Marketing of Kitselas Canyon National Historic Park:
An Emerging Tourist Destination in Northern British Columbia

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Abstract

The encouragement of Aboriginal Cultural tourism products in Canada has expanded the scope of tourism products and is anticipated to contribute to the economic development plans of First Nations'. Existing literature suggests that marketing is lacking for current and future aboriginal cultural tourism products and services, specifically related to industry growth.

This paper examines the development of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site (KCNHS), an emerging aboriginal cultural tourism destination near Terrace, British Columbia. The project will determine to what extent the Kitselas Band follows best practices regarding marketing by examining the current marketing of the Kitselas Canyon site, and compare this overview with best practices theory, existing literature, and statistics to determine if any marketing improvements may be suggested to be incorporated to the next phase of development.

Marketing standards used in this report include the 4Ps of the marketing mix with the addition of service. Price, product, placement, and promotion and level of services on-site include the cultural knowledge and hospitality training of staff, activities, and safety. The recommendations are based on each segment of the marketing mix specific to the Kitselas Canyon National Historic site.

In the process of this examination, this report will also gauge the depth and scope of current marketing research regarding aboriginal cultural tourism. The secondary question addressed is if there is enough current literature and statistics for aboriginal cultural tourism operator's use to support marketing decisions, and industry growth.
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Abbreviations

ATBC – Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia
ATC – Aboriginal Tourism Canada
CTC – Canadian Tourism Commission
KCNHS – Kitsetas Canyon National Historic Site
RATA – Regional Aboriginal Tourism Associations
TAMS – Travel Activities and Motivation Survey
TBC – Tourism British Columbia
TIC – Travel Information Center
WTO – World Tourism Organization
Acknowledgement

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This work is dedicated to my two angels, Ryan and Sarah, whose lives touched so many, and whose memories fill me with joy everyday.
Introduction

Tourism in an increasingly global industry with nearly 898 million international tourists reported for 2007 by the World Tourism Organization.\(^1\) As more countries strive to attract international visitors to strengthen their economies, the global tourism industry has become increasingly competitive.\(^2\) The development of several niche markets, such as rural tourism destinations and culture-specific heritage attractions, will expand and maintain market share but often requires a specialized marketing strategy to attract a specific target market.

Among niche markets recommended for development by the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) is cultural tourism, specifically aboriginal cultural tourism.\(^3\) It is believed Canada has a number of cultural sites that rival competing countries that have yet to be developed; First Nations communities in Canada are sitting on a gold mine of tourism potential.\(^4\) What remains is the development and marketing of these sites to realize additional annual tourism revenues:

Aboriginal tourism or eco-tourism in B.C. holds great potential in a strong growing tourism market, but is currently recognized to be an immature market needing support to develop business and tourism operator skills, networking/partnerships and marketing skills.\(^5\)

Marketing is an area of business often cited as a challenge for First Nation’s tourism products and services.\(^6\) The process of identifying target markets, building on competitive advantages, and exploiting information sources into an effective marketing plan, resulting in maximum returns on investment, has been limited by the ability to translate market research into viable products.

While First Nation’s communities recognize the benefits of developing tourism products and services, it is unclear if there is a sufficient research available, or how
advanced these organizations are in understanding of the marketing mix formulation to realize these benefits.

This study examines the available sources of information and marketing best practices as it relates to an emerging Aboriginal tourism destination, the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site (KCNHS). The current marketing standards of this site are examined, and then compared to the current research and customer feedback to determine if there are any sections of the marketing mix that can be improved. The marketing mix will be disassembled into product, price, placement, and promotion with an examination of the target market. The effective alignment of the marketing mix factors will increase the financial feasibility of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site. As the official opening of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site nears, the timeliness of this marketing plan is relevant. The site will be poised to deliver the experience, matched to the customer's specifications, generating positive feedback that will reinforce the site's position as an industry leader in this region, reinforcing its first mover advantage. It is anticipated that the marketing plan will also position the site to maximize the benefits, including increased traffic and revenues, expected when the 2010 Olympic Games will be hosted in Vancouver, B.C.

By understanding the challenges and opportunities of this site, it is anticipated the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site will be better able to position itself to attract the target market, and capitalize on these two anticipated events. The goal of effective marketing of this site is to realize long-term returns on investment, and to fulfill the vision of the site: to be the best, contribute economically and increase the cultural heritage of the Kitselas people.
Study Area

Northwestern British Columbia encompasses several aboriginal territories, including the Haida, Haisla, Nisga’a, Gitk’san, Tahlton, and Tsimshian. Many of the traditional Tsimshian lands exist around the present-day city of Terrace B.C.; the closest Tsimshian villages include the Kitsumkalum to the west, and the Kitselas to the eastern side of the city. The study group for this paper is the Kitselas; the development site is the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site which is located approximately 15 minutes west of Terrace on the Gitaus Indian reserve.

The Kitselas Canyon has been the traditional home of the Gitselasu (“People of the Canyon”) for the last 5000 years. The Kitselas Canyon contains the remains of what are now the only historic villages on the Skeena River where remains of houses and totems of the 1800’s still survive. It is at the fortress site “Gitlaxdzawk” that there are existing house remains and totem poles. At “Gitxtseax” there is still evidence of longhouse sites. At the height of its power, the site was a fortress that exerted military, political and economic influence on the people along the Skeena. The Kitselas Canyon was significant in both pre- and post-contact history. Nagel captures the allure of this site in his 2001 report:

![Figure 1: Map of Cultural Groups of British Columbia (adapted from the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC website)](image-url)
The rock walls of Kitselas Canyon hold the clues to the past. Enormous metal ringbolts driven into the rock in the central island tell of the days when paddle wheelers plied the canyon’s stormy waters. Petroglyphs—ethereal figures cared onto the nearby stone—whisper of how for thousands of years this was an important and strategic place. Further back from the river, in the trees, sunken areas in the moss signal where longhouses, cache pits and totem poles once stood. The history of Kitselas Canyon today lives on primarily in historic photos, academic texts and archaeological records. Now the Kitselas band is poised to develop their ancestral lands into a park they hope will be a magnet for tourists.¹¹

**Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site**

The Kitselas Canyon was declared a National Historic Site in 1972 by Parks Canada.¹² However, the site was never developed until the Kitselas Band Council began construction in 2001.¹³ According to Band officials, tourism was selected for economic development following the failure of the forestry and fishery industries in the region. The Kitselas Band Council needed an alternative economic resource for employment and income.

In addition to the documents supplied by the Kitselas Band, this researcher has undertaken her own SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats) (Table 1) and VRIO (Value, Rarity, Imitability, Organization) (Table 2) analysis to determine the internal and external factors of the site, and its competitive advantage.

**Table 1: SWOT Analysis of Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Weakness</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mature industry experiencing slow constant growth</td>
<td>Currently limited traffic accessing Northern B.C. tourism sites</td>
<td>Expand walking tour to Ringbolt Island with water taxi or have two points of</td>
<td>Lack of liability insurance leaves Site exposed to risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Historic Aerial Photograph of Canyon site (adapted from the Kitselas Band Council website)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>British Columbia is a well-known naturally scenic destination increasing pull of tourists</strong></th>
<th><strong>Limited knowledge of Tsimshian culture or the Kitselas Canyon outside of the region</strong></th>
<th><strong>To increase the cultural knowledge of the Tsimshian group to the region, province, and globally</strong></th>
<th><strong>Change in government policy or focus on tourism as an important industry</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhance the cultural identify of the Kitselas Band</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lack of business plan and performance/development accountability</strong></td>
<td><strong>Development of greater regional visitor products and services to complement the park – hotels, travel access, package tours, RV park, restaurants, guides/guidebooks, enhanced visitor services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increased cultural tourism sites in the region will dilute the market</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exerts influence as a leading development that other aboriginal tourism operators can examine and learn from</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lack of complementary services in the region (i.e. restaurants, hotels, lodges, ski resorts, hiking trails, camp sites, other tourism sites, shopping, activities, tours, theatres)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Form partnerships to promote region, aboriginal tourism sites, and to encourage a wider scope of visitors</strong></td>
<td><strong>Loss of funding will cause the project to become idle therefore need to be efficient with funds received to gain highest return</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unique product, giving KBC a clear competitive advantage based on the product</strong></td>
<td><strong>Seasonality and weather limitations– extremely limited tourist market between October and April</strong></td>
<td><strong>Promote site and accessibility via internet, local guidebooks, tourism operators, visitor centers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Authenticity challenged if tourism operators choose low-cost alternatives over traditional goods</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First mover advantage in the Terrace region</strong></td>
<td><strong>Target market expectations not yet achieved - Site not completely developed to meet sophisticated visitor’s expectations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Coordinate provincially with other FN tourism organizations to capitalize on the anticipated 2010 Olympic Games influx</strong></td>
<td><strong>Environmental threats such as increase pine beetle effect, negative weather impact (i.e. floods)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Archaeological data and local experts available to explain the significance of the Kitselas site</strong></td>
<td><strong>As a luxury item, travel is one of the first items to be pruned if financial challenges arise</strong></td>
<td><strong>Continue market surveys to improve product, customer experience, and to encourage cyclical returns</strong></td>
<td><strong>Change of Kitselas governance may interrupt development and implementation of business plan for the Site</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicated management and</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lack of signage and other promotional products and</strong></td>
<td><strong>Expand into ecotourism,</strong></td>
<td><strong>Negative effect of economic instability</strong></td>
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</table>
The objective of the project was to re-establish elements of the traditional village as a basis for an integrated cultural and eco-tourism initiative that will support socio-economic and cultural sustainability of the Kitselas First Nation. The vision is to make Kitselas Canyon and the area surrounding it the basis for the finest cultural tourism destination in Northwestern Canada. The project promises to deliver economic benefits through cultural experience:

the Kitselas National Historic site project will attract tourism dollars to the region by providing an aboriginal experience unlike any other. Through a guided tour of the region visitors will play a part in the evolution of the First Nation people who
live in North Western British Columbia. The experience will include: 1) a boat tour of the river and the modern aboriginal fish farming process, 2) the opportunity to view petro glyphs that are over 5000 thousand years old, 3) a cultural interpretation trail, 4) food and beverage facilities, and 5) three long houses that host numerous events and activities throughout the day including elder stories, entertainment, dancing, music, arts, and last but not least the gallery of the totems of the ancient tribes. Kitselas First Nation is developing a realistic aboriginal experience unparalleled to any current native-tourist experience available in Canada.¹⁶

