

Product and destination development

Developing tourism products through a destination-based approach

Core idea

Visitors experience a total destination system, not just a single attraction.

Learning outcomes

- Explain tourism product development and destination development, and their relationship.
- Identify the core benefit, actual product, and augmented or total experience.
- Apply the tourism product development process from audit to monitoring.
- Explain stakeholder roles, sustainability, quality, competitiveness, and resilience.
- Evaluate a proposed product using market, operational, social, environmental, financial, safety, accessibility, and quality criteria.

Preparatory question

Start from a destination you already know.

What exactly is the “product” a visitor experiences there?

Attraction only, or also transport, food, accommodation, guides, information, safety, cleanliness, local people, and atmosphere?

- Identify one strong part of the visitor experience.
- Identify one weak part.
- Suggest one element that could be developed.

What is a tourism product?

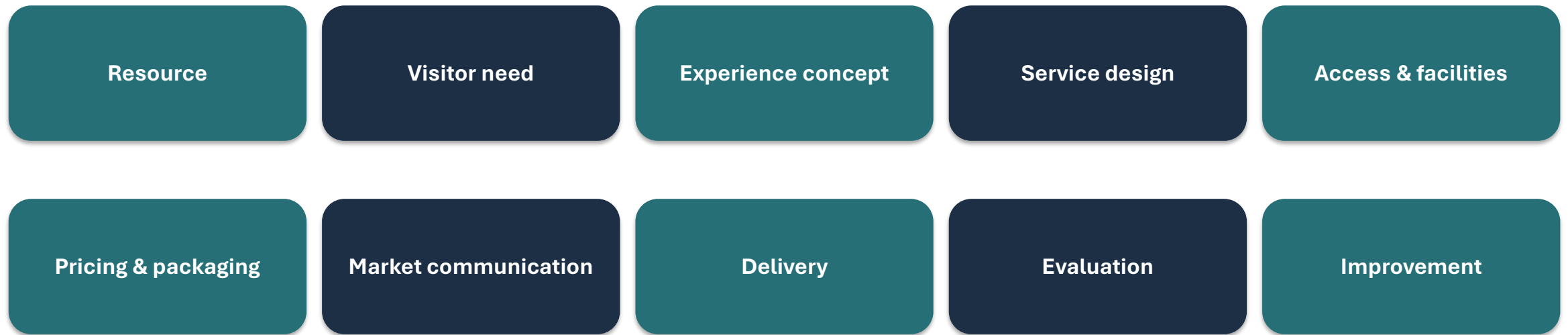
- A combination of tangible and intangible elements that satisfies a visitor need or creates a desired experience.
- Tangible: facilities, rooms, meals, vehicles, trails, museums, souvenirs, equipment.
- Intangible: service, interpretation, atmosphere, convenience, reputation, hospitality, authenticity, safety, memories.
- Visitors judge these elements together even when different organizations supply them.

The tourism product at three levels



- Core benefit: relaxation, learning, adventure, social connection, escape.
- Actual product: heritage walk, island-hopping tour, farm stay, food tour, dive trip.
- Augmented experience: booking, transport links, signage, restrooms, interpretation, safety, accessibility, customer service.

From resource to tourism product



A resource becomes a product when visitors can access it, understand it, experience it, and obtain value from it under acceptable conditions.

Destination development: the wider system

Attractions

Accessibility

Amenities

Activities & experiences

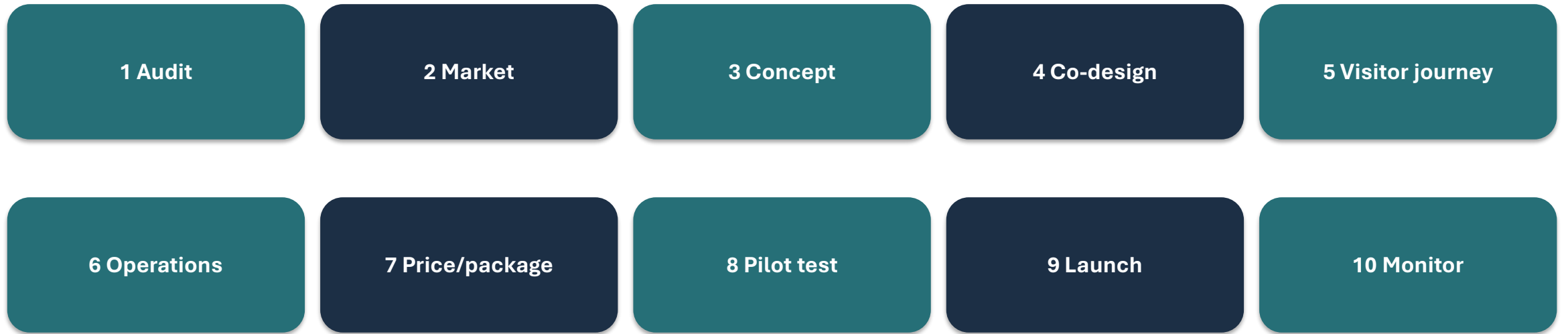
Packages & distribution

Ancillary services

Why develop tourism products?

