



PORT MACQUARIE

JULY 2026

DESTINATION MARKETING PLAN





Yii Birrbay Barray
This is Birpai Country

Nyura yii-gu mara-la barray-gu, nyaa-gi, ngarra-gi
You have come here, to the country to see, listen and remember

Gathay Nyiirun Wakulda
Let's all go together as one

We acknowledge that we are on Birpai Country and pay respects to all elders past and present. We acknowledge the ongoing connection to the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters of the Port Macquarie Hastings Region.



CONTENTS

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECTION 2: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

- Customer Journey Trends
- Destination Overviews
- SWOT Analysis
- Competitor Profiles

SECTION 3: STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

- Economic Development Strategy
- Visitor Economy Strategy 2030

SECTION 4: MARKETING

- Brand Positioning
- Target Audiences
- Digital Marketing
- Brand Collateral
- Traditional & Out of Home
- Events
- Collaboration
- Current & Emerging Strengths

SECTION 5: ACTION PLAN & TRACKING

SECTION 6: KPIS



SECTION 1: **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



This document outlines a marketing strategy and supporting short-term action plan aimed at positioning the Port Macquarie Hastings Council (PMHC) as a premier regional visitor destination.

The plan is designed to increase the desirability of the region as a travel destination and encourage visitors to spend more and stay longer in the region. Combining this short-term strategy with our long-term Economic Development Strategy will enable us to maintain the relevance needed to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage in the tourism industry.

The plan includes an updated analysis of the current tourism landscape, including key travel and tourism trends, brand positioning, target markets, and competitor and SWOT analyses. It also outlines our approach to marketing and tourism development and concludes with our strategic action plan and KPIs for marketing and facilitating the sustainable development of tourism in the region.

SECTION 2: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS





This situational analysis provides a comprehensive snapshot of the tourism market, visitor trends and competitive landscape influencing the Port Macquarie-Hastings region.

Tourism is constantly evolving, shaped by changing traveller expectations, economic conditions, technology and increasing competition between destinations. Understanding these influences is essential to ensuring future marketing investment is targeted, relevant and effective.

Drawing on the latest visitor data, industry research and market insights, this section examines customer journey trends, destination overviews, SWOT analysis and competitor profiles to identify the opportunities, challenges and market conditions shaping the visitor economy. Together, these insights establish the evidence base for the strategic priorities and recommendations presented in this Destination Marketing Plan.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY TRENDS



THE NEED FOR HEALTH & SAFETY

Visitors are placing greater value on open spaces, wellness experiences, low-density destinations, and travel choices that feel safe, clean, and environmentally responsible.



THE AGEING POPULATION

Australia's ageing population creates workforce challenges but also increases the need from older travellers seeking accessible, inclusive, comfortable, and well-supported visitor experiences.



THE ACCELERATION TO DIGITAL

Digital technology continues to reshape tourism, with businesses needing to adapt quickly to changing booking behaviour, online distribution, e-commerce, and technology-led visitor experiences.



THE GROWING MIDDLE CLASS

Growth in the global middle class, particularly across Asia, is increasing demand for travel and creating opportunities to target new markets through research, data, and partnerships.



YOUNGER AUSTRALIANS

Younger travellers use Instagram and TikTok for destination inspiration and prefer convenient, bundled travel options that combine accommodation, transport, activities, and experiences.



OLDER AUSTRALIANS

Older travellers are a strong domestic segment, often relying on Facebook groups, review sites, peer recommendations, and trusted information before booking individual trip components.



EVENTS AS KEY DRIVERS

Major events remain a strong motivator for domestic travel, attracting visitors who may not otherwise come and encouraging increased spend across accommodation, hospitality, and retail.



LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

Visitors increasingly want authentic experiences that connect them with local communities, culture, stories, produce, and businesses in a respectful and meaningful way.



SLOW TOURISM

Travellers are seeking slower, more immersive experiences that allow them to explore the wider region, understand local culture, and avoid rushed itineraries.

