

VISITOR MARKETING STRATEGY FOR PORTSMOUTH

REPORT FOR PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL



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Key Headline Visitor Figures for Portsmouth (2010)*

- 638,000 trips by staying visitors
- 2,026,000 staying visitor nights
- £130,677,000 spent by staying visitors
- 7,828,000 trips by tourism day visitors
- £269,990,000 spent by tourism day visitors
- £400,676,000 spent by all visitors
- £12,018,000 other tourism related spend
- £550,498,000 turnover for local businesses
- 10,713 jobs supported by tourism expenditure
- 9% of all jobs in City supported by tourism expenditure

**Economic Impact of Tourism 2010, Tourism South East*



Spinnaker Tower

1 INTRODUCTION

Portsmouth City Council asked Blue Sail to help produce a Visitor Marketing Strategy to guide their promotion of Portsmouth as a tourism destination taking full advantage of the investment and regeneration of the city and the expansion of the experiences it can offer to visitors.

This Strategy leads on from a short strategic review that Blue Sail undertook earlier this year updating their 2007 report on visitor markets, trends, and marketing opportunities for Portsmouth.

In preparing the Strategy we have consulted with a number of key players in Portsmouth's visitor economy, and reviewed the wider strategic context and ambitions for Portsmouth's future within which visitor marketing sits.

This Strategy sets out what visitor marketing should be trying to achieve, who it should be aimed at, how Portsmouth should be positioned and communicated, and how that marketing should be delivered within current resources and structures. The Strategy will guide the detailed marketing campaigns and promotional activity undertaken by Portsmouth City Council during the next 3years

The visitor marketing strategy in a nutshell:

Portsmouth City Council will lead on promoting Portsmouth as a great visitor destination and a city with a new story to tell. It will build awareness and interest in Portsmouth as a destination while driving visits from mainstream High Street families and empty-nesters living and holidaying in South East England and niche markets nationally and internationally- working to position Portsmouth as a preferred European City Break destination. The 'Great Waterfront City' brand will be used to promote our heritage attractions, our excellent retail located on our beautiful waterfront, our seaside and our many cultural attractions for day visits and overnight stays. Our main channels will be PR, press advertising, digital marketing, third party endorsements, work with intermediaries and marketing partnerships within the city and elsewhere. We will use great value offers as an incentive and will prioritise customer relationship management (CRM) through building a database of interested, repeat visitors.



New Mary Rose Museum and HMS Victory, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Portsmouth is a city with a new story to tell.

It is rightly famous – nationally and internationally - for its maritime history which can still be experienced first-hand during a visit to Portsmouth today. But it is much more than that. Portsmouth is also home to the resort of Southsea with a range of attractions and activities along the seafront, has one of the best shopping locations in Britain right on the waterfront, overlooked by the iconic Spinnaker Tower and a hugely characterful historic quarter. And Portsmouth's story continues with major investment taking place in the city centre and along the seafront, and in the cultural experiences the city can offer – events, literary attractions, performing and visual arts. The expansion of the University is also contributing new venues, cultural activity and the buzz generated by thousands of students around the city.

Portsmouth is set to tell this new story to the world, to create a buzz about the place which challenges out-dated perceptions or introduces Portsmouth for the first time to new audiences.

It is the job of this visitor marketing to take the old and the new stories and spin them into a narrative so compelling that it will attract significant numbers of visitors to the city, growing the visitor economy and supporting jobs and prosperity.

WIDER CONTEXT

It is clear that despite a challenging economic and public funding environment Portsmouth City Council has ambitions for the city's development. It is actively engaging the business sector in the city through *Shaping the Future of Portsmouth*, and pursuing funding opportunities from public and private sources to stimulate economic growth, prosperity and quality of life.

While some of this is tangential to the visitor economy there is no doubt that the physical developments planned will contribute greatly to Portsmouth's attractiveness as a place to visit; and an economically prosperous city will support a strong visitor economy and vice versa.

