

An aerial photograph of a coastal area. In the bottom left corner, there is a rocky shoreline with green vegetation. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, showing a dense coral reef system. The water transitions to a deeper blue as it extends towards the top right of the frame.

MARKETING STRATEGY

2019

The Whitsundays
QUEENSLAND

Contents

Overview	3
Situational Analysis	5
Marketing Goal	6
Target Markets	6
Marketing Objectives	10
Key Activities	11
Measuring Success	12



Overview

This document outlines a three-year marketing plan, to support effective annual planning of Tourism Whitsundays' marketing (promotion, public relations and industry relations) activities. The document builds off our existing mission and vision, to leverage our new brand framework and creative outputs, to achieve our business goals.

Our Vision

To showcase the Whitsundays as the globally recognised Great Barrier Reef destination.¹

Our Mission

We promote the destination globally to increase visitation, dispersal, expenditure and length of stay; driving the economic benefit and sustainability of the tourism industry through marketing and industry development.

Our Brand

The Whitsunday region will stun you. With its natural beauty and spectacular wonder, it is home to some of the most remarkable places the world has to offer. The tranquillity of the area centres itself on the calm of a simpler life while keeping the marvel of its natural wonders well within reach.

What our environment provides is a testament to its longing to keep people near. The land and locals cultivate a strong connection, where agriculture and farming build livelihoods while fishing and sailing build lifestyles. Here, down-to-earth people grow values that stem from nature and invite all visitors to experience it for themselves.

Everything that flourishes in the Whitsunday region is accompanied by a tropical warmth that extends well beyond the beaten path. It penetrates the region and its people, creating an optimistic outlook that guides us to see every day, rain or shine, as a great day for a new adventure.

Only in the Whitsunday region can you wander farther and still get closer.

¹ Note: At some point in the coming 1-2 years it would be important to revisit the vision to make it more specific and powerful (number one destination for Aussie travellers and a bucket list experience on the world-stage alongside Annapurna Trail in Nepal and Machu Picchu in Peru). This includes position around the GBR but should not limit you. The timing may flow well from the completion of the Destination Tourism Plan. This may align to a piece of strategy work to re-align the organisation to and build stakeholder-support for a new way of marketing.

Business Goals

- 1** To maintain strong financial management and governance which will retain a committed team, enable a strong marketing plan each year and keep membership and stakeholder network engaged and supportive.
- 2** Be recognised for delivering an excellent return on investment by all stakeholders including members, local government, state tourism authority and state government through strong destination marketing campaigns and activation.
- 3** Focus on industry and product development in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure the Whitsundays destination is growing and competitive in a global environment.





Global Context

As we develop and execute a marketing strategy, we must consider current trends. Travel has become one of the world's largest global industries over the past two decades. Many places have increased their investment in tourism, competition is fierce.

To remain competitive, the Whitsunday region must adapt to worldwide changes that impact consumer behaviour. By extension, a new approach to developing and promoting tourism experiences is needed.

Technology has dramatically shifted consumer preferences and behaviours. The internet and smartphones give people endless travel options, and access to information is no longer scarce. Online travel inspiration is at our fingertips and trip planning has changed forever. The tourism industry was once an authoritative source of travel information, people now find what they need through a myriad of websites and social media channels.

Online recommendations and word-of-mouth promotion are essential in this ecosystem. Recommendations from friends and family remain the most trusted form of advertising ([source](#)), and many people use social media to talk about travel. Positive experiences lead to positive stories, which are amplified through personal networks and public forums. In this context, customer service is becoming ever more important as travellers are better able to compare experiences. Ensuring high-quality service is a priority because online recommendations and reviews greatly impact how our destination is perceived. Word-of-mouth is the greatest influencer of travel decisions.

Situational Analysis

Recognising the trends shaping the travel landscape and influencing visitor behaviour, our approach needs to evolve and increase focus. This plan includes some of the best ways to respond to the tourism challenges of today.

