This lesson provides a clear, actionable guide on how to effectively market these attractions, ensuring they are found, valued, and booked by the right audience.

1. 🔍 Identifying and Packaging Your Attractions

Marketing begins with a high-quality, well-defined product. Your attractions are not just places; they are structured, bookable experiences.

A. Inventory Your Unique Assets

List everything your community offers that is unique and authentic:

- **Cultural Assets:** Traditional architecture, local crafts (weaving, pottery), ceremonies, storytelling sites, traditional music/dance.
- **Natural Assets:** Scenic viewpoints, unique flora/fauna, conservation projects, clean water sources, specific geological features.
- **Livelihood Assets:** Agricultural activities (coffee processing, harvesting), traditional cooking methods, local markets, artisan workshops.

B. Shift from Sites to Experiences

Tourists don't just want to *see* an attraction; they want to *participate*. Package your assets into bookable experiences that are easy to understand.

Attraction Asset (Site)	Marketable Product (Experience)	Value Proposition
Traditional Weaver's Hut	"Weave Your Own Story: Half-day workshop with Mama Aida"	Skill-building, direct interaction with a local artisan, and a tangible souvenir.
Local Coffee Farm	"Bean-to-Cup Journey: Full-day coffee harvesting and tasting experience"	Agro-tourism, hands-on participation, and learning about sustainable farming.
Sacred Forest	"Elders' Path: Guided interpretive walk on medicinal plants and local folklore"	Authentic storytelling, cultural respect, and conservation fee included.

C. Standardize Quality

Marketing a product you can't reliably deliver hurts your reputation. Every attraction must have clear **quality checklists** covering safety, hygiene, and the guide's knowledge. **Consistency** is key to earning positive reviews.

2. 📱 Digital Marketing: Making Your Attraction Visible

Rural locations are geographically remote, but the internet makes them digitally accessible. Digital marketing is the most cost-effective tool for CBTOs.

A. Optimize Your Online Listings

Your listing on a platform like **Equera** is your primary storefront. Treat it like a professional advertisement:

- **High-Impact Visuals:** Use **high-resolution photographs** and short, engaging videos. Focus your visuals on **people in action** (e.g., a tourist laughing while cooking), not just empty landscapes.
- **Descriptive Keywords:** Use keywords that the target traveler is searching for: "Authentic," "Sustainable," "Community-Owned," "Hands-On," and your specific niche (e.g., "Birdwatching," "Ceramic Workshop").
- **Clear Call to Action:** Make the booking process simple. Ensure your prices, availability, and contact details are **100% accurate** to avoid frustration and lost bookings.

B. Master the Art of Impact Storytelling

The conscious traveler chooses you for your social mission. Your marketing must focus on the positive impact of their visit.

- **Highlight the "Why":** Clearly state how the money from the attraction is used. *Example: "The fee for this tour contributes **20% directly** to the **Community Development Fund (CDF)** for local water sanitation projects."*
- **Use Testimonials:** Feature quotes from previous satisfied guests who specifically mention the impact or the genuine connection with a local host.

C. Leverage User-Generated Content (UGC)

Reviews and posts by past visitors are the most trusted form of marketing (often called **social proof**).

- **Encourage Sharing:** Create attractive, photogenic spots at your attractions (e.g., a unique sign, a scenic swing). Encourage guests to tag your CBTO when they post.
- **Monitor and Engage:** Regularly check online platforms for reviews (Google, Equera, social media). Respond quickly and politely to all feedback, showing your commitment to service and accountability.

3. 🤝 Strategic Partnerships and Distribution

You cannot reach every potential customer alone. Partnerships extend your reach and stabilize bookings.

A. Collaborate with Tour Operators

- **Targeted Outreach:** Identify small to medium-sized tour operators who specialize in **ethical, educational, or adventure travel**. They value authentic CBTO experiences.
- **Non-Monetary Negotiation:** When negotiating, offer unique advantages besides price, such as **exclusive access** to certain activities or high-resolution photo/video content for the operator's use.
- **Transparency:** Use your digital records (as promoted by the **Kitara Foundation**) to provide clear, verifiable reports on how their clients' money is allocated, meeting their own Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) requirements.

B. Local and Regional Bundling

- **Package Deals:** Work with neighboring CBTOs or local enterprises (e.g., a nearby lodge, a regional transport service) to create bundled itineraries. *Example: "The 5-Day Cultural Triangle Tour" involving three distinct community attractions.*

- **Regional Networks:** Participate actively in local tourism networks or destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to collectively market your region as a whole, sharing the cost and effort.

4. **Continuous Improvement and Innovation**

Successful marketing requires constant adaptation. Use feedback to make your attractions better and more marketable.

- **Analyze Booking Data:** Use the data from your platform (Equera) to see which attractions are selling well, which are not, and where your guests are coming from. Focus your marketing budget on the most effective channels.
- **Iterate on Product:** If an attraction is not selling, don't drop it immediately. **Innovate!** Consult the community to find out if the price is wrong, the activity is too long, or the description is unclear. *Example: Change a 4-hour historical tour into a 90-minute "Highlights of Our Past" experience.*
- **Maintain Quality:** Never allow the desire for more bookings to compromise the **authenticity or environmental sustainability** of the attraction. Your commitment to responsible tourism is the most powerful marketing message you have.