The site has developed in stages and is currently in the third phase which includes the building of basic infrastructures throughout the canyon which will allow the development to proceed into its operational phase of conducting tours of the canyon.¹⁷

The site currently features three reconstructed longhouses, each with cultural artifacts, and a tour that offers local information and cultural interpretation. All the buildings on site have been constructed using Tsimshian architectural forms and design; focusing on the traditional post and beam longhouse construction.¹⁸ This attention to detail adds to the top-quality, unique experience to visitors. This site also showcases the Canyon’s natural beauty and the rich cultural heritage of the Kitselas Nation’s traditional lands, including evidence of pre-contact historic villages along the Skeena River, rare petro glyphs on Dry and Ringbolt Island, and representations of traditional houses, totems, and fortress remnants of the archaeologically significant villages of Tsunyow, Gitaus, Gitlaxdzawk, and Gitxtsaex.¹⁹

In August 2007, the Kitselas Band ventured into the competitive tourism industry with the soft-launch of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site marked by the raising of two house poles. The site had been scheduled for a grand opening for 2008, but the official launch has recently been pushed back to 2009.
As of publishing, the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site offers limited tours into the Site, ranging from self-guided tours, to educational programs for schools and tour groups designed to share the land's indigenous culture, create awareness for Tsimshian history and maintain the ancient knowledge passed down through generations. Special event tours, including performances by the Kitselas Dancers, traditional dinners, and guided tours have been arranged for private group functions.

In addition to self-guided tours, and guided tours of the Kitselas Canyon Historic site, long-term expansion plans include an on-site RV Park possible outfitted with a traditional sweat lodge/sauna, and river boat tours, in addition to the following buildings, erected in phases could include but not limited to:

1. Visitor information centre with public washrooms
2. Arts and crafts sales building
3. Carving and crafts workshop
4. Museum of Native history and art
5. Museum of wildlife of Northwestern B.C.
6. Museum of riverboat era and Grand Trunk Railway
7. Museum of logging in Northwest B.C.
8. Covered barbeque pit and sitting area
9. Outdoor barbeque pit/picnic tables
10. Indoor stage
11. Outdoor stage
12. Restaurant/Hotel facilities

The Kitselas Site is a tremendous opportunity to generate income for the Kitselas Band to fund cultural and social programs, and increase employment to First Nations in the region:

Spin off businesses in traditional food preparation, river transportation, ecological and adventure tourism and hotel and hospitality are all planned as part of the long-range project. There is no comparable tourism and heritage attraction in Northwestern B.C. The long term potential is significant. In 1995, 10,000 people camped at Kleanza and Lakelse Provincial Parks, and 67,000 people attended the day use areas. In the year 2000, it is estimated that cruise ship visitors along the north coast will exceed one million for the first time. Excellent road and rail links,
the city of Prince Rupert’s focus in tourism expansion and the Tsimshian presence all along the coast are important factors.22

Although a seasonal operation, with expected on-site operations expected from April to September, depending on weather, it is expected that marketing will occur year-round.23

The Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site is owned by the Kitselas Development Corporation (4562 Queensway Drive, Terrace, B.C), which is owned in trust by Kitselas Band Council.24 The Kitselas Band Council consists of five (5) elected officials: the Chief councilor and four councilors who oversee Band operations. The Kitselas Development Corporation is an incorporated, for profit entity that is organized hierarchically with the Canyon Site operations as one branch of the Natural Resources portfolio. The intent expressed by the Kitselas Band Council is that when the proposed business is ready to assume ownership of Kitselas Canyon Historic Site attractions, management team and field staff will be hired and employed by the Kitselas Development Corporation.25 Currently the site operations are managed by the Tour Operator.

On March 5, 2008 the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site was awarded the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC’s Cultural Authenticity Award given to groups that demonstrate a commitment to sharing authentic, realistic cultural activities through dance, song, or cultural events, as well as having a commitment to preserving the community and their living culture.26 The award heightened awareness among the site’s peer groups, and the media coverage served to publicize the site locally.

As an aboriginal owned and operated attraction, the site fits within the Aboriginal Tourism Association of B.C.’s definition of aboriginal cultural tourism, a highly
specialized market requiring effective communications and service excellence. Although a small, emerging site, the Park will be affected by the same macro and micro influences felt by the industry. Paramount to the development and maintenance of market share and growth is the realization of marketing objectives.

**Canadian Tourism Industry**

Canadian tourism is a mature industry with an upwards trend. Over the past twenty-five years, the only changes to this pattern has been an upward bump in tourism expenditures in the second and third quarters of 1986 during Expo86 and an up-tick in tourism expenditures in the first quarter of 1988 during the Calgary Winter Olympics, and a marked decline just prior to and following the events of 9/11. Aside from these events, the industry has been growing consistently.

According to Lawton and Weaver, tourism is an increasingly widespread and complex activity that requires sophisticated management to realize its full potential as a positive economic, environmental, social, and cultural force. Nationally, some of these activities are managed throughout the Canada Tourism Commission whose goal is to compel the world to explore Canada. This is accomplished through a network of travel agents, tour operators, and online resources that connect potential visitors to their desired services and experiences, including recommendations for hotels, events, and tour packages to meet visitor’s needs. Organizations like the Canadian Tourism Commission network within the tourism industry, and all levels of government to promote Canada as a destination, research and study the industry, and promote product and industry development.
Visitor statistics are compiled based on customs entries as reported by Statistics Canada, visitor center statistics, room revenue, hotel occupancy rates, as well as by utilization rates of modes of travel including BC Ferries, airports, and toll booths. In 2006, tourism spending in Canada increased 6.5% compared to 2005, totaling $66.8 billion for the year. The Canadian Tourism Commission’s 2006 year in review states that the total tourism Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached $27.4 billion, or 2.0% of Canada’s GDP. Canada is its own biggest tourism customer with domestic spending reached $50.3 billion (76.3%), with foreign spending declining to $16.5 billion (24.7%).

In addition, Lawton and Weaver note that North America accommodates two of the world’s largest bilateral tourist flows including flows between US and Canada, as well as US and Mexico, indicating a link between countries.

Visitors to Canada are motivated for a variety of reasons; the tourism market reflects the demands of consumers for a very wide range of travel and hospitality products. Travelers aged 55+ are the largest demographic, the ratio of men to women is nearly equal, hotel is the preferred accommodation type, and the top rated activities while visiting Canada are shopping and sightseeing. According to the CTC, the industry is entering a period of subdued growth. The factors related to this decrease are a slowdown in the growth of the domestic market and the continued erosion of foreign spending due to the high value of the Canadian dollar and the implementation of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative in the United States. This indicates the Canadian tourism industry will increasingly compete for tourism dollars, both from their domestic market, and internationally.
Canada is the 12th most popular tourism destination based on international tourist arrivals by country of destination.\(^{42}\) To retain its ranking, and move up in rank, it must continue to develop its tourism product.\(^{43}\) Continued success within the industry requires the maintenance of the most popular urban destinations, as well as an expansion and diversification to increase market share and revenue per visitor. Expansion of the industry includes recognizing and recommending tourism products outside of the urban centers, thereby expanding travelers’ vacation options to smaller destinations. According to CTC’s 1999 “Cultural and Heritage Report”:

In the intensely competitive world of tourism, every country must develop its own unique products. Canada’s culture and heritage has often been referred to as one of these unique products. However, little has been done to develop it, even though there is a wealth of products available, a growing demand and a high level of interest from both the cultural/heritage and tourism sectors.\(^{44}\)

The successful opening of this sector requires a quality visitor encounter with a cultural or historic experience that is authentic and not created solely for the purpose of attracting tourists\(^{45}\) and must be sustainable to ensure that the quality and integrity of the cultural or heritage resource experience are conserved.\(^{46}\) According to Burton and Volpe, cultural and heritage attractions include historic sites, natural wonders, Canada’s heritage rivers, and centers of cultural and educational value such as Aboriginal cultural centers, arts and music festivals, and museums. These attractions, events, and sites of significant Canadian heritage educate and entertain Canadian and others about Canada.\(^{47}\)

It is expected this sector will sustain itself as the population ages: the amount of highly educated and well travelled baby boomers will increase. Learning travel is an important niche market among this audience.\(^{48}\) Diversification of the industry includes
marketing newer travel options including eco-tourism, and the emerging aboriginal cultural tourism sector. Both are natural draws for this increasing target market.

**Aboriginal Cultural Tourism**

British Columbia’s cultural landscape includes 30 cultural groups; among the most recognizable groups are the Haida located on the Queen Charlotte Islands, and the Nu Cha Nulth located on Vancouver Island, and the Squamish located on BC’s southern coast. Each cultural group has its own language and cultural traditions, including unique artistic techniques, style of dress, and oral history.

Until recently, access to most aboriginal cultural sites in British Columbia has been restricted to travelers who have direct knowledge of the people and location of the site, and have invested a great deal of time and money to access the site. Invitations to feasts, totem pole raisings, or other ceremonies are subject to formal cultural traditions, limiting public access. Lawton and Weaver summarize prehistoric cultural attractions and access:

> prehistorical attractions include rock paintings, rock etchings, middens, mounds and other sites associated with indigenous people, such as those that occur in many parts of Australia, Canada, and the United States. Many of these attractions are affiliated with existing indigenous groups, and issues of control, appropriation, proper interpretation and effective management against excessive visitation therefore all have contemporary relevance.49

Culturally significant sites are often protected by tribal government and tribal members with limited information available to outsiders, resulting in a variety of untapped tourism resources.

Aboriginal tourism has gained in popularity and success in global destinations like Australia, and New Zealand; however, in Canada it is a sector that is in its infancy.50 As such, it encompasses a wide range of products and services with limited infrastructure
overseeing the sector, collaboration within the sector, or between the sector and the
parent industry. In response, tourism network groups and councils formed to assist with
the development and sustainability of authentic aboriginal product. These groups include
the Aboriginal Tourism Canada (ATC), and Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia
(ATBC).

Under these organizations, the segment has started to define itself and its
parameters of authenticity. According to the ATBC, aboriginal cultural tourism is:

a cultural experience that must be tied directly to an Aboriginal person, or
group of Aboriginal people.
The Cultural experience is authenticated in one of two ways:
1) As a direct result of permission provided through that person or person’s
Cultural Keepers, Elders or those designated with the authority to approve the
sharing of the experience as it relates to that culture; or
2) As a result of experiences relating to either traditional Aboriginal culture
or today’s living culture as it is reflected through modern day lifestyle.51

As the generally accepted definition, the remainder of this paper will adapt this
definition for this study.

Aboriginal Tourism Canada lists both traditional and contemporary activities in
this sector, including accommodation, food and beverages, transportation, attractions,
travel trade, events and conferences, adventure tourism, recreation, and arts and crafts.52
Of these sectors the Aboriginal Blueprint Strategy identifies adventure tourism products,
and products associated with information centers and arts/crafts retail stores as the most
popular.53 Diversification of the industry includes the maintenance and expansion of
products and services to include transportation, food and beverages, events and conferences,
accommodations, adventure travel, and attractions such as museums, cultural centers,
interpretive villages, historical walking tours, casinos, heritage facilities.
The lack of information regarding revenue generated by Aboriginal Tourism limits the ability to determine the sector’s economic impact. Reliable sources of the economic impact of this sector are not available; however there are two reports that provide reasonable estimates. According to Aboriginal Tourism Canada’s 2003 Strategic Plan, the revenues of the Aboriginal tourism industry in 1995 were estimated at $270 million or just 0.5% of the entire Canadian tourism industry. Based on current Canadian tourism revenue of $66.8 billion for 2006, the current contribution of the Aboriginal Tourism industry is approximately $334 million. The 2003 Aboriginal Tourism in Canada Economic Impact Analysis reports a higher amount of $474 million exclusive of casino operations, with the western provinces representing 25% of the total revenue.

It is estimated British Columbia’s aboriginal tourism industry contributes $35 million to the provincial economy and will grow to $50 million by 2010. British Columbia is a popular tourism destination for Aboriginal tourism visitors in Canada. According to the TAMS 2006 report of Canadian market participating in aboriginal cultural experiences, 8.6% of Canadians, or 2,139,302 people participated in aboriginal cultural experiences while out of town, overnight trips of one or more nights. Those who took part in an aboriginal cultural experience are over-represented among those who live in British Columbia at 15.6% or 518,566 people. Ontario (56.9%) and British Columbia (47.3%) were the most common destinations among this travel group.

Among American markets, 14.7 million of 8.4% of the American market participated in activities related to aboriginal travel products while on overnight out of town trips over the last two years. California represented the largest portion of travelers
who had participated in aboriginal activities.\footnote{62} Canada was the most popular international destination with Ontario and British Columbia rated high. 12.5\% of respondents indicated they had visited British Columbia in the past two years.\footnote{63}

The potential for Aboriginal Tourism growth was recently supported by the Province of British Columbia’s contribution of five-million dollars. According to the press release:

By 2012, the Aboriginal tourism industry is expected to contribute over $50 million to B.C.’s economy, up from approximately $35 million today. A sustainable Aboriginal tourism sector with diverse products in communities in every region of the province is recognized as one of the major focuses for achieving the target set by Premier Gordon Campbell to double tourism revenues in B.C. by 2015.\footnote{64}

The industry has considerable potential for growth, by incorporating new products and services into the tourism mix, and increasing market size of existing products and services.

Prior to filling the growth potential, this sector must address a number of development challenges. Key challenges as reported in the Aboriginal Tourism Blueprint Strategy are the need for community approval processes, a lack of community awareness of tourism, restricted access to land and other resources, inadequate physical infrastructure support, gaps in human resource skills development, and lack of access to appropriate marketing mechanisms.\footnote{65} A common thread of industry development is a lack of marketing skills. Marketing is a key issue affecting growth\footnote{66} according to 2004’s Environmental Scan of Aboriginal Tourism, while a related study notes most Aboriginal businesses are micro-enterprises and many owners lack product development and marketing skills and access to adequate financing. In this sector, the biggest issues continue to be a lack of market-ready products and a lack of awareness of the Aboriginal
tourism industry in Canada in international markets.\textsuperscript{67} This is echoed by Hudson who states:

Within the range of visitor management techniques available to attractions, marketing is increasingly seen as fundamental to success. It is recognized as the best way of generating revenue to contribute to the cost of operation and maintenance of the resource base, to develop and sustain satisfying products, to create value for money, and to influence the volume and seasonality patterns of site visits.\textsuperscript{68}

To become sustainable, native communities must develop unique products and services which specifically match the needs of clearly defined target market groups both nationally and internationally.\textsuperscript{69} Once these challenges have been addressed by industry stakeholders, the aboriginal community will realize benefits to entrepreneurship and employment, tourism training and mentoring, capacity building, cultural sharing, training and awareness that support a self-sustaining economy. The common theme to each of these scenarios is the marketing challenge. Without efficient development in this regard, systematic growth cannot take place to fully realize the potential of the industry.

**Objective**

The objective of this paper is to determine the current marketing of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site, the progress the Kitselas Band has in the execution of its strategy, and formulate a primary marketing plan for the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site. This marketing plan will be based on information from the Kitselas Band stakeholder interviews, literature review, customer exit survey, and best practices theory.

Through this study, the current state of aboriginal cultural tourism literature and research will be examined to determine if the current resources are broad enough in scope to understand trends in the industry and sector, yet specific enough to develop an effective marketing plan for a remote site. It is the intention that this study’s results and
recommendations can be used to improve the Kitselas Canyon National Historic site positioning to realize improved returns on investment. In the process, this framework will provide other aboriginal tourism operators a marketing tool that may be used to benchmark marketing mix factors for their own location.

Method

The methods used for this project included an extensive literature review, consultation with management of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site, and an exit survey of participants attending the Park’s soft opening of August 2007. Although the researcher is a member of the Kitselas Band, this research was approached with sensitivity to the Kitselas Band’s privacy of their economic development, and cultural traditions. Authorization to conduct the survey and interviews on the Kitselas Reserve was obtained prior to any survey or interview planning, and only members willing to participate were interviewed.

Literature Review

The scope of literature reviewed and compiled for this study includes an overview of marketing best practices with specific regard for the unique challenges faced by the service industry, specifically tourism; the most up-to-date research by key aboriginal cultural tourism organizations; information regarding the macro and micro factors affecting the Canadian tourism industry; research statistics of current travel trends; as well as the developmental history of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site.

Stakeholder Interview

In addition to authorizing access to the Canyon Site, and allowing customer exit surveys to be administered on that site, the Kitselas Band Council also allowed interviews
with key management to provide a complete understanding of the site’s current
operations, strategic direction, and marketing.

The combined level of knowledge includes the development and management of
the Kitselas Canyon National Historic site, experience with tourism in the Terrace area,
economic development, and familiarity with the challenges facing Aboriginal cultural
tourism.

The stakeholder selection was based on the following criteria:

1. knowledge of the development of the Park
2. knowledge of current operations and strategic objectives for the park
3. professional experience in the local tourism industry
4. professional experience in the aboriginal tourism industry
5. availability and willingness to volunteer their time and insight to this project

Originally, a total of forty-two questions were designed to gather marketing
information specific to the site from a variety of managers. The questions were submitted
prior to the interview, and in an unscheduled pre-interview meeting, an interview subject
provided several documents relating to the question subject areas, including the original
product development plan, vision, and feasibility studies. A majority of the background
information for the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site was available in these
documents. These information sources enabled the questions to be redirected and
trimmed to nineteen questions designed to confirm the research information provided,
and provide a clearer picture of the current marketing practices of the Kitselas Canyon
National Historic Site. The stakeholder interview was conducted with the key Kitselas
Canyon official to confirm the research information from these sources, confirm the
future directions of the Site, and any to gain an understanding of the site’s current
marketing practices.
Exit Survey

In total, twenty-eight (28) park visitors were interviewed using an ethics approved survey questionnaire. The participants were randomly selected as they exited the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site’s soft-opening on August 15, 2007. Each survey was opportunistic due to the limited time-frame, and the limit of one fieldworker. There was no selection criteria for these interview participants other than they had visited the Park during that day’s festivities. The author approached visitors as they exited the Park and asked for their participation. Questionnaires, containing eleven questions focused on demographics, and the marketing mix, were completed by the respondents themselves. Only 2 participants refused. All questionnaires came with section explaining the study, a confidentiality clause, and contact information.

It should be noted that on the day of the survey, the Kitselas Band experienced a lack of sanitation services that figured highly into the survey results.

Key Findings:

Stakeholder interview:

The majority of information relating to the Kitselas Canyon development was collected directly from park management in a one-to-one interview conducted on March 19, 2008, and access to documents relating to the Site development and history. The key findings include the confirmation of the site’s developmental history and reliance on external funding through each stage. The understanding of the target market was baby boomers, aged fifty plus, with greater education and income, resulting in more recreational dollars available. These potential customers originate from British Columbia and regions immediately adjacent to its borders, including Alberta, Washington, Yukon, and Alaska. In addition, the local schools and post secondary institutions have been
targeted for special excursions to the site, as was the flow of RV traffic through the region.

The site’s pricing grid was confirmed as benchmarked on other sites and services in the sector and region. Other sources of revenue identified were memberships and fees, with benefits such as reduced ticket rates for members. The interview reviewed current promotional activities, including word of mouth, newspaper articles, free development tours, a one-page magazine ad, internet site, and relationship building. It was noted that the Kitselas Canyon site is still in its birth stage, and hasn’t grown to full range regarding promotions. When they establish a marketing and promotional budget promotional activities will increase.

The prime pull to the site will be its cultural history. Questions regarding services on-site revealed that a lot of activities on-site are planned, including crafts training (i.e. cedar weaving), demonstrations of cedar stripping, as well as salmon harvest and preserving, although, presently, an implementation date is not confirmed.

The interviewee added to the vision of the park. Not only is the vision to be the finest cultural tourism destination in Northwestern Canada, but will also be a source of economic development, and rebuild culture within the community. Regarding protection of the investment, the Kitselas Band intends on training and employing security for the site, on-site security systems, and is in the process of incorporating liability waivers for participants via signage on-site.

The interview clarified the events leading to the postponement of the ‘soft-launch’ of the site from August 8, 2007 to August 15, 2007, and the temporary closure of park facilities, including washrooms, for that day.
Exit Survey:

While the results of the customer exit survey during the Park’s soft opening in 2007 were qualitative and not statistically significant, the data results were examined for similarities between this data and previous marketing studies of aboriginal tourism sites, such as Notzke (2004), and Lang (2007).

The survey shows that a majority of visitors to the park were 46 years of age and older:

**Table 3: Park Exit Survey Age Groups (n =28)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+ years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of respondents who self-identified their occupation were educated professionals, responses for types of occupations included: college instructor, electronics technician, marketing director, teacher, treaty negotiator, bishop, lawyer, fisheries biologist, GIS technician, film producer, camera operator, clerical worker, and student.

Of all respondents 67.86% were employed full-time, 21.43% part-time, 7.14% unemployed, and 7.14% retired. The majority of visitors originated from Terrace (89.29%), with the remainder from the Vancouver area (7.14%), and one respondent self-identifying from Alberta (3.75%).

Twenty-one point four-three percent of the visitors attended the event for business, while 78.57% attended for pleasure. Only a portion of the promotional engines were identified as drawing visitors to the site for that day. The promotions with greatest pull were word of mouth and newspaper article.
Table 4: Park Exit Survey Promotions (n = 28)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotions drawing participant to event</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>67.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Article</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>46.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Advertisement*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Information Centre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Advertisement*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*It should be noted that the event was held in conjunction with Riverboat Days, Terrace’s annual municipal celebration. The soft-opening and totem pole raising was promoted as part of these activities, and benefited from this promotional partner’s advertising, including brochures, newspaper and radio advertisements, as well as internet listing of events.

In addition to visiting the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site, visitors identified a majority of the regional sites as those they have visited in the previous year. Included in this list are: Stewart, Meziadin, Hazelton, Smithers, Babine Mountains, Riverboat Days, Terrace Farmer’s Market, Skeena River, Kitimat Village Music Festival, K’san Historical Museum, Kitimat Village, Pike Island, Kitwanga, Hyder, Nass Valley Volcano, Canyon City, Greenville, New Aiyansh Lava Beds, and Prince Rupert. The responses demonstrate the visitor’s knowledge of regional attractions, and the origin of visitors support the theory that a majority of the initial tourist traffic can be expected from the local population.

Survey questions about the site itself concerned price and product. A hypothetical price suggestion of $20.00 CDN per adult for all day access received majority approval, with 60.71% rating the price as fair, 35.71% rating the price as too high, and 3.57% rating the price as too low. Survey participants were also asked to select the five (5) most liked features of the KCNHP from a choice of eight (8) identified attractions. The results in Table 5 indicate the visitors appreciated the developments added to the site (longhouses, trails, river platform) as well as the natural beauty of the site.
Respondents were eager to suggest improvements to the product; among suggestions were: improved bathroom facilities, the addition of cultural tours, more signage or information onsite, more information brochures on history or culture, improve landscaping, more authentic experiences (i.e. drumming, dancing, storytelling), have an elder meet the tour group, have arts and crafts to participate in, as well as activities for children. On the day of the survey, the on-site washroom facilities were closed for repair, not surprisingly improved bathroom facilities was the number one suggested improvement on this day. Aside from this anomaly, a majority of suggested improvements focus on customer services, and the desire for authentic information and history about the site. The need for history may also be reflected in the low ranking of history of site in Table 5’s tabulation of most liked features.

Although the Canyon Site was incomplete, 100% of the survey respondents indicated they would recommend the site to a friend, indicating satisfaction with the experience and its stage of development so far.

These results lend support to the theories of target segment expectations of the aboriginal tourism product as discussed by Notzke, statistics reported by TAMS, ATBC, and ATC. In addition, the survey specifies which services appeal to the target market, and what immediate improvements are suggested by the target market.
Marketing

Hudson defines the marketing concept as a process intended to find, satisfy, and retain customers while the business makes a profit.\textsuperscript{70} It is a process where businesses understand, by using market research, which markets they wish to serve and the service attributes they wish to offer, establish the prices to be charged, tailor the service to meet the clients needs, and develop a communication program to inform them about the service.\textsuperscript{71} In Krekic’s report to the Kitselas Band Council, it is noted some attractions of a similar nature exist in the region, the unique history and location will place Kitselas Canyon competitively in the existing market (yet) success of the proposed business will depend on quality, consistency and strong marketing.\textsuperscript{72} Marketing is a beginning to end process.

Prior to entering any project or business, to meet customer needs, a company analyses its own products or services in terms of its own business expertise and how competitors’ products and services may affect them.\textsuperscript{73} A SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat) analysis provides internal and external feedback; a VRIO, or resource-based view is used to determine competitive advantages. Interestingly, the Kitselas Band did not complete either a SWOT or VRIO analysis prior to the project launch, nor did any funding resource require these analyses prior to phase one of the Canyon Site project. To gauge these factors, this researcher undertook her own SWOT (Table 1) and VRIO (Table 2) to determine the feasibility of the current site. The VRIO analysis includes an overview of the site itself as the product. These analyses serve to provide an objective perspective on the feasibility of the site.
Highlights of the SWOT analysis include the strength of the site's cultural and historical significance; the Canadian tourism industry is experiencing healthy slow growth with aboriginal tourism championed as the next sector to create pull for tourists; and an authentic product that matches the target market's expectation. Weaknesses include the limited knowledge of Tsimshian culture outside of region; and a lack of complementary services in the region of the site. Opportunities are partnerships for promotion and publicity; diversification and expansion of services; and capturing part of the anticipated 2010 Olympics tourist surge. Meanwhile threats to the site are environmental concerns of rain or floods in the region; the negative effects economics instability on the tourism industry; and any loss of traditional sources of funding will stagnate the project. The highlight of the VRIO analysis is the magnificence and rarity of the cultural and physical site, but is coupled with the services that currently are not developed or unique.

Overall the SWOT and VRIO analysis indicate that there is risk associated with this tourism project; however, the site is uniquely positioned, and with well managed product-development will translate into a feasible project that should be continued to completion.

Mahoney and Warnell identify three factors of the marketing concept for firms:

1. design their products/services to meet customer needs and wants
2. focus on those people most likely to buy their product rather than the entire mass market; and
3. develop marketing efforts that fit into their overall business objectives.

The issue of product/service design, and target market will be discussed further in this report. Regarding the third point, the business objectives of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site include the original vision to make Kitselas Canyon and the area
surrounding it the basis for the finest cultural tourism destination in Northwestern Canada, as well as to provide the Kitselas Band with a source of economic development and rebuild the culture within the community. As will be demonstrated throughout the discussion, the marketing mix and development plans are aligned to these objectives.

Mahoney and Warnell’s three factors will be used as a benchmark to gauge Kitselas’ marketing success in the conclusion of this report. To gauge the effectiveness of the site, the target market, and marketing mix plan and implementation will be examined.

**Target Market**

The target markets of the firm are the group of customers who have been identified, for whom the offering should be tailor-made, and to whom the organization will direct the majority of its marketing time, resources, and attention. According to Best, the target customers have to be aware of the product, and it needs to be attractive to target customers; that is, target customers have to have favorable attitudes and interest in the product and the benefits it offers at a particular price.

This section begins with an overview of the theorized target markets of aboriginal cultural tourism. These characteristics will be compared to the customer exit survey results, as well as the stakeholder feedback to measure commonalities. If the target market trends are confirmed with the customer exit interview, this will lend support to the viability of the marketing preferences of this market as it applies to the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site. These results can then be compared to the stakeholder feedback to gauge the understanding of the target market, and if the Site’s target market is defined as the aboriginal cultural tourist.
It should be noted prior to this discussion that the issues of international markets (exclusive of the American market) have not been included in this discussion due to the early stage of the Site's development, and the 100% Canadian content of the customers surveyed. It is reasonable to conclude the international market is not yet a cost-effective market to pursue at the site’s stage of development. For these reasons, the preliminary marketing plan will focus on the North American customers: Canada and the United States.

Studies regarding the Aboriginal Tourism target market agree on many points in their assessment of the target market. The typical visitor to heritage or cultural sites in Canada is well educated, between 45-55 years old (part of the baby-boomer generation), predominantly female, middle income wage earners, live in households with 2 or more adults, no children, spend more money per trip, and travel in larger parties.76

Table 6 profiles the aboriginal tourist market based on demographics: age, income, education, household composition, place of birth, locations in the past year, cultural activities and attractions in the past 2 years, and outdoor activities on trips in the past 2 years are based on the 2006 TAMS tabulations.79 These data tables concur with the general characteristic of the target market listed above.
Table 6: Canadian TAMS: Participating in Aboriginal Cultural Experiences while on Trips (Adapted from Lang 2007)

| Attribute          | Size of Market | Took Part In an Aboriginal Cultural Experience | Did Not Take Part In an Aboriginal Cultural Experience | Pleasure Travelers | Index
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------
| Gender             |                |                                               |                                                     |                   |       
| Male               | 42.9%          | 49.5%                                         | 44.8%                                               | 90                |       
| Female             | 56.1%          | 50.5%                                         | 51.2%                                               | 110               |       
| Age of Respondent  |                |                                               |                                                     |                   |       
| 18 to 24           | 14.1%          | 12.6%                                         | 12.8%                                               | 110               |       
| 25 to 34           | 17.7%          | 19.5%                                         | 19.3%                                               | 92                |       
| 35 to 44           | 20.1%          | 20.6%                                         | 20.6%                                               | 98                |       
| 45 to 54           | 20.4%          | 20.3%                                         | 20.3%                                               | 100               |       
| 55 to 64           | 17.6%          | 13.8%                                         | 14.1%                                               | 120               |       
| 65 Plus            | 10.7%          | 13.2%                                         | 12.9%                                               | 83                |       
| Average Age        |                |                                               |                                                     |                   |       
|                   | 44.2           | 44.0                                          | 44.5                                                | N/A               |       
| Marital Status     |                |                                               |                                                     |                   |       
| Married            | 36.6%          | 31.8%                                         | 32.2%                                               | 111               |       
| Not married        | 64.4%          | 68.2%                                         | 67.8%                                               | 95                |       
| Parental Status    |                |                                               |                                                     |                   |       
| No children under 18 | 73.5%    | 70.6%                                         | 71.1%                                               | 103               |       
| Children under 18  | 26.5%          | 29.4%                                         | 28.9%                                               | 97                |       
| Education          |                |                                               |                                                     |                   |       
| High school or less| 26.2%          | 37.5%                                         | 36.2%                                               | 72                |       
| Some post-secondary| 12.1%          | 11.1%                                         | 11.2%                                               | 108               |       
| Post-secondary diploma/certificate | 23.0% | 21.8%                                         | 21.9%                                               | 105               |       
| University degree  | 38.8%          | 29.6%                                         | 30.7%                                               | 126               |       
| Household Income   |                |                                               |                                                     |                   |       
| Under $20,000      | 5.4%           | 5.9%                                          | 5.7%                                                | 94                |       
| $20,000 to $39,999 | 12.6%          | 14.7%                                         | 14.6%                                               | 89                |       
| $40,000 to $59,999 | 14.7%          | 16.8%                                         | 16.5%                                               | 89                |       
| $50,000 to $79,999 | 15.0%          | 13.9%                                         | 15.2%                                               | 98                |       
| $80,000 to $99,999 | 13.2%          | 21.2%                                         | 22.2%                                               | 108               |       
| $100,000 or more   | 28.4%          | 22.4%                                         | 22.8%                                               | 116               |       
| Not stated         | 12.6%          | 13.0%                                         | 13.0%                                               | 97                |       
| Average Household Income | $76,696 | $72,319                                         | $72,299                                              | N/A               |       

Notzke notes the majority of aboriginal tourists are well-traveled, seek vacations which offer natural as well as cultural experiences, are educational at the same time, and they enjoy the encounter with different cultures. Campbell notes that the touring markets, who are interested in new things to see and do, exciting scenery, historic sites and cultural events, may be the best match for aboriginal tourism products. Those Canadian who took part in Aboriginal cultural experiences while on trips are more frequent travelers, and are highly active; taking part in participatory educational attractions, attend live art performances, and participate in nature-oriented outdoor activities. The target group is progressively aging, leading ATBC to conclude that this is causing an increased demand for certain tourism products including experiential and learning tourism, cultural tourism, nature-based tourism, ecotourism and soft adventure. These potential customers demand:
...tourism experiences that offer opportunities to visit museums, art galleries and interpretive centers...as well as tours that incorporate a learning component ranging from crafts, to storytelling, ceremonial dancing, to interaction with elders. Tour operators surveyed by the Aboriginal Tourism Blueprint Strategy indicated was that their clients would more positively receive the cultural and heritage facilities when authentic, hands-on experiences, themed and educational programs were offered. 84

This is supported by the recent TAMS survey that indicates Canadian participating in Aboriginal Cultural experiences while on trips indicate museums (5.7%) as the most popular attractions, followed by aboriginal arts and crafts shows (3.7%), sampling aboriginal cuisine (2.5%), and taking part in aboriginal cultural experiences in rural or remote settings (2.1%). 85

Media habits of the target market focus on the use of the internet. The Canadian Aboriginal Tourism segment is an above average user of the internet to plan (69.5%) and book (48.5%) travel. 86 This segment often starts planning their trip with a specific destination in mind 87 and use the internet followed by word of mouth, and past experiences to plan the trip. 88 US Aboriginal tourists rely on the internet more than their Canadian counterparts, with 82.7% of adult Americans using the internet as a source of information followed by advice of friends/family (50%) and official travel guides or brochures (42.4%). 89

Members of the Canadian target market are above-average consumers of travel-related media and may be targeted through educational, nature-oriented magazines and television shows. 90 A high percentage of this market reads the weekend edition newspaper (89.8%), they also enjoy science and geography magazines, history television shows, and frequent travel websites. 91 There are indicators that the target group may also
have affiliations with organizations like the Canadian Auto Club, sports clubs, and regularly attend outdoor recreation shows, like boat, or RV/camper shows.\textsuperscript{92}

A majority of travelers originate from North America. According to Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC’s post trip survey, 39\% of visitors originate from overseas, while 28\% were American and 22\% from other Canadian locations.\textsuperscript{93} According to the TAMS 2006 report for Canadian aboriginal tourism travelers, there are two regions that tourism operators in British Columbia should concentrate on for the highest return on investment. From an estimated 2.13 million Canadian Aboriginal tourists, the majority are from British Columbia (15.6\%), followed by Saskatchewan (10.2\%), then Alberta (10\%).\textsuperscript{94} Ontario (56.9\%) and BC (47.3\%) were the most common destinations, with B.C. (8.9), Nova Scotia (7.6), P.E.I. (7.5) and Ontario (7.5) receiving the highest appeal ranking among Canadian aboriginal tourists.\textsuperscript{95} In Canada, the greatest interest for aboriginal cultural tourism is in Western Canada, at the same time, B.C. is popular and highly demanded.

The American Market TAMS reports 8.4\% or 14.75 million adult American participated in Aboriginal cultural tourism.\textsuperscript{96} California (14.4\%) has the highest proportion of this market, while Alaska, San Francisco, Seattle, and Nevada are over-represented for this travel segment.\textsuperscript{97} Interestingly, the California market is as large as the total Canadian market for aboriginal tourism. Canada was rated as one of the top aboriginal tourist destinations with significantly more visits to B.C, and Ontario than for any other provinces.\textsuperscript{98} A similar trend is noted in Western U.S.A. where greatest interest in aboriginal cultural tourism is found; again B.C. is a popular destination.
According to the customer exit survey results, a majority of Kitselas Canyon visitors were 36 years of age and older, with 39% of visitors 55 years of age and older. A number of survey participants were professionals, and a majority was employed full-time. The variety of other tourism sites, from the results of this survey, indicates a preference for eco-tourism, adventure travel, and other aboriginal cultural tourism sites in the region. Suggestions for improvement to the product include improvement to learning, and cultural aspects of the site. These results lend support to the idea that the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site attracts the aboriginal cultural tourist.

The Kitselas Band’s expectations of potential customers are aligned with the generally accepted attributes of aboriginal tourism target market. They specify their intended audience is baby-boomers in the fifty-plus age category, with more education, and high income earners meaning more recreational dollars. In addition, there is a concentrated effort by the Band to target local educational institutions (primary, secondary, and post-secondary) as a more public service. These educational school tours introduce a new generation to the culture and history of the Kitselas Park and people. Park management believes a lot of potential customers originate from the region, as well as the adjoining provinces and states to British Columbia including Alberta, and Washington State. It was also mentioned a high interest in RV traffic in the area and how the Site’s management would like to benefit from the tourist flow North, up the Alaska Highway.

In terms of target market, the Kitselas site management is able to articulate who the potential customers are, they did not express any knowledge beyond demographics and location. Target market knowledge includes understanding the target market’s
preferences to develop the product, and how to best communicate with these potential customers, both of which are key to successful marketing. Site management can identify their niche target market, but are still drawn to the mass market, such as the tourism traffic, for customers which can be counterproductive. While the pursuit of a larger market share is encouraged, site management must be careful not to expend resources on the pursuit of customers who do not fall within the target markets specifications. If inappropriate markets are selected, marketing resources will be wasted.99

Following Mahoney and Warnell’s factors the identification of the target market enables a firm to focus on the selected group rather than the mass market to develop marketing objectives that address their needs.100 Identification of the target markets wants and needs allows the firm to align their products and services, to initiate a successful marketing strategy.

**Marketing Plan**

A marketing plan is a written short-term plan that details how an organization will use its marketing mix to achieve its marketing objectives generally over two years or less.101 The marketing mix of products traditionally relies on the 4P’s of marketing: price, product, placement and promotion, and involves the continuous evaluation of how a business operates both internally and externally to meet customer requirements.102 Best adds service as a component of the marketing mix,103 while Hudson identifies an addition 3Ps to add to the mix for services: people, physical evidence, and process.104

The marketing mix factors help form a marketing plan. Marketing involves the interaction and interrelationships among consumers and producers of goods and services, through which ideas, products, services and values are created and exchanged for the
mutual benefit of both groups.\textsuperscript{105} An effective marketing plan guides service operations: it provides a road map for all future marketing activities of the firm; it ensures that marketing activities are aligned with the corporate strategic plan; it forces marketing managers to review and think through objectively all steps in the marketing process; it assists in the budgeting process to match resources with marketing objectives; and it creates a process to monitor actual against expected results.\textsuperscript{106}

In the case of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site, the argument will be made that the target market responds to Best’s definition of the marketing mix: the 4Ps and service.\textsuperscript{107} In this definition, service will include people, physical evidence, and process as they relate to the customer’s experience. An effective product will be delivered by fulfilling the target markets expressed needs specific to these marketing mix factors.

\textit{Product and Service}

As a niche market, the Kitselas Band will have to target tourists through an increasingly specialized array of products within the tourism industry.\textsuperscript{108} In Campbell’s early research it was noted that quality, authenticity and service are critical to success.\textsuperscript{109} The common theme regarding current aboriginal tourism products is authenticity. Authenticity is the extent to which an attraction is genuine as opposed to imitative or contrived.\textsuperscript{110} Visitors and potential visitors do not want to experience a fabrication; they look for actual history, culture, and interaction. The literature is clear on the growing demand for authentic cultural tourism experiences with a growing emphasis on providing ‘experiences’ as compared to ‘destinations’.\textsuperscript{111} As travelers in this segment become more
sophisticated, they want their experiences to be grounded in reality and connected to today’s representatives of the culture they have come to sample.112

According to Bernard Campbell, the aboriginal tourism product should consist of history, lifestyle, the land, customer and entertainment, spiritual values, and arts and crafts.113 These characteristics are echoed by Valene Smith’s 4H model as quoted by Notzke, which analyzes aboriginal tourism on four interrelated elements:

1. Habitat is the geographical setting; the natural environment or the land is at the very heart of native culture.
2. Heritage or culture (etnographic traditions) comprises the whole body of knowledge, skills, values and beliefs that give meaning to life and distinguish populations from each other.
3. History refers to post-contact relations between indigenous peoples and Westerners and/or the effects of acculturation
4. Handicrafts includes items like crafts or carvings; items created traditionally that are marketable114

The majority of tourism businesses are attractions, followed by adventure, tourism services, accommodations, events and conferences, travel trade, food and beverage, and transportation.115 Products must be developed to authentic and quality standards to challenge the general perception in tourism industry circles such as travel/tourism intermediaries that aboriginal tourism products are below standard and therefore more risky and less reliable.116

The decision on which product mix option to adopt depends on many factors, including the strength and value of consumer demand in the different markets, the level of competition in each market, and the distinctive competence of the organization to service the markets adequately.117 This section reviews the target market product and service preferences in relation to the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site development, current status, and future development.
Service quality has been increasingly identified as a key factor in differentiating service products and building a competitive advantage in tourism. Recognizing that customer service is central to the satisfaction levels of tourism services is significant because consumers are often buying something of which they have high expectations, based on the marketing mix, which is shaped by people, physical attributes (e.g. good or bad weather) and processes of delivery. A bad service experience can negate the entire marketing effort.

The product desired by the target market includes quality services with specific knowledge of the attraction. According to TAMS 2006 survey for Canadian Aboriginal tourists, this segment considers it especially important that vacations are intellectually stimulating create lasting memories, offer novelty (e.g., seeing or doing something new and different) and provide learning opportunities (e.g., gain knowledge of the history and culture of a destination). Zeppel’s findings from the Cowichan Native Village study indicated that travelers want to experience culture to enrich their lives, and wanted to be educated on the traditional and contemporary aspects of the Cowichan culture.
In a 2002 feasibility report to the Kitselas Band, the main product is described as the experience of accessing the site and a number of locations that have a unique cultural and historical significance. The product mix at the Kitselas Canyon National Historic site currently consists of structures and sights. The site is dominated by longhouses upon entrance to the grounds, which houses an arts and crafts display, as well as photographs. A trail from the longhouses leads visitors to the Skeena River and the Kitselas Canyon, where visitors can use the wooden viewing platform overlooking the river, or hike onto Dry Island opposite Ringbolt Island (see Figure 3 for feature locations). The shoreline of Dry Island features some petroglyphs, with other petroglyphs located across the river on Ringbolt Island. Visitors can explore the shoreline and enjoy views of the river, fauna, and mountain scenery.

Services are currently limited, without a developed visitor centre or regular staff on-site. There is no site-map to guide visitors or explain the significance of the site’s features, signage along the trail has yet to be installed, and guided tours are by special arrangement. Food services and visitor safety services have not yet been included as part of the Site’s product mix. Valene Smith’s 4h model is not currently complete, but it is...
anticipated that all of these services will be added by the grand opening of the site in 2009.

However, the site’s features are a strong pull. In its current state of development, the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site has recently been recognized for its cultural authenticity with an award from the Aboriginal Tourism Association of B.C. In addition, the customer exit survey results were largely positive regarding the site’s attractions. The Longhouses (92.86%) and river platform (75%) were among the highest ranked of on-site attractions indicating visitors appreciated the constructions that compliment the site’s natural attractions. Not surprisingly, visitor services (10.71%) and the history of the site (50%) were the lowest ranked on-site attractions, which indicate the need for development of these areas. The suggested improvements to the site also focus on improving the on-site experiences. Visitors wanted to be more involved, either by learning more about the Kitselas culture through cultural tours, or information brochures, and to be more interactive with the culture through drumming, dancing, storytelling, or participating in crafts. The service areas should be a main area of focus for the site as the 2009 Grand Opening approaches since these relate directly to the target market’s preferences, and are echoed locally through the customer exit survey. The Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site management recognizes the negative impact that the lack of bathroom facilities had during the ‘soft-opening’ of the site, and have since rectified this service need. The future development plans for the site will add to this location’s competitive advantages, with increased services and events to complement the strong physical infrastructure. Achieving increased services, in conjunction with a unique
setting and product will result in successful product which, according to Hudson, emerges when the market planning steps are followed.\textsuperscript{124}

\textit{Price}

Pricing for an event or service must strike a balance between gaining acceptance with the target market and making profit for the organization.\textsuperscript{125} Pricing strategies include a breakeven analysis which is necessary to determine the price to set to avoid a loss, and may involve environmental scanning, and an understanding of the industry evolution to price appropriately.\textsuperscript{126}

For tourism pricing, Mahoney and Warnell list seven influential factors:

1. business and target market objectives
2. the full cost of producing, delivering and promoting the product
3. the willingness of the target market to pay for the product or service you provide
4. prices charged by competitors offering a similar product/service to the same target market(s)
5. the availability and prices of substitute products/services
6. the economic climate, both locally and nationally, and
7. the possibility of stimulating high profit products/services (such as boats) by offering related services (such as maintenance) at or below cost\textsuperscript{127}

Hudson notes that pricing should be treated as a tool to achieve corporate and marketing objectives; if the target market has been clearly identified, and a decision has been made about where a product is to be positioned, then pricing will become easier to determine.\textsuperscript{128} This section examines the current pricing of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site, and compares it to customer feedback regarding a hypothetical price to suggest a pricing strategy.

A pricing grid for the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site has recently been released to selected education institutions in the Terrace region. Table 7 outlines the current pricing levels.
Table 7: Price Grid for Kitselas Canyon National Historic Park

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admission Rates*</th>
<th>Guided Tours</th>
<th>Unguided Tours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>$12.00 CDN</td>
<td>$6.00 CDN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (under 12 years)</td>
<td>$8.00 CDN</td>
<td>$4.00 CDN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniors (65 years and over)</td>
<td>$8.00 CDN</td>
<td>$4.00 CDN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Minimum/maximum per guided tour: 5/25 participants. There is a special rate for schools at $60.00 per group (adopted from Bennett 2008 3).

The site has yet to approve a business plan so the prices are not break-even or cost-plus based on anticipated yields, instead the pricing grid was determined based on comparisons with similar tourism sites. Comparison or competition oriented pricing (going-rate pricing) is a technique in which an organization fixes the prices of products in relation to competitor’s prices. 129

The price grid was not available prior to the customer exit survey during 2007’s soft-opening. For this survey a random fee of $20.00 CDN per adult for all day access to the site was used as a standard. Participants responded that this fee was fair (60.71%) while 35.71% rated the price as too high, and 3.57% rated the price as too low. Although a small sample, the survey suggests that most customers would not be opposed to higher prices than currently charged by the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site. This fits with Hudson’s theory that attractions seeking to appeal to niche markets may have slightly more price flexibility, since they have fewer competitors and perhaps more points of difference between their products and others in the niche. 130 These results may also support the notion of “price-quality trade-off”: the recognition that consumers might accept a higher cost for a better quality product. 131

However, in terms of affordability, Lawton and Weaver believe cost must take into consideration the cost of living in the destination region relative to an origin area,
since a high proportion of total trip costs are normally incurred within the destination through food and accommodation expenditures.\textsuperscript{132} There must be an overall scale cost consideration, not just the ticket price, in order to compete regionally, and globally. Affordability can be influenced by fluctuating exchange rates, and the remoteness of the attraction. This is a concern that partnerships with other tourism operators can address by packaging services in the region to deliver economic alternatives for tourists.

The current pricing grid covers the season from April to September. The seasonality of some tourism attractions adds an additional pricing approach, in which firms should give attention to pricing strategies which may encourage off season and non-peak period sales, longer stays, group business, and the sale of package plans.\textsuperscript{133} Packaging is the process of combining two or more related and complementary offerings into a single price offering. A package may include a wide variety of services, such as lodging, meals, entrance fees for attractions, entertainment, transportation costs, guide services, or other similar activities.\textsuperscript{134} This is an approach that will benefit the Kitselas site at a later in its development. In the current period, Kitseías Canyon National Historic Site should conduct a cost-plus pricing strategy to achieve its business objectives: to continue to fund the site as it develops into one of the best in Canada, achieve economic and cultural growth. Cost-plus pricing will enable the KCNHS to realize profits based on the full accounting costs and anticipated number of visitors. The hypothetical price point of $20 CDN as used in the customer exit survey lends support to higher admission prices, so management can consider higher admission fees than currently implemented.
Placement

Traditional retail producers describe placement as where the customer meets the product; if potentially interested customer seek a product and cannot find it at their preferred point of purchase, there is a loss of potential market share.\(^{135}\)

The challenge of placement to tourism destinations is instead of moving the product to the customer, the customer must travel to the product. Travel is a significant portion of the time and money spent in association with recreational and tourism experiences and is a major factor in people’s decisions on whether or not to visit your business or community.\(^{136}\) Hudson echoes this belief: distribution systems’ purpose is to provide an adequate framework for making a company’s product or service available to the consumer; in the tourism industry, distribution systems are often used to move the customer to the product.\(^{137}\) In this sense, placement is an encompassing concept, involving not only access to the site, but also the services of the surrounding area.

Distribution systems are often used to move the customer to the product.\(^{138}\) The Review of Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada notes that many of the operators are in remote locations that are not readily accessible.\(^{139}\) The report suggests that operators need to be in contact with travel agencies, and other tourism organizations in the transportation and accommodation business, in order to get on tourist packages offered through the mainstream tourist industry. Adequate availability and service facilitate purchase.\(^{140}\) Managers of attractions must consider how the customer will get to the site, or how the local service levels will affect their capture of market share. According to Mahoney and Warnell, too many tourism businesses place the emphasis on the customer’s service while on-site, and do not consider the travel to and from the site.\(^{141}\) Accessibility to markets are
affected by the infrastructure accessibility...the availability and quality of transportation linkages such as air routes, highways and ferry links within transit regions, and of gateway facilities such as seaports and airports within the destination and origin regions.\textsuperscript{142} This affect was felt with Sami indigenous tourism: while visitors are attracted to the concept of indigenous tourism, the distance and remoteness of the site can limit their choice.\textsuperscript{143} Remote locations have also been shown to offer visitors a sense of exclusiveness and may emphasise the contrast to the urban visitors’ everyday life.\textsuperscript{144}

It is useful for aboriginal tourism operators to examine the transportation levels servicing their area to understand how the Sami situation may affect them. In the case of KCNHS, the Terrace/Kitimat airport is serviced by four airlines offering travel service from Vancouver: Air Canada Jazz, Hawk Air, Central Mountain Air, and Pacific Coastal Airlines. Three of the four airlines offer Vancouver to Terrace flights. The cost comparison of these carriers is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airline</th>
<th>Frequency*</th>
<th>Lowest Fare (based on two-week advance purchase**)</th>
<th>Frequency*</th>
<th>Comparison lowest fare Vancouver to Edmonton**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Canada Jazz</td>
<td>6/day</td>
<td>$420.35</td>
<td>20/day</td>
<td>$334.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawk Air</td>
<td>4/day</td>
<td>$357.36</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Coastal Airlines</td>
<td>3/day</td>
<td>$380.45</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Jet</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>25/day</td>
<td>$334.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*frequency refers to total number of flights available to the destination on the selected departure date, plus the total number of flights available from the destination on the selected return date
**fares obtained via corporate websites online booking, rates obtained on March 23, 2008 for departure dates of April 14, 2008, return date of April 20, 2008

This chart is meant to provide an understanding of the accessibility of the site based on frequency of flights and affordability as discussed previously. Both factors can limit the attractiveness of the site. However, by choosing to combine the activities of the various members, participants in the distribution system can work together to identify
opportunities to fulfill each other's needs. The distribution members, including suppliers like KCNHS and other local services; travel agencies; tour operators; and consumers.

**Promotion**

As a niche market, the Kitselas Band will have to target tourists through an increasingly specialized array of products within the tourism industry. Of primary importance to Kitselas are the selection of a marketing image and the creation of awareness of the product.

A marketing image is the sum of beliefs, attitudes and impressions held by a person or group of people towards some phenomena. Such images are important in discretionary forms of tourism such as recreational vacations, where the destination is not predetermined by business or social considerations; in such cases, potential visitors rely on their images in deciding to patronize one destination over another. The Kitselas Band has produced one magazine advertisement that supports their vision of authenticity. It is important that the Kitselas continue to positively reinforce this image consistently in all promotions related to the site. As noted by Lawton and Weaver, the potential tourist must first be aware that the destination exists...next it is vital that the awareness of the potential destination is positive. Integrated marketing communications is one method that will
plan and manage marketing mix elements interrelationships, and build a consistent brand or company image.\textsuperscript{151}

Promotion is the way the potential customer learns about the product; this awareness initiates the buying process. For the tourism industry, promotion provides target audiences with accurate and timely information to help them decide whether to visit your community or business.\textsuperscript{152} The information is distributed via channels that the target audience is likely to have contact with, whether it is media, presentations, or signage. Specific methods used in the promotional mix include advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, word of mouth, direct marketing, and internet marketing.\textsuperscript{153} These promotional methods include push and pull strategies.

Distribution channels are the paths by which tourism organizations execute the communication and sale of their products and services.\textsuperscript{154} At their early stage of development, and funding limitations, a direct distribution channel is a cost-effective option for the KCNHS. Information distributed about the site is limited to publicity via media coverage of events at the site, an informational web page, and a one page advertisement distributed through a local Terrace-based tourism organization. The scope of distribution is regional, with very few opportunities that extend this distribution reach outside of the local region.

The participants of the customer exit survey were asked how they learned about the soft-opening event. This question gauges both the amount of promotions recalled by participants for the event, and what types of distribution channels these represented. A majority of respondents selected word of mouth (67.86\%), newspaper article (47.83\%), followed by brochure. While these methods attract participants for special events, the
maintenance of the site as a business will require increased and efficient distribution methods in the future.

A tourism organization must decide how to make their services available to their selected target market by choosing their distribution mix strategy. They must select a mix that will provide them with the maximum amount of exposure to potential travelers as well as ensure that the strategy chosen aligns with the company or destination image.\textsuperscript{155} The distribution method gaining in popularity among users is the Internet. A digital presence allows tourism operators to bypass intermediaries and to sell their basic products and services directly to the customer.\textsuperscript{156} The target markets identified for aboriginal cultural tourism in Canada and the United States show very high usage and reliance on the internet for researching their travel destination, and booking their trip.\textsuperscript{157} These results can be found locally; the “Value of the Smithers Visitor Info Centre” reports the Internet was the top information source for both travel groups.\textsuperscript{158} Smithers is located approximately 230 kilometers east of Terrace, and is similar to Terrace in remoteness, size and services. This lends support to Cardamone and Rentschler’s beliefs that the internet is a significant medium which has large distribution potential but is yet to be fully exploited by aboriginal tourism operators: websites have the potential to allow the access to products and services quickly and effectively and provide immediate solutions to buyer queries.\textsuperscript{159} KCNHS has a website that, with updated promotions, information, and interactivity, will be an effective distribution method.

According to 2004’s Opportunities for British Columbia: Activity Based Tourists in Canada report, Aboriginal Cultural Tourists may also be reached through their affiliations, including mail outs to Canadian Automobile Association’s members, or
displaying promotional booths at sportsmen’s shows, boat shows, or sending information to major sports clubs memberships.\textsuperscript{160} Notzke also emphasizes the importance of networking and partnerships to promote a niche cultural tourism product.\textsuperscript{161} This is supported by the recommendation by Review of Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada that the ATTC and RATAs should combine their efforts to provide an online, interactive bulletin of events and opportunities, to serve both the tourist industry and tourists at large. Postings of national events, art shows, tourist packages, etc., as well as links to tourist operators across the nation would help promote the industry in a more cohesive fashion.\textsuperscript{162} Partnerships will have a substantial role in the site’s initial success:

The community impact is obvious from the region co operations that have taken place to make this project a success. If this cooperative approach remains sustainable, we are quite confident that the Kitselas Canyon site project will contribute positively to the economic development of the Terrace community. Word of mouth and media feedback will continue to play a positive role to create awareness throughout the BC. However, in order to make this venture a complete success we need to have the backing of Tourism BC and other regional tourism boards to promote the site rigorously for the first three years of operations.\textsuperscript{163}

The customer exit survey reflects external promotional mix factors currently used by Kitselas, but must be interpreted with caution since the event during the survey was a joint promotion. Kitselas uses a combination of one page advertisement in a local tourism magazine, (Figure 4), descriptive web page, word of mouth, public relations, and publicity to promote the site. This relates to Page’s belief that most attractions use limited budgets for public relations rather than media advertising, with many profile attractions having media kits, websites and virtual reality tours, as well as targeting groups through promotional campaigns that are price-driven.\textsuperscript{164}
While the marketing mix results indicate Kitselas is hitting two of the top sources of information used by the target market, there is a gap concerning the use of the internet, the number one information source, as a promotional vehicle. It is expected the use of the World Wide Web will create awareness and pull more customers to the site from outside of the region than currently are being attracted. Kitselas is expanding their partnerships with local and provincial travel associations including Kermodei Tourism, the Tourism B.C., the City of Terrace, and the Aboriginal Tourism association of B.C. will expand their reach, adding benefit to a digital presence.

**Recommendations**

As shown by Wilton’s research, the long-term trend for overall tourism growth is good. As an emerging sector of the tourism industry, aboriginal tourism is expected to both benefit and contribute to this growth. It is imperative that Kitselas understand the urgency concerning the need to complete and establish the Park, preferably earlier than the expected 2009 grand opening to maximize benefits. An earlier opening date will allow the Band to test their product with the target market, and correct any product or service needs prior to the 2010 Olympic Games. An earlier start date will also allow Site management to coordinate with local and regional tourism organizations to capitalize on the anticipated increase of provincial visitors expected during the Olympic year, thereby capitalizing on this event’s awareness.

Aboriginal tourism is expected to contribute $35 million in British Columbia this year, growing to $50 million by 2010, Northwest British Columbia’s share of tourism revenues is estimated at 5%, resulting in a Northwestern market of $1.75 million this year, up to $2.5 million by 2010. KCNHS has the opportunity to capitalize on this
growing market, and will increase their success with carefully planned and executed marketing, supported by adequate resources.

Key to the marketing mix recommendations is the understanding of the aboriginal cultural tourism target markets. According to Best:

A well-defined target market is also cost efficient. If managers do not know what the company’s customers are, they are going to spend a lot of time and money marketing to people who are not likely to buy, regardless of their marketing efforts. Or, if the customers do buy, they will be difficult to retain because the value proposition cannot deliver the customer satisfaction they desire. A good marketing plan will be more productive; it will take fewer dollars to accomplish performance objectives because there are fewer resources wasted on non-target customers.168

This study has demonstrated the importance of understanding the scope of the target market’s characteristics, as they apply to the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site. The most recent TAMS reports have showed changing trends of the target market regarding significant factors of the marketing mix, specifically promotion and placement.

**Product:**

The development of the product has been aligned with the vision of the site. The physical infrastructure is an attraction and it is recommended that Kitselas continue with the development of this authentic and unique product.

While the site itself is a draw, the long-term growth will depend on the addition of services to meet the target market’s expectations and preferences. The initial improvements can be made based on the customer exit survey results: completing the facilities, installing signage, landscaping, and developing visitor services including brochures detailing the history of the site, and visitor maps. Visitor services will be important to the long-term success of the site. These include culturally-knowledgeable Site staff to meet visitors, guide visitors through the Park, answer questions, take
customer feedback, and monitor the site for safety and security. Internal marketing including effective staff recruitment and ongoing training will add to the customer’s experience on-site, improving the site’s reputation and word of mouth promotion.

It is anticipated that site management will monitor and survey customers to ensure facilities are meeting their needs, continue good word of mouth, encourage repeat customers, and track the success of the site.

**Placement:**

The challenge of connecting the customer with the site may be hindered by the transportation infrastructure in the region.

In addition to being aware of this affect of remoteness, KCNHS can take a proactive approach to maximize this affect. Providing alternative travel routes, comparison rates of carriers via air, train, or ferry will assist the target markets decision-making. This may include linking complementary travel service agencies’ websites to the Kitselas Canyon National Historic website to encourage the flow of information. Monitoring the issues affecting the travel sector and changes affecting accessibility will help KCNHS understand the changes to tourist traffic flows as it affects the site.

Partnering to provide package services (i.e. tours) is another method to minimize travel cost prohibition to the region.

**Promotion:**

The current distribution effort of the KCNHS is concentrated on local and regional tourist flows. Distribution will be more effective if it is focused on the target markets that will generate the greatest return on investment. According to TAMS recent publications the largest target market populations can be found in Western Canada and
the Western USA coast market of Washington, and California.\textsuperscript{169} As a remotely located aboriginal tourism destination, the KCNHS will have to concentrate efforts to create awareness of the site.

The internet is a significant tool for distributing information to this group; a majority uses the World Wide Web to research and book their holiday destinations. The internet is a relatively inexpensive distribution tool that can be enhanced to be used to its full advantage. An attractive, interactive, and informative website linked to partner website and achieving high internet search placement will help communicate the Kitselas site to an audience of approximately 12 million Canadian and American tourists interested in aboriginal tourism. Sharing internet links with tourism promotional partners such as Tourism BC, Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia, Kermodei Tourism, as well as private sites such as Fodors, Expedia, VIA rail, and local hotels will increase the distribution network.

It is recommended that the KCNHS maintain a local presence through the distribution of brochures, and inclusion of ads in some local publications as the promotional budget will allow.

Not only does the KCNHS need to speak to their customer, they also have to have the right images, copy, and spokespeople. It is important to set standards for promotion based on the image that Kitselas want to convey, as well as quality control of these standards.

As most aboriginal tourists start with a destination in mind,\textsuperscript{170} it is in the best interest of all aboriginal tourism operators to co-operate with regional tourism as well as site specific promotion. The activities preferred by the aboriginal tourism market are a
good match for some services and events in the Terrace region, which should serve both Kitselas and Terrace area, and encourage joint promotion. Relationship marketing should be continued.

In addition to expanding the website's information and services, creativity will help KCNHS take advantage of every opportunity. For example, a current Royal BC Museum display at the University of British Columbia showcasing the "Treasures of Tsimshian" is a potential distribution and promotional vehicle to pull customers to the site. Other opportunities include sending informational brochures home with participants of the school tours to create awareness. All promotional materials like business cards, signage, brochures, and advertisements should include the Kitselas Band's website and email addresses so potential customers have access to current information. A brochure detailing the archaeological and historical significance of the site should be produced and distributed to all regional tourism information centers, and stakeholders within the region to connect with potential customers and community representatives.

The establishment of a promotional budget will encourage management to make effective promotional choices based on rate of return. This may lead to a realignment of current promotional activities.

Price:

The current price grid has been set based on benchmarking competitors. In the absence of a formal business plan, this is the best source of information to base a pricing system on.

As the KCNHS management formalizes a business plan it is suggested that the price be re-evaluated based on a cost-plus formula. A cost-plus model is recommended
for all general admissions, with a break-even model implemented for public relations events such as school tours. Both of these pricing models will align the price section of the marketing mix with the vision of the site: as an economic development initiative in addition to cultural revival tool, and establishing the finest cultural tourism destination in Northwestern Canada.

These recommendations will increase customer satisfaction with the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Park, increase customer traffic to the site, resulting in a greater return on investment for the Kitselas Band. In conjunction with an effective business plan, a well researched and effective marketing plan will translate into success.

**Conclusion**

Marketing of aboriginal cultural tourism sites is a challenge as information and resources concerning the target market’s preferences are relatively new, with trends changing over time. In this state of change, it is in the best interest of aboriginal tourism operators to continually conduct market research to learn about who the best targets for their product is, that their product matches this target’s preferences, and how to best communicate the availability of the product to the target to initiate the buying process.

The study of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site demonstrates the importance of ongoing market research and alignment internally to meet external demands to maximize tourism return on investment. The recommendations form the basis of a marketing plan, which, in conjunction with a business plan, will give the site’s management clear directions regarding site development, promotional options, considerations for pricing, suggestions for placement, and information regarding service
expectations. The recommendations are intended for short-term use, and should be revisited annually.

The marketing mix does enable Kitselas to attain the three factors proposed by Mahoney and Warnell:

1) customer needs and wants will be met following the recommendations
2) focusing on the target market is attainable now that this market is clearly defined
3) develop marketing efforts that fit their overall business objectives. Effective communication to the target market will create pull to the site; on-site needs include improvements to services to complement the attractions to create a satisfying experience and positive feedback. As the site attracts more customers, profits must be managed to fund further development of the Site, and enhance cultural activities to meet the full mandate of the site’s vision.

In the service industry, full implementation of these marketing basics is the means to attracting, maintaining, and growing market share. Kitselas is pursuing a first mover advantage for aboriginal tourism in the Terrace region, but has been delayed due to funding constraints, and marketing requiring fulfillment. Efficient marketing will propel the site forward into self-sufficiency, decreasing reliance on external funding sources, and adding to the Band’s economic prosperity. Similar practices adopted by the aboriginal cultural tourism industry will increase the market match of products to consumers, leading to a satisfying experience between service operators and tourists. Partnerships and maximizing the benefit of digital technology will help create awareness of the Aboriginal tourism product to the local, national and international market.

The study of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site’s marketing also demonstrates the growing size and scope of marketing research available to aboriginal cultural tourism producers. As the interest and study of aboriginal cultural tourism grows internationally, studies regarding this sector’s target markets, promotions, product
expectations, issues with placement, and studies of price are increasing. These studies may be used to benchmark successful practices worldwide to similar situations locally. In addition, TAMS has specific categories for both Canadian and American aboriginal cultural tourists that is updated regularly, and has become more sophisticated, providing valuable data that can be incorporated into market research.

As tourism increases, the importance of small scale studies, such as those used in this report regarding percentages of tourist traffic to Northern British Columbia, help provide a reasonable estimate of tourism expenditures expected to the region, which can be used to estimate anticipated aboriginal cultural tourism revenues in specific regions. In short, the body of market research has grown to the point where aboriginal cultural tourism operators and producers can be reasonably secure in marketing plans based on the current body of knowledge. The reliability of this data continues to grow as aboriginal cultural tourism studies continue.

In closing, although based on the single site of the KCNHS, these research findings may be used by other Aboriginal cultural tourism attractions as a tool to understand the marketing process, and adopted with local data to assist with marketing at other sites.

**Critique of Methods**

The research methods used in this study were designed to return specific marketing recommendations to the Kitselas Canyon National Historic site, and provide a form other First Nation's tourism organizations can benchmark future marketing plans. As such, the stakeholder analysis was restricted to key officials within this organization.
Greater validity will be achieved on a wider scale project with the inclusion of more stakeholders.

The most significant area of critique for this study concerns the sample size. At twenty-eight (28) responses, the sample size is not reliable or valid, but is the result of the opportunistic survey conducted on the single-day on-site ‘soft-opening’ event. The survey’s significance was to act as a guide to understanding the effectiveness of current marketing at the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site, and to base marketing recommendations drawn from the literature review, and best practices. As a result, the recommendations are not strong recommendations, and interpretation should be hesitant based on this small sample size.

The customer exit survey questions and format were basic, based on the understanding that the marketing recommendations would be a primary plan, requiring feedback concerning the general topics of the marketing mix: price, place, promotion, and product. Survey participants were able to complete the survey; however the questions were not specific enough to gauge the marketing efforts beyond generalizations. In addition, the questions meant to measure placement were found to be more applicable to promotion, thereby creating a gap in this research.

In future surveys it is recommended that a trial survey be conducted to ensure survey participants understand the questions, and the participant’s ability to respond appropriately to each question.

The request to survey customers as they exit the park was an effective method to intercept customers after they had completed their on-site experience, but because the survey was administrated by one individual not as many surveys were completed as
anticipated. Additional survey administrators during the day of the ‘soft-opening’ would have increased the survey results, increasing the validity of the data. In addition, an incentive-based survey will have generated greater participation, and is recommended for future surveys.

**Future Research Directions**

Although this project restricted the target market to the North American flow, there is potential to study the target market of international tourists, specifically the viability of this target sector to remote aboriginal cultural tourism destinations. How this sector relates to the remote location of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site will further assist in identifying this potential market for increased revenue generation.

In addition, there are a significant amount of additional stakeholders in the area whose input to the marketing process is important. These stakeholders may include but are not limited to: other aboriginal cultural tourism operators in the region, local tourism officials and organizations, provincial tourism organizations, Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia, Aboriginal Tourism Canada, the City of Terrace, the Kitimat-Stikine Regional District, the Terrace Economic Development Corporation, regional First Nation’s governments, neighboring villages, as well as employment trainers and funding agencies, and media representatives. Several of these organizations may have valuable input that will enhance the marketing of not only the Kitselas Canyon National Historic site, but also the region, which is a mutually beneficial result based on the TAMS 2007 report that most aboriginal cultural tourists begin their vacation plans with a destination in mind. Future research should include a stakeholder analysis based on the understanding of aboriginal cultural tourism, and how regional stakeholders will
assist with the marketing of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic site. This will provide additional marketing information based on the regional perspective, enabling the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site to build their marketing plan with local input and expertise.

Future research directions are recommended for specific factors of the marketing mix. For example, a price comparison of the different types of aboriginal cultural tourism occurring regionally, nationally, and internationally will aid in determining the optimal pricing strategy will benefit future aboriginal cultural tourism operators. Similarly, studies regarding the product, placement, and promotion are equally required. Finally, an updated study regarding the target market's demographics and specifications is required to enable aboriginal tourism marketers to remain current and effective.
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