To connect with and successfully influence potential visitors, we will shift from a broad market approach to adopt strategies for segmented, interest-based markets. We have a new opportunity to find the right visitors for the Whitsunday region — those people that are passionate about the tourism experiences that are a part of this region's DNA. Those who will share their experiences with like-minded potential visitors. By focusing on interest-based markets, we remain competitive, growing the Whitsunday regions' reputation and tourism industry in the right way. As a result, more people will find the meaningful experiences they seek.

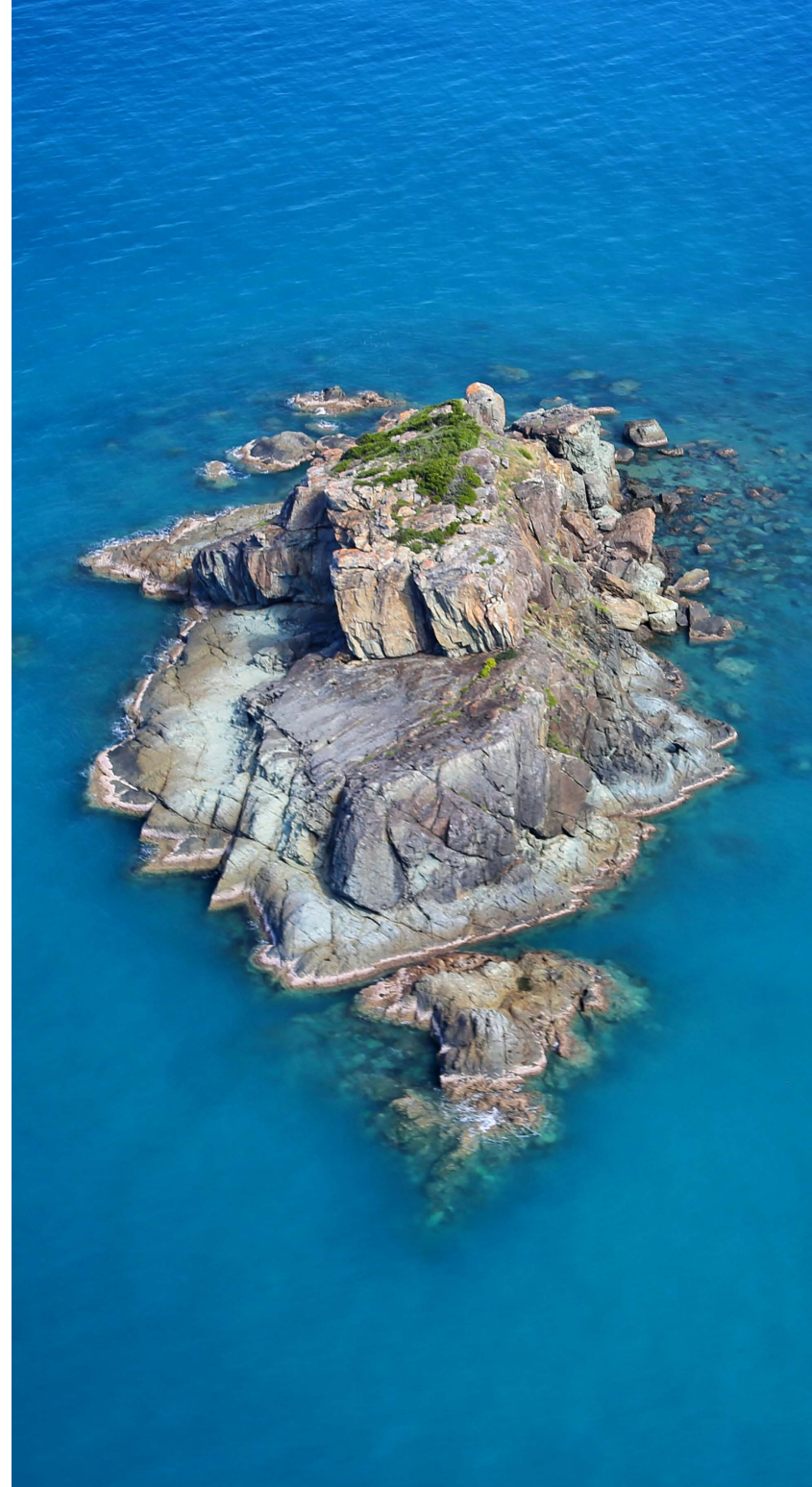
Tourism generates \$769M in economic output in the Whitsunday region while supporting one in three jobs making it a driver of one-fifth of the region's total economy. An important economic sector for our region, tourism has a lot of potential for growth. It also has the power to secure a prosperous future inoculated against the finiteness of limited resources and if done correctly, the ability to preserve the environment rather than damage it.