The key strategic initiatives and the specific and/or direct implications for the marketing strategy are listed below:

	Initiatives relevant to visitor economy	Implications for visitor marketing
Shaping the Future of Portsmouth 2012	<p>Setting up of City Brand work stream taking ‘Great Waterfront City’ forward – new logo, marketing and communications plan</p> <p>Investment in new cultural sub-brands, including the ‘Home of Great Writing’</p> <p>Establishment of new Destination Marketing Partnership</p>	<p><i>Visitor marketing will significantly contribute to the image of the city benefitting other agendas (particularly inward investment, attracting students). But there is a need for alignment and consistency across communications.</i></p> <p><i>Investment in the cultural/literary offer will help to differentiate Portsmouth and give new, appealing reasons to visit</i></p> <p><i>Potentially a vehicle for visitor marketing with opportunities to increase resources and impact.</i></p>
City Deal bid 2013	In partnership with Southampton, Portsmouth is one of 20 cities in the second round of bidding for the City Deal programme	<i>Funding and investment in range of economic regeneration projects including leisure and retail developments in the Northern Quarter which will enhance the visitor offer</i>
Southsea Seafront Strategy 2010 & Masterplan 2012	Major environmental improvements and improvement of visitor experience along the Seafront	<i>Will deliver the waterfront experience more effectively. Integration and extension of Southsea and Portsmouth visitor offer.</i>
City Centre Masterplan 2013	Identifies range of sites for redevelopment and public realm initiatives	<i>When implemented will significantly enhance the look and feel of the city, strengthen its sense of place as well as providing new infrastructure including retail and hotels</i>
PCC Regeneration Strategy	<p>Sets out vision of Portsmouth as “vibrant, modern city with a strong and positive national and international reputation”.</p> <p>Commitment to culture-led regeneration strategy to support the visitor economy and identification of investment in cultural infrastructure as key priority including Mary Rose Museum, New Theatre Royal, King’s Theatre, Faculty of Creative & Cultural Industries at Portsmouth University, Guildhall, Sherlock Holmes Centre and bidding for events</p>	<p><i>Visitor marketing can make a significant contribution towards raising awareness of Portsmouth and building its reputation.</i></p> <p><i>New cultural infrastructure will provide important opportunity to extend Portsmouth’s visitor offer and attract new markets. Will provide significant new stories about Portsmouth to use in its promotion.</i></p>

3 STRATEGIC MARKETING APPROACH

OBJECTIVES

There are two strategic objectives of this Visitor Marketing Strategy.

The first is around continuing to **create awareness, interest and reputation for Portsmouth as a great place to visit**. It is longer term, harder to measure but essential to continue to build sustainable tourism to the city AND to support Portsmouth's wider aspirations for economic prosperity across different sectors.

The second is about **driving visits now**, giving clear and compelling reasons to persuade people to choose Portsmouth for their next day out, overnight stay, short break or holiday.

All visitor marketing communications must deliver against both these objectives. The City Council doesn't have the resources to deliver awareness/brand-building campaigns and tactical sales campaigns; so the activity has to be cleverly executed to do both.

BRAND & POSITIONING

Portsmouth is operating in very competitive environment – culture, heritage, shopping and urban 'vibe' are all strong claims made by Portsmouth's competitors. And it is increasingly easy for potential visitors to validate a claim through a little online research and checking reviews such as Trip Advisor.

However we know that perceptions of the city are often out-dated or ill-informed or simply non-existent. We also know that visitors when they do get here are pleasantly surprised by the range and quality of experiences Portsmouth already has to offer, and this does not take account of the exciting developments which are in train for the next few years.

Of course Portsmouth has to present itself truthfully, but it also has to make sure it presents its old and its new stories in a compelling new narrative which will motivate its target audiences.

Portsmouth already has in '**Great Waterfront City**' a powerful brand which works across all its place marketing. This brand, and the branding developed for it, should continue to run through all visitor marketing communications.

Portsmouth can confidently claim to be a city ideally located on England's sunny south coast, within easy reach of London, offering world-famous heritage attractions, excellent and varied retail, traditional seaside, cultural attractions and an historic quarter – all set on a magnificent waterfront. Ideal for a day visit or a short break for those living in, or visiting, Hampshire and the South East.