- Improve visitor satisfaction and increase length of stay.
- Spread demand across seasons or locations.
- Reach new market segments and increase local expenditure.
- Reduce pressure on congested sites.
- Strengthen local enterprise participation or renew an outdated offer.
- Development should answer a destination need, not simply add more attractions.

The ten-step product development process



- The process moves from evidence and design to delivery, testing, and continuous improvement.

Steps 1–3: audit, market, concept

- 1. Audit: assess quality, uniqueness, condition, ownership, access, seasonality, constraints, supporting services, users, and risks.
- 2. Understand the market: identify likely visitors, motivations, spending, time, booking behavior, barriers, and competing choices.
- 3. Define the concept and value proposition: specify what visitors experience, for whom, and why it is worth choosing.

Steps 4–6: co-design, journey, operations

- 4. Co-design with stakeholders: coordinate government, communities, enterprises, guides, and destination organizations.
- 5. Design the visitor journey: map awareness, inquiry, booking, transport, arrival, orientation, activity, payment, departure, and feedback.
- 6. Establish operations: schedules, staffing, capacity, equipment, standards, maintenance, complaints, emergencies, safety, and accessibility.

Steps 7–10: commercialize, test, launch, improve

- 7. Price, package, distribute: cover delivery costs, match positioning, combine complementary services, and select booking channels.
- 8. Pilot test: check timing, instructions, facilities, service flow, safety controls, and whether the promise is delivered.
- 9. Launch accurately: communicate real inclusions, exclusions, schedules, prices, difficulty, accessibility, and environmental rules.
- 10. Monitor and improve: use evidence to maintain, modify, expand, reposition, limit, or discontinue the product.

Product portfolio and diversification

- A destination may combine nature, heritage, food, events, recreation, wellness, education, business, community-based, and special-interest products.
- Diversification can reduce dependence on one market or season and spread visitors toward less congested areas.
- More themes are not automatically better.
- Products should fit destination identity, resources, market opportunities, infrastructure, community interests, and management capacity.

Who develops the destination?

- Government: policy, infrastructure, regulation, safety, environmental protection, standards, data, and public facilities.
- Destination organization: strategy, coordination, research, branding, information, monitoring, and crisis coordination.
- Tourism enterprises: accommodation, transport, tours, food, activities, retail, and other services.
- Communities and resource managers: local knowledge, culture, stewardship, conservation, inclusion, and social license.
- Visitors: demand and revenue, but also crowding, resource use, behavior, reviews, and destination reputation.

Sustainability, quality, and visitor confidence

- Sustainability must be designed around ecological and social limits: resources, waste, water, energy, transport, habitat, culture, visitor behavior, and local benefit.
- Community-based tourism requires meaningful community ownership, operation, or coordination, not just community-themed marketing.
- Quality means consistent delivery of the stated promise: cleanliness, reliability, courtesy, interpretation, safety, accessibility, and complaint response.
- Quality is not the same as luxury.

Competitiveness and resilience

COMPETITIVENESS

- Distinctive products
- Access and value
- Service capability
- Reputation
- Governance and assets

RESILIENCE

- Diversified portfolio
- Capable institutions
- Reliable data
- Flexible businesses
- Coordinated planning

Evaluating a proposed tourism product

Market fit

Destination fit

Financial feasibility

Environmental acceptability

Quality & consistency

Distinctiveness

Operational feasibility

Community value

Safety & accessibility

Measurability

Applied example: heritage-food district experience

Old market

Family food businesses

Historic streets

Local museum

- Product concept: guided walking experience combining tastings with stories of local trade, migration, and everyday life.
- Destination needs: pedestrian safety, signage, waste collection, restrooms, lighting, and traffic management.
- Operating needs: tasting portions, service times, hygiene, pricing, trained guides, group size, photography rules, and community consultation.
- Pilot with a small group before regular sale.

Key takeaways

- A tourism product is the total visitor experience, not only the attraction.
- Resources become products through access, organization, interpretation, service, safety, and market readiness.
- Product and destination development are interdependent.
- Good development combines market fit, stakeholder coordination, operational feasibility, sustainability, accessibility, safety, quality, and local value.
- Monitoring is part of development; evidence should guide modification, expansion, limitation, repositioning, or discontinuation.

Class discussion / review task

Choose one destination in your locality.

Identify one existing or potential tourism product and explain how it could be improved using the ten-step development process.

- Distinguish changes to the product itself from changes required at the destination level.
- Use the evaluation criteria to justify whether the product should proceed.

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