Given the Whitsunday regions potential and stunning appeal, an approach to growth must be considered thoughtfully. The very thing that makes the Whitsunday region compelling needs to be protected. Maximising our potential while protecting our unique way of life, cultural and environmental assets will be essential in the years to come. The Whitsunday region has qualities that are exceedingly rare and in demand — spectacular natural wonder that is accessible and unspoilt.

On the same level as iconic destinations like the Rocky Mountains in Canada, the Na Pali Coast in Hawaii, or Machu Picchu in Peru, the Whitsunday region should be a *cannot miss* for any visitor on an Australian trip and be a global icon in its own right. The Whitsunday region is relatively unknown compared to its counterparts both domestically and internationally. For potential visitors who are aware of the Whitsunday region, some inaccurate perceptions remain. There is little awareness beyond the islands and lingering concern that the area has not fully recovered from the cyclones. We have continued work to do to strengthen our destination brand by building global recognition and iconic status this region deserves.

Changing these perceptions is not just a matter of communication. It is a matter of experience and visitors sharing their stories of the true Whitsundays. Our new destination brand provides us with the blueprint for developing and promoting our destination for the next decade. This brand serves as a compass for developing a shared destination story that is to be experienced, communicated and shared.

It has long been said that knowledge is power. We have information and data gaps to fill that will allow us to increase the impact of our marketing activities; determine carrying capacity so we can know how many visitors are the right number; and benchmark key data points to give us a clearer line of sight on our progress. Undertaking this research will make our current approach stronger and sharpen our direction in the years to come.



Marketing Goal

Manage 1 million visitors that add maximum, sustainable value to the Whitsunday Region²

² Inherent in this goal is the need to:

- a) be able to measure visitation accurately
- b) grow the destination visitation to 1m
- c) constantly refine the mix of IM visitors to ensure we are constantly increasing yield without outgrowing capacity
- d) grow in a way / to a level that is sustainable (for residents, the environment, industry)

Ideally, a massive percentage of this 1m will become repeat visitors, and 100% will become advocates. Also note: this makes the assumption that the destination can handle 1m visitors. This needs to be validated through a capacity study.

Target Markets

This marketing plan represents the beginning of a move towards valuable new ways of segmenting consumers, to allow us to focus our budget to achieve maximum ROI and embrace incredible new opportunities that many of our competitors are missing.

We have identified six priority target markets and seven secondary target markets based on traveller behaviour and interest, then layering on demographic and geographic factors where relevant.

Our role as the Regional Tourism Organisation is to help travellers to move through the path to purchase more quickly than they would on their own, to achieve our business goals. For each of the priority market segments, we have identified the primary challenge(s) in the path to purchase in order to create objectives for our marketing activities.



Our corresponding activities will be aimed at overcoming these challenges. Each year we will review performance, priorities and adjust accordingly.