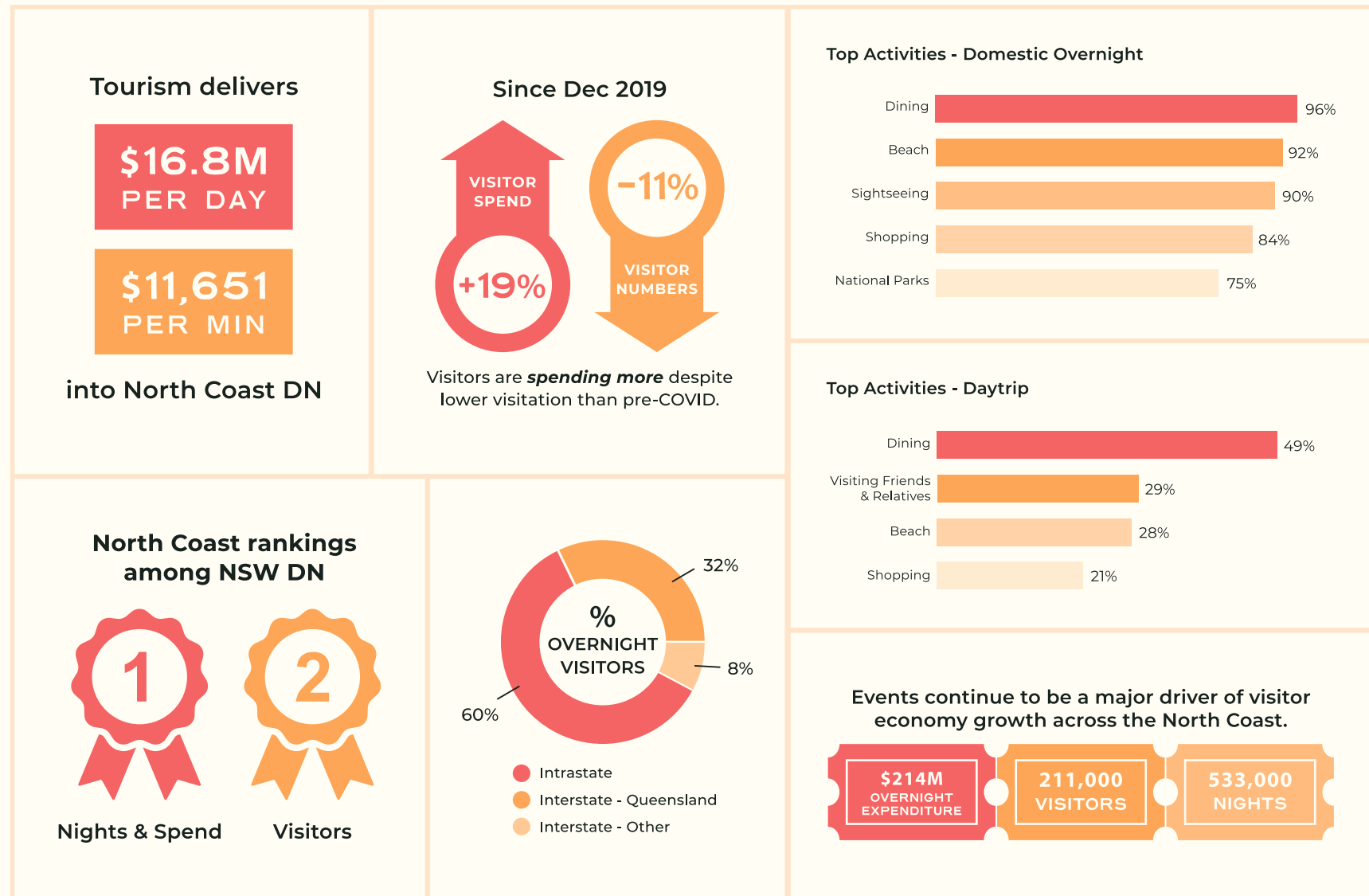


SUSTAINABILITY

Visitors are increasingly conscious of their impact and are seeking destinations, products, and experiences that reduce harm and support more sustainable tourism practices.

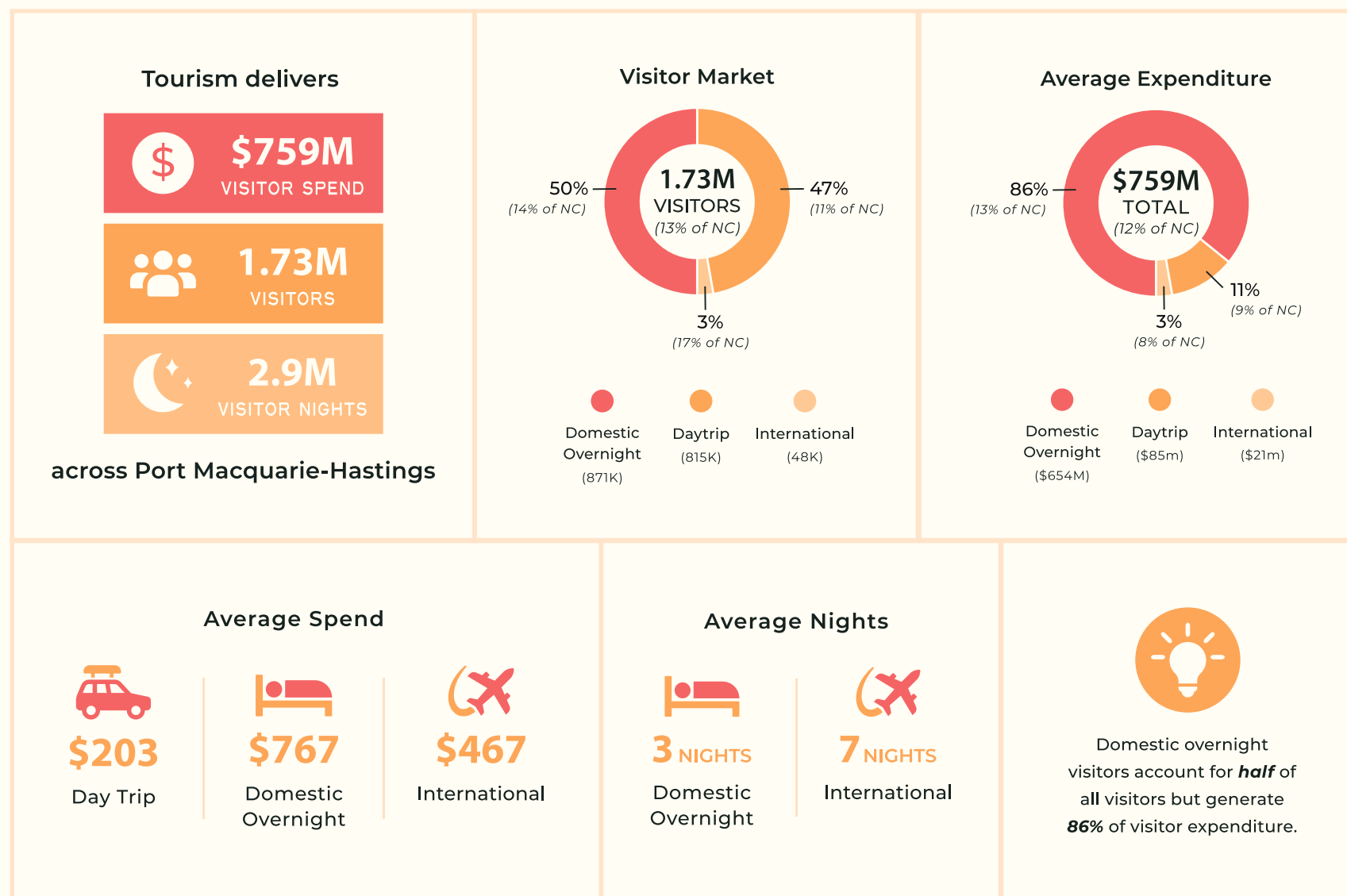


OVERVIEW: DESTINATION NORTH COAST



Source: Value of Tourism to the North Coast 2024

OVERVIEW: PORT MACQUARIE TOURISM

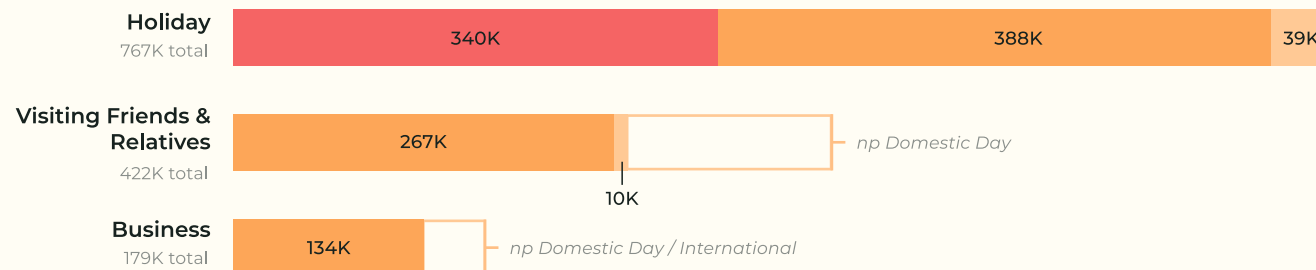


Source: TRA 2025 National Visitor Survey & International Visitor Survey YE Dec 2024

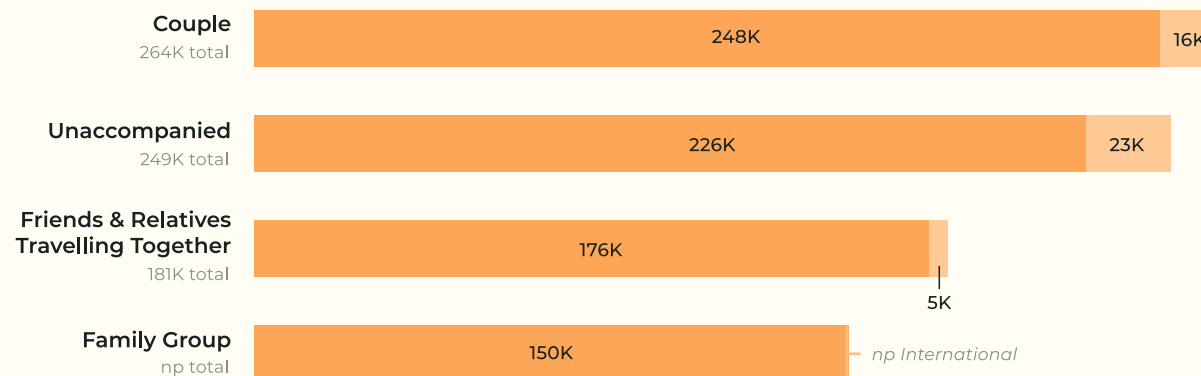
REGIONAL NSW VISITOR PROFILE

DOMESTIC DAY DOMESTIC OVERNIGHT INTERNATIONAL DATA NOT PUBLISHED (NP)

TRAVEL REASON



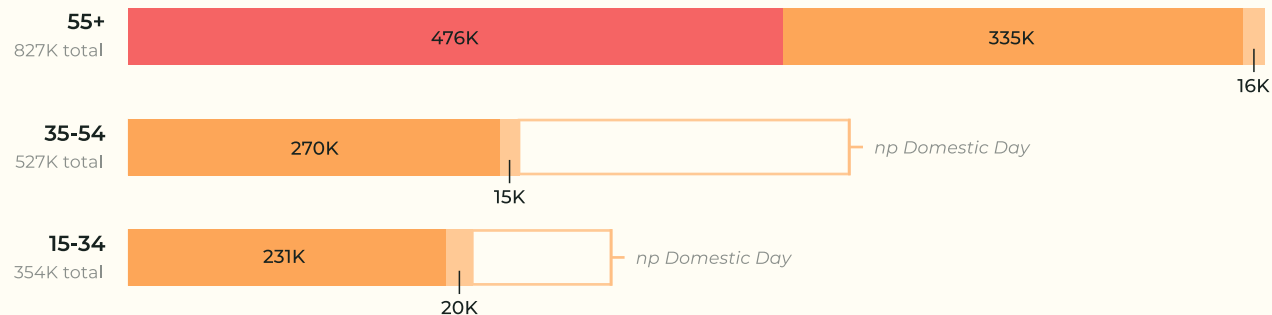
TRAVEL PARTY



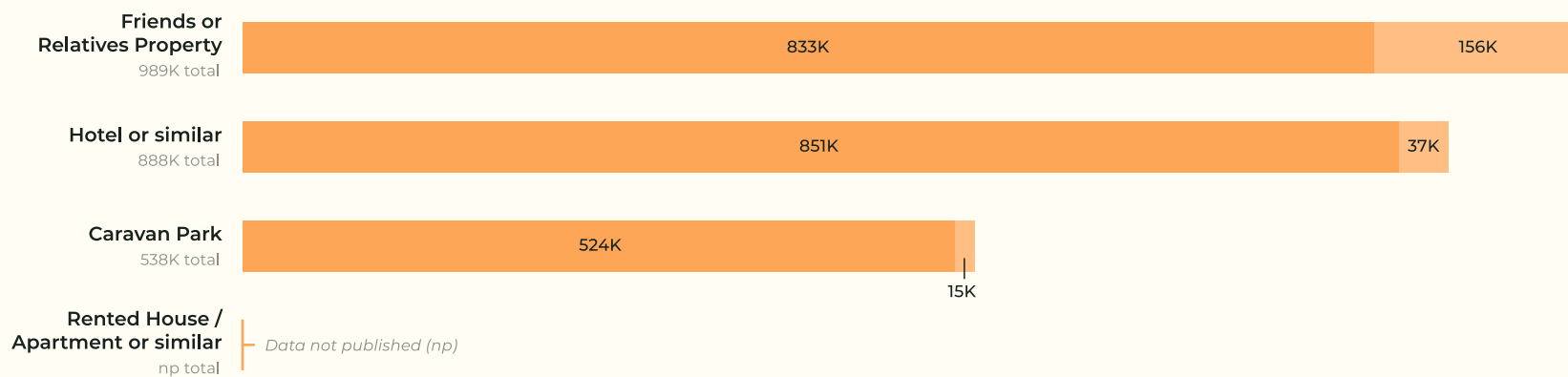
Source: TRA 2025 National Visitor Survey & International Visitor Survey YE Dec 2024

DOMESTIC DAY DOMESTIC OVERNIGHT INTERNATIONAL DATA NOT PUBLISHED (NP)

AGE GROUP



ACCOMMODATION



REGIONAL NSW VISITOR PROFILE

Source: TRA 2025 National Visitor Survey & International Visitor Survey YE Dec 2024

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

Significant tourism economy worth \$759M annually

Accessible destination with direct flights and strong drive market

Diverse natural assets including beaches, hinterland, national parks and forests

Value-for-money alternative to major coastal destinations

Strong events portfolio led by Ironman and cultural events

Safe, welcoming destination with strong community character

Quality accommodation, food and beverage experiences across market segments

Established Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) market supported by diverse tourism products and attractions

WEAKNESSES

Rising operating costs across tourism and hospitality businesses

Seasonal visitation patterns impacting business sustainability

Workforce shortages and limited industry capacity

Limited wet-weather and evening visitor experiences

Tourism products and experiences not consistently packaged or connected

Underdeveloped agritourism, Aboriginal and accessibility offerings

Reduced tourism resources and competing Council priorities

Constraints on attracting and servicing major business and event opportunities



OPPORTUNITIES

Grow eco, accessible and Aboriginal tourism experiences

Strengthen business events and major events attraction

Position Port Macquarie Hastings as a safe, spacious and sustainable destination

Capitalise on growth in senior and accessible travel markets

Build industry digital capability, AI adoption and being online bookable

Attract younger experience-driven travellers through digital engagement

Leverage Newcastle Airport and strategic tourism partnerships

Strengthen local advocacy, community support and VFR market growth

THREATS

Increasing competition from coastal and regional destinations

Economic uncertainty reducing visitor expenditure and travel demand

Bushfires, floods and climate-related disruptions

Community resistance to tourism growth and development

Intensifying competition for domestic, international and business events markets

Seasonality impacting tourism business viability

Workforce shortages across tourism and hospitality

Ageing infrastructure and regulatory constraints limiting growth



NORTH COAST COMPETITOR PROFILES

Port Macquarie contributes around **13% of visitors** to the North Coast (NC), making it a key destination in the region.

It offers an exceptional mix of natural assets, including pristine beaches, scenic coastal walks, and lush hinterland trails. The area is known for its strong sense of community and cultural experiences, providing visitors with an authentic and welcoming atmosphere.

Port Macquarie stands out as an affordable and accessible alternative to more high-profile destinations, while also emerging as a hub for events and conferences. With a growing emphasis on wellness, events, inclusive, Aboriginal & sustainable tourism, Agritourism and the night-time economy, the destination is well-positioned to attract travellers seeking nature, relaxation and genuine coastal experiences.

BARRINGTON
COAST



17% of NC visitors

Highest variance of tourism experiences in the region: coastal, hinterland, adventure and nature-based activities

Strong positioning for eco-tourism and outdoor recreation

Growing reputation for authentic, less-commercialised experiences

COFFS COAST



14% of NC visitors

Big marketing budgets and major family attractions

Significant investment in sporting and event infrastructure, enabling hosting of large-scale events

A privately leased airport offering flexibility and commercial adaptivity

BYRON BAY



14% of NC visitors

Iconic destination with strong national & international brand recognition

Diverse tourism experiences: luxury stays, wellness retreats, food & wine, beaches and hinterland escapes

High appeal for influencers and social media-driven travel

THE TWEED



12% of NC visitors

Mature tourism market with well-developed branding and substantial marketing resources

Large team of tourism specialists and strong industry networks

Renowned food and wine experiences

Proximity to Gold Coast

OTHER COMPETITOR PROFILES

SHOALHAVEN



Strong brand recognition as one of NSW's most popular coastal getaway destinations

Proximity to Sydney and Canberra, offering a large, high-yield domestic drive market

Well-developed nature-based tourism offering beaches, national parks and marine sanctuaries

Established food & wine scene supported by boutique wineries, farmgates and high-profile dining

Rapidly growing reputation for wellness retreats and premium accommodation

Strong events calendar tied to arts, culture and outdoor recreation

SAPPHIRE COAST



Strong positioning as an unspoilt, nature-rich coastal destination with minimal overcrowding

High-quality wildlife and marine experiences, including whale watching and national parks

Growing food provenance story anchored by award-winning oysters and regional produce

Appeal to slow-travel and eco-conscious markets seeking low-impact, immersive experiences

Proximity to ACT and strong drive-market appeal from Canberra and South Coast travellers

Increasing investment in boutique accommodation and wellness-oriented retreats

GOLD COAST



One of Australia's strongest tourism brands with global visibility

Extensive theme-park and family-entertainment offering, unmatched on the East Coast

Major hotels, large-scale conference facilities and strong capacity for international events

Well-connected airport with high volumes of domestic and international services

Vibrant nightlife, dining and shopping scene appealing to multiple market segments

Highly developed tourism infrastructure, marketing resources and industry partnerships

SUNSHINE COAST



Strong positioning as a relaxed, nature-based, family-friendly coastal destination

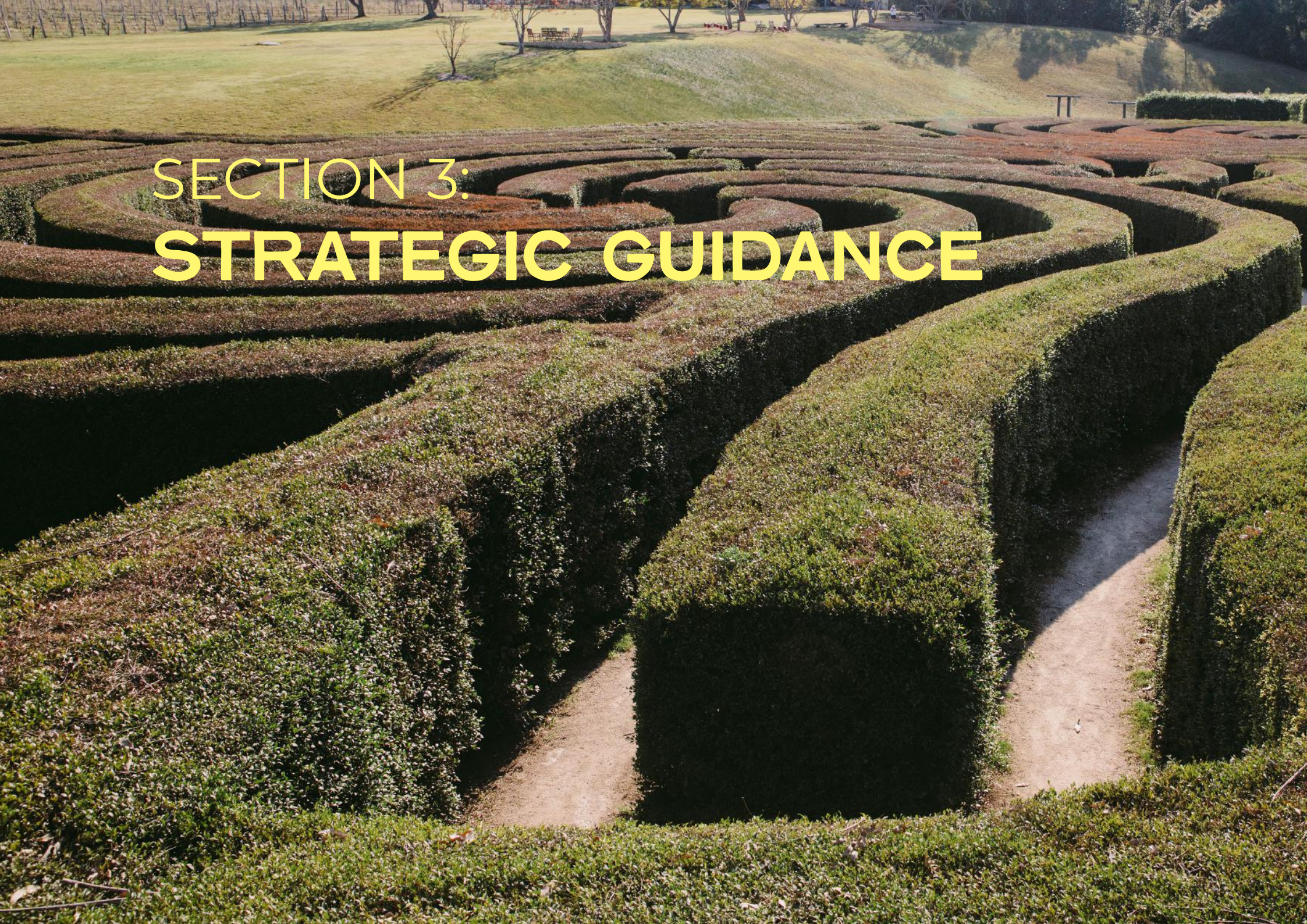
Rapidly expanding food and agritourism sector, including Hinterland experiences

New international-capable airport supporting long-haul and high-yield markets

Strong reputation for wellness, boutique retreats and outdoor adventure

High brand appeal to self-drive markets from Brisbane & SEQ

Well-balanced offering of beaches, hinterland villages, national parks and eco-experiences

A large, intricate hedge maze made of green boxwood hedges, winding through a park. The maze has many paths and dead ends. In the background, there is a grassy field, some trees, and a few people sitting on a bench. The sky is clear and blue.

SECTION 3: **STRATEGIC GUIDANCE**



AT A GLANCE: NSW VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY 2030

The NSW Visitor Economy Strategy highlights **3 key Strategic Phases**:



RECOVERY
PHASE
TO 2024



MOMENTUM
PHASE
TO 2026



ACCELERATE
PHASE
TO 2030

In addition to this, the Strategy focuses on **5 key Strategic Pillars**:



ROAD TO RECOVERY



BUILD THE BRAND



SHOWCASE OUR
STRENGTHS



INVEST IN
WORLD-CLASS EVENTS



FACILITATE GROWTH

AT A GLANCE: NSW VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY 2030

The NSW Visitor Economy Strategy also highlights a number of **Ambitions, Outcomes**, and **Visitor Expenditure Targets** as part of the NSