

10 steps to help your business become weather savvy:

Learning how your business is affected by the weather allows you several insights into your market and your clients. Using a solid method helps your analysis become more robust and accurate, justifying managerial decisions for your organization. Viewing weather as a positive asset to connect to your market will ultimately help cut costs and raise revenues.

1. Keep a daily log book or spreadsheet of attendance and weather at your site



The best first step to any analysis—data creation. Begin by noting attendance and weather conditions during your business hours. If you already have historical attendance data but not weather data, see the Center for Sustainable Tourism’s online weather links to help you fill the void.

2. Have the right tools for the right analysis

At the simplest form you need two tools, one inside and one outside! Your inside tool performs the analysis and keeps the data; this is either a log book or a computer with a spreadsheet program and graphics. Your outside tool is the way you measure the weather. If you are located in a large city or an area that already has a good weather station, your work has been done for you—just go on the internet for data. If not, you need to purchase some inexpensive weather instrumentation for your site. See the Center for Sustainable Tourism’s online weather links document for retailers to meet your needs.



3. Engage with clients about the weather effect

Even the best intentioned researcher with powerful computing resources will tell you there are confounding variables and random variations to consider. With this in mind, it is not sufficient to simply draw conclusions between attendance and weather variables. Schedules, circumstance, or indirect marketing can affect attendances at your business. Engage with clients, ask them: “How comfortable were you with the weather?” “How could it be better?” “What are your ideal preferences?” Mark this down in your log book under a “comments” section for future determinations.

4. Understand weather variables and weather indices that may have great impact on your attendance

Begin by listing the aspects of the weather that you think will affect the enjoyment and attendance of your tourism activity the most. Good starter variables include high and low temperatures, cloud cover, and precipitation. Your business will probably have other, more specific, weather variables that interest you. See the “weather variable” documents within the Tourism Climate Series at the Center for Sustainable Tourism for more ideas.

5. Brainstorm the storms

Think about how business attendances are positively and negatively affected by the weather. What weather simply hampers business versus what shuts you down for the day? Not only what variables, but what outdoor experiences cause people to flock to your site or run away to other activities? Attendances are confounded by other social factors; however, personal enjoyment and comfort are not. Know what conditions may create lasting impressions of the experience and plan to do something about it!



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6. Focus on the demands and needs of YOUR clients, not just general consumers

Responses to weather and weather events vary based upon expectations. While there might be a good fit model for a general population which responds in expected ways, this may not work for you—get to know your client base and how they react. For example, a coastal storm may cause beach goers to evacuate, but if you work with advanced surfers this may benefit your business and you need to be ready. Ask yourself, “Are my clients weather-resistant?” That Tuesday women’s golf group shows rain or shine, so be prepared.

7. Know your microclimate

Simply put, microclimates are areas which over time display weather conditions that are different from the surroundings. These come in varying sizes, but an example is a shady park versus a sunny city street. Does your location display microclimate tendencies? If so, you may be able to benefit! Justified claims of warmer conditions, more golf days, sunnier skies, better waves, more snow, or enhanced wind surfing conditions can give your business a competitive advantage and a marketing edge.

8. Plan for weather liabilities



The outdoor nature of tourism and recreation includes risks, and you and your business need to be aware of these risks. Don’t simply pass the buck to clients for their own well-being; take an active role in determining the weather conditions that will affect their comfort and health to prevent foreseen accidents. Invest in lightning detection equipment, know the exertion required for recreation and keep heat indices in mind, report icy conditions, look for rip currents, document unfavorable winds. A little research and prevention now will save you and your business a lot of time and money later.

9. Think regionally

Analyze the spatial breadth of your visitors and analyze the weather over the entire region. Just because it is raining at your competitor’s site doesn’t mean you are going to get a washout. Keep this in mind and use weather as a demand-pull factor to your advantage.

10. Forecast

Weathermen forecast the weather. Now it is your turn to forecast your attendance (hopefully with better accuracy!) Take what you have learned to help you determine that “based upon the weather,” you should have greater or fewer people in attendance. This can help you avoid stock-outs, prevent understaffed situations, and add one more week’s profit to your seasonal business. And maybe it will also allow you to go home a little early and enjoy that bad weather...if need be!



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