Domestic Target Markets

TARGET MARKET	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGE/OPPORTUNITY
Romance	<p>Primarily domestic (organic overlap into NZ and some international). This segment includes; honeymoons, babymoons, engagement trips, weddings, anniversaries and romantic getaways.</p> <p>This market always travels with a significant other, and sometimes includes friends and family.</p> <p>We suspect that this market is unaware of what the overarching Whitsunday region experience is and is more familiar with specific experiences offered by Hamilton, Hayman and Daydream. There is a perception that safety is a barrier (sharks, stingers, cyclones, etc.). We also believe that the proximity/ease of access for a short break is a barrier. In reality, we are more accessible than competitors (Fiji, Vanuatu, Bali) because of language, customs/immigration, travel time, health factors (water/food), etc.</p>	<p>Educate this market about the value proposition that the Whitsunday region really offers relevant to their needs (correcting awareness) and accessibility around proximity and safety (consideration).</p> <p>e.g. online content like Iceland's educational videos and online quiz (Do you really know the Whitsundays to capture data through contesting). Also, an opportunity to create a 'how to do the Whitsundays' tool.</p>
Big life events	<p>This segment is celebrating milestone birthdays, hens/bucks, retirements, promotions, graduations, etc. This is distinct from romantic travel (above). This market will likely travel for a long weekend (3 nights), and travel in groups of friends/family.</p> <p>For this market there is a mix of being interested in a big splash, not worrying about the budget and those who are concerned over price. The target market may feel as if it is out of their price range, as their perceptions are limited to the islands and do not incorporate the remainder of the region and sailing opportunities.</p> <p>We suspect that this market is unaware of what the overarching Whitsunday region experience is and is more familiar with specific experiences offered by Hamilton, Hayman and Daydream. There is a perception that safety is a barrier (sharks, stingers, cyclones, etc.). We also believe that the proximity/ease of access for a short break is a barrier. In reality, we are more accessible than competitors (Fiji, Vanuatu, Bali) because of language, customs/immigration, travel time, health factors (water/food), etc.</p>	<p>Educate this market about the value proposition that the Whitsunday region really offers relevant to their needs (correcting awareness) and accessibility around proximity and safety (consideration).</p> <p>e.g. online content like Iceland's educational videos and online quiz (Do you really know the Whitsundays to capture data through contesting). Also, an opportunity to create a 'how to do the Whitsundays' tool.</p>
DINKs	<p>Location matters less</p> <p>Primarily high net worth couples in major cities in Australia or NZ. Internationally, this market may be 'grown up backpackers' who are naturally adventure-focused traveller and may have visited the Whitsundays before (aligning to TA's market segment: Experience Seekers). This audience is not highly price sensitive and is instead looking for unique experiences.</p> <p>We suspect that this market is unaware of what the overarching Whitsunday region experience and is more familiar with specific experiences offered by Hamilton, Hayman and Daydream. There is a perception that safety is a barrier (sharks, stingers, cyclones, etc.). We also believe that the proximity/ease of access for a short break is a barrier. In reality, we are more accessible than competitors (Fiji, Vanuatu, Bali) because of language, customs/immigration, travel time, health factors (water/food), etc.</p>	<p>Educate this market about the value proposition that the Whitsunday region really offers relevant to their needs (correcting awareness) and accessibility around proximity and safety (consideration).</p> <p>e.g. online content like Iceland's educational videos and online quiz (Do you really know the Whitsundays to capture data through contesting). Also, an opportunity to create a 'how to do the Whitsundays' tool.</p>
Aussie families	<p>High net worth families taking a holiday, typically during school breaks. Often they come because of a package deal on one of our islands. They may be unaware of the sailing experience or think it is unsafe with kids. This market is focused on major East coast capital cities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brisbane/GC/SC (often Daydream) • Melbourne (often Hayman) • Sydney (often Hamilton) <p>A major challenge is the perception of cost. There is little awareness or consideration. There is a dominant legacy behaviour skewed towards competitive destinations (e.g. Gold Coast).</p>	<p>TBD - needs discussion.</p> <p>May be overlap with other segments (e.g. organic impact from DINK & international activity. May also need to be repeat, if they came for romance/life event). Perhaps we target past visitors. This would require a data-capture tactic in year 1 (e.g. campaign that industry can run to past visitors such as an online knowledge competition that only past visitors could do well on). Going forward there is an opportunity to instill a program to capture traveller data (email/social connections).</p>

NOTE: Many of the back-of-napkin assumptions we have made about target markets should be researched and validated over time.

International Target Markets

TARGET MARKET	DESCRIPTION	CHALLENGE/OPPORTUNITY
Backpacker	<p>Primarily originating in the UK and Germany but overlap into other international markets. UK travellers often drink and party in Airlie Beach and participate in group sailing experiences. Whitsunday region is typically just one of many stops on a self-drive Australian trip. The German market is more likely to be driven by GBR and aligned with environmental conservation.</p> <p>This could be individual travel or small groups of friends.</p> <p>Influencing this market is Tourism Australia's and TEQ's role (we do not have resources to do this effectively).</p> <p>We suspect that in recent years, backpackers are treating Australia as one part of a South Pacific trip (incl. NZ) and not coming to the Whitsunday region as often. This challenge is amplified by the ease of obtaining visas in other markets.</p> <p>This market is a valuable market segment and has a high lifetime value because they can be advocates and return as visitors in another market segment. Word-of-mouth is a very important influence in this segment.</p> <p>We are concerned that our product may not be meeting market expectations in this segment.</p> <p>12% (118,527 in 2018) of backpackers who come to Australia come to the Whitsundays. This number declined 6% from the previous year.</p>	<p>We need to make sure that every backpacker who comes to Australia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes to the Whitsundays as part of the trip • Has the 'full' experience (i.e. 7 days, not 2 nights) <p>The opportunity is to target backpackers after they have booked a trip to Australia (in the intent/planning phase).</p> <p>ex 1) on OTA confirmation page. This is important for in-market activities in Germany for backpackers it should be focused on the period after the backpacker has already made the decision to come to Australia (after they have booked a trip).</p> <p>ex 2) after they have landed in Australia through a co-op (digital and in-agency) campaign with trade partners in key gateways (such as Sydney) who are selling 5 nights of Whitsundays in their tours. Identify and collaborate specifically with trade partners that are passionate/loyal and knowledgeable about the Whitsunday region experience.</p> <p>Our goal is that a high % of backpackers coming to Australia visit the Whitsunday region properly.</p>
International	<p>Our assumption for planning is that the Whitsunday region is not the key motivator for the trip, but the GBR is a key part of an Australia trip (e.g. Sydney + Reef). The primary challenge for this market is shifting from intent to booking an Australia trip. We cannot really afford to influence this at scale. We need to make sure that the Whitsunday region experience (including the best place to experience GBR) is a primary feature on everyone's dream Australian itinerary.</p> <p>GBR is key aspect to positioning. Sailing is the hero experience to inspire travellers, even if they actually experience in other ways.</p> <p>Typically, the following geographic markets are priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK • Germany - environmentally focused • US - luxury and the experience • China - experience (especially for the photo) <p>German visitors are ideal & aligned to our values.</p>	<p>There's two ways to impact these visitors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on interest (diving/snorkelling due to having the reef, sailing the Whitsundays as a bucket list experience and bucket-list adventure travel). Tactics may include either world-stage PR (Condé Nast, Nat Geo) or extremely focused digital marketing based on interest-targeting. There will be a natural overlap from this brand-level activity into other domestic markets (especially DINKs). 2. The instant they have booked an Australian trip, the ideal tactic would include advertising through OTAs and Airlines. Our German trade rep should be focused on niche publications and niche trade shows (rather than broad travel), based on interests (diving/snorkelling, sailing, adventure travel).

Note: we have not specifically differentiated LGBTQ as a market, because they fall within all of our target markets.

Secondary Markets

(requiring no or low investment levels at this stage)

TARGET MARKET	TRAVELLER BEHAVIOUR	CHALLENGE/OPPORTUNITY
Grey nomad	<p>1 to 60 nights</p> <p>Explore the entire region</p> <p>Opportunity for free camping in Collinsville</p> <p>Focus is to talk to this audience from May-Oct, during the cooler months.</p>	Get people to turn off the highway, e.g. using really effective creative on the billboards. There is an opportunity here for Collinsville leveraging 'free camping'.
Grown-up backpackers	Likely included in DINKs and International	
Regional drive	<p>Typically looking for discount holiday or mining industry workers guys who are cashed up and a bit more flashy.</p> <p>Events are a driver of travel.</p> <p>Last-minute booking is typically.</p> <p>Opportunity to fill wet season.</p> <p>A priority market in the low season.</p>	<p>We need to communicate reasons to visit (especially during the wet-season).</p> <p>Example: social ads/posts, targeted to near-in market, showing reasons to visit: weather, fish caught today, waterfalls when it rains, events, etc. Same tactic would work on local radio or Thursday local news spot.</p>
Fishing (fits into others)	Proserpine is known as the mecca for Barra in Australia	Feature in content plan.
Business Events	<p>Not a focus its an output of other activity. Play at a brand-level to build reputation.</p> <p>Generate leads for industry.</p>	Build web page for lead-gen. Feature case-studies from past event organisers that represent ideal events. Small amount of content to highlight strengths as meeting destination.
Endurance events	Highlight events to relevant target markets (e.g. hero broadly through Australia using targeted digital and smaller events to regional visitors).	Social and content plan.
Cruise	This is an opportunity for data capture to encourage repeat visitation.	Greeter program.

Marketing Objectives



Educate and inspire key domestic markets.



Drive brand-level awareness domestically and internationally of the Whitsunday Islands and the accessibility of the GBR on the map³.

³ With sailing as a featured hero experience to create inspiration



Drive visitation to all parts of the region by cost-effectively putting the right content/ experience in front of the right audience at the right time.



Lead residents and industry to deliver on our brand promise through the experience we protect.

Key Activities

Year 1: 2019-20

Foundation

- Brand asset development
- Organisation strategy review
- Website refresh
- Crisis management plan
- Tourism Sentiment Index (TSI)

Brand

- Brand launch campaign
- Brand roll-out (industry and internal)
- Brand ambassador program

Content

- Annual content plan
- Evergreen content
- Real-time (social) campaign
- Paid amplification

Earned

- Influencer & advocate plan
- International & Domestic PR and earned media as part of other initiatives

International

- Great Barrier Reef Campaign
- Connecting with Asia
- Youth group cluster marketing

In Destination

- Visitor Guide
- Billboards

Year 2: 2020-21

Foundation

- Continue to build brand
- Organisation strategy review
- Website maintenance
- Crisis management plan
- Destination data monitoring
- Capacity monitoring
- Visitor research
- Tourism Sentiment Index (TSI)

Brand

- Brand campaign
- Brand playbook
- Brand committee
- Xcelerator program
- Brand ambassador program

Content

- Annual content plan
- Evergreen content
- Real-time (social) campaign
- Repeat visitor program
- Paid amplification

Earned

- Influencer & advocate plan
- International & Domestic PR and earned media as part of other initiatives

International

- Backpacker intercept program
- Sail the GBR program

Trade and industry relation

Year 3: 2021-22

Foundation

- Destination management plan

Brand

- Brand campaign
- Resident advocacy program

Content

- Annual content plan
- Evergreen content
- Paid amplification
- Travel further program

Earned

- Advocacy program

International

- Niche campaign

In Destination

- Online visitor servicing

Trade and industry relation



Measuring Success

How we measure success (KPIs)

Overarching:

- Yield per visitor⁴
- Resident satisfaction
- Industry satisfaction
- Net promoter score or TSI
- Total number of connections (email & social)
- Repeat visitation level⁵

Backpackers:

- % of backpackers visiting Australia who visit the Whitsunday region
- # of nights that Backpackers stay
- Content consumption / engagement
- Ad performance / engagement
- Total customer-base of travel trade partners cooperating in program

Domestic (DINKs, Romance, BLEs, Aussie Families):

- Content consumption / engagement
- Ad performance / engagement
- Reach of PR

International (excluding backpackers):

- Reputation / Intention / TSI
- Reach of features in international PR
- Performance of brand campaign (engagement with content & digital ad performance)
- Increase in # German visitors

Near-in / drive & Nomads:

- Engagement with content/social
- Increase in visitation during wet season

Please see corresponding table for comprehensive details.

⁴ Need to measure and establish baseline

⁵ Would need to be able to measure, and establish a baseline.

DESTINATION

Think!

The Whitsundays
QUEENSLAND



Australian Government

BUILDING OUR FUTURE