So in the immediate future the core marketing themes for Portsmouth are.

- ▶ Maritime heritage
- ▶ Seaside
- ▶ Shopping
- ▶ The historic buildings, streets, cafés and charm of Old Portsmouth
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Cultural attractions and evening economy
- ▶ All connected by a great waterfront

As Portsmouth extends its accommodation sector it can further build its promotion to staying visitors. And as retail, cultural venues and attractions supported by public realm improvements in the city and on the seafront, come on-stream over the next few years, these should be integrated into marketing messages making a richer, deeper offer capable of generating more awareness, interest and visits.

4 TARGET MARKETS

It is always tempting for destinations to target a multitude of markets. Yet the most successful destinations are those which focus narrowly with a strong positioning tailored to that market. Counter intuitively the success this brings will attract other segments and markets without these being directly targeted.

This is the right approach for Portsmouth – be very good at what we do for our most promising market segment.

The best prospect market for Portsmouth is **High Streets living or holidaying in South East of England** – families with kids aged up 15 and empty-nesters aged 45+. Aim for the middle-market, core consumers with mainstream values (C1 socio-economic group) – those with money to spend, looking for fun, entertainment and education - and a bit of indulgence.

Portsmouth has a particularly strong offer for these segments and stands most chance of attracting new visitors by targeting them. These are large segments offer plenty of opportunity to increase penetration and for Portsmouth to be their destination of choice.

High Streets want **reassurance, information, validation and ideas**. They like to know what they are going to get – and they want to know it will be good.

This means all visitor marketing communications must deliver these things for them.

Pen portrait of High Streets:

Look for reassurance, information, validation and ideas

Like to know what they are going to get

Like to take their information from other sources rather than discover things for themselves

Keen to follow along when a fashion has been established

Brand and style are more important than functionality or individuality

Not the first to adopt new products but they will be ahead of the majority of the market

An active segment that is moderately interested in intellectual pursuits, arts and culture

Prepared to spend money on luxury - which tends to mean more things

Very interested in city breaks and city experiences

Big TV watchers –standard profile of TV stations

Big magazine readers – esp. women's mags

Standard profile of radio

Big newspaper readers.

Portsmouth's main attractors are listed below with the primary routes to market to reach the High Street segment along with the key messages which will motivate them.

Key attractors

- ▶ Waterfront
- ▶ Historic Dockyard
- ▶ Mary Rose Museum
- ▶ Spinnaker Tower
- ▶ Southsea – seaside and independent shopping
- ▶ Old Portsmouth
- ▶ Gunwharf Quays
- ▶ Events
- ▶ Cultural attractions (Sherlock Holmes, Dickens etc), galleries
- ▶ Evening Economy - venues such as Guildhall and two theatres

Key routes to market

- ▶ PR - the third party endorsement offered through PR works well for High Streets and is a cost effective channel
- ▶ Press advertising – magazines and newspapers
- ▶ Social media
- ▶ Third party endorsements – celebrities, guide books, what's on listings, awards, TripAdvisor etc
- ▶ Partner marketing with tourism and non-tourism brands
- ▶ Web and digital marketing
- ▶ Intermediaries - travel agents, group and event organisers, ground handlers etc.
- ▶ CRM – building a loyal visitor base who will repeat visit – communicating with them regularly with new ideas, offers,
- ▶ Groupon and other deal/offer led websites
- ▶ VFR – friends and family of residents and students

Key motivating messages

- ▶ A great place to visit
- ▶ Ideas for a day out; 24 hours; 48 hours...
- ▶ Everything you want within easy reach
- ▶ Recommended by...
- ▶ Use the iconic and famous as hooks to get noticed
- ▶ Top 5 things to see/do/enjoy...
- ▶ Best place to...(buy/eat/see/have fun/learn something new...etc)
- ▶ Lots to keep kids entertained (for families)
- ▶ Making it personal – stories & profiles from local businesses, people, historic characters, big names
- ▶ Special deals, offers, incentives
- ▶ WW1 & 2 stories (particularly for empty-nesters)

While most effort will be on the domestic market Portsmouth will selectively devote some resources to reaching international markets – largely through working in partnership. This work will look to achieve the vision in the Seafront Strategy: ‘Portsmouth and Southsea becomes a European city break destination with world-class attractions’. In summary:

- ▶ Group market – working with the city’s big attractions and with travel agents, group and event organisers etc.
- ▶ Cruise market – working with Portsmouth and Southampton International Ports
- ▶ France and Spain - passengers on ferry routes – working with Portsmouth International Port and the ferry companies
- ▶ Work with Southampton Airport and Flybe
- ▶ International partnerships – working with partners on inward investment activity and with the University – primarily providing collateral rather than direct promotional activity.
- ▶ International marketing – working with Hampshire, Tourism South East, Visit England, Visit Britain, agents etc.

Working with transport partners

Portsmouth is well-placed as a transport hub with ferry links to Europe and Isle of Wight, and air links via Southampton Airport. Partnership activity with Portsmouth International Port and the ferry companies, Brittany, Condor and DFDS Seaways to France, Spain and the Channel Islands and Wightlink Ferries and Hovertravel to the Isle of Wight, provides the opportunity to target international visitors and domestic visitors who currently use Portsmouth as a gateway.

Similarly Southampton Airport - and Flybe in particular – open up opportunities to reach domestic travellers going through the airport en route elsewhere to raise awareness of Portsmouth; and international visitors from France, Holland and Germany focusing on cities most likely to deliver in-bound from those countries rather than out-bound routes from the UK.

International markets

While Portsmouth does not have the resources to undertake significant marketing campaigns in its own right, working in partnership can provide opportunities to reach international markets. The main opportunity lies in French, German, Dutch and US markets. International

markets can be accessed through partnerships with transport partners, agents and working with and through regional partners such as Hampshire County Council and Tourism South East and national tourist boards.

In addition Portsmouth can reach international visitors on holiday in London through careful use of media which will be seen by both the domestic target segments and international visitor target markets. This was effectively done in 2012 with the campaign on the London Underground.

The primary appeal of Portsmouth to international visitors is its heritage – the Historic Dockyard and the Mary Rose Museum in particular, and its famous literary connections – Dickens and Sherlock Holmes.

Conference Market

Portsmouth does not have a substantial business tourism market other than the Ministry of Defence. However the refurbishment of the Guildhall does provide the opportunity for Portsmouth to expand its share of the conference, meetings and events market and establish the Guildhall as the primary local, and among the top regional, location for conferences, meetings and events. This highly competitive market has suffered in the recent economic downturn as companies have cut numbers of events and budgets. Those venues providing up to date, flexible, tailored facilities at the right price, supported by an active and focused sales effort will be more successful. Portsmouth's Guildhall will provide just such a new offer in the marketplace and will be supported by dedicated, targeted sales activity, both directly to companies and to conference organisers.

5 PRIORITIES

The priorities for marketing Portsmouth will be:

1. Plan and deliver a promotional programme which meets the objectives in this strategy targeting the priority markets using PR, press and online advertising, intermediaries, digital marketing, and social media as the main channels
2. Produce marketing collateral – web and print - which targets the priority segments with the appropriate messages, content and a distinctive tone of voice - and look to optimise income by providing advertising opportunities for tourism businesses
3. Optimise the Visit Portsmouth website for mobile
4. Identify and work with tourism partners in Portsmouth, regionally and nationally using their channels and leveraging their resources
5. Identify brand partnerships with non-tourism brands
6. Continue to develop the CRM strategy to increase the visitor database and introduce regular communications, updates and offers
7. Use openings and new developments as a focus for building newsworthy content and achieving awareness
8. Take every opportunity and use every channel and communication piece to talk about the old and new stories that Portsmouth offers
9. Make sure a visitor message is built into other promotional activity undertaken by the Council

CAMPAIGNS

Planning is already underway for 2013 with regional partners and on thematic campaigns with Visit England building on successful collaboration in 2012 on cultural cities and English seaside. There will also be support for a major campaign around the opening of the Mary Rose Museum, which will include TV advertising in the region and in London.

Detailed marketing action plans will flow from this strategy and broadly speaking will take the following approach:

- ▶ Separate campaigns will be run for the family segment and the empty-nester segment although there may be destination marketing activity which underpins this targeted activity and is more orientated towards building awareness and interest among non-visitors
- ▶ Family campaigns should be run immediately prior to school holidays

- ▶ Empty nester campaigns should be designed to attract visits in the shoulder months outside school holidays
- ▶ Year round activity will take place through PR, social media, digital marketing (CRM activity and e-newsletters)

PARTNERS

Within the City

The Destination Marketing Partnership is a key partner and, while it is independent of the Council and able to determine its own priorities and activity, it will hopefully make sense to all parties to collaborate on the delivery of this Strategy. The Council will actively seek to provide opportunities for the DMP and its members to buy-in to campaign activity and so increase the resource available. One immediate action would be a joint project targeting the groups market. Portsmouth has a very strong offer for domestic and international groups with its combination of excellent visitor attractions, retail and eating offer. The opening of the Mary Rose Museum provides just the right sort of new hook the travel trade looks for. Exhibitions, press and travel trade familiarisation visits and information (print and/or online) are all worthwhile.

A second action would be for the DMP to lead on a day visits campaign leveraging the involvement of the main attractions, working with regional media and incentivising visits using tactics such as online/downloadable vouchers, joint ticketing promotions and special offers. Local outdoor media are also worth considering – bus backs, bus shelters etc. Another area possibly worth exploring is a VFR campaign led by the DMP, targeting the local resident market to bring friends and relatives. This type of activity would work best partnering with local press (including specialist publications like the Primary Times) or radio. Mechanisms might include vouchers or simply proof of address, special offers and/or special events (free days, reduced rates, special tours) and hooks like ‘bring a friend/grandparent’ etc. Social media channels – Twitter and Facebook in particular - would be important for day visits and VFR campaigns and are ideal for promoting offers and promotions. As all the attractions will already be using social media then a collaborative campaign among the partners can immediately have a significant reach. Special deal sites like Groupon are another excellent channel for offer-led promotions.

Tourism businesses are clearly important partners. They need to understand the Council’s Visitor Marketing Strategy and the opportunities they can buy into. They also need to be using the same branding and positioning for Portsmouth when they talk about the destination.

There will be individual partners with whom the City Council may collaborate on an individual basis – the large attractions, hotel groups, transport operators and the Port and Southampton Airport.

Outside the City

Visit England and Tourism South East are the main tourism partners. Both run campaigns which offer a platform to Portsmouth extending its reach. Visit England – and indeed Visit Britain – also constantly seek content for social media and PR activity providing a further outlet for news, stories and features about Portsmouth, so the City Council will exploit this channel by feeding through stories, updates and offers.

At sub-regional level Portsmouth will work with a range of appropriate partners, in particular Hampshire County Council and Southampton. Constructive partnership is already underway with Southampton which will support Portsmouth's tourism offer through the City of Culture bid and the City Deal bid.

Collaboration with non-tourism companies with similar brand alignment and target audiences are worth exploring. Joint mailings, special offers, competitions, on-pack branding are all potential activities. Media partnerships (regional press and radio) are particularly useful but product brands and services can provide creative opportunities to reach new markets and benefit from positive associations.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Targets will be set for each marketing activity which in turn will be monitored and evaluated. The following key performance indicators will be tracked.

- ▶ Perceptions of Portsmouth as a visitor destination among the target segments – perceptions take time to shift so this tracking will be done annually on key attributes of the city (association of key propositions/words/phrases; propensity to visit; understanding of what's on offer etc.). It may make sense to build this into a bigger 'city brand' tracking.
- ▶ Numbers on database
- ▶ Responses
- ▶ Conversion (where possible)
- ▶ Web analytics
- ▶ PR coverage
- ▶ Vouchers downloaded
- ▶ Vouchers and offers redeemed
- ▶ Visits to attractions.

- ▶ Opening rates and click thrus on digital communications
- ▶ Interactions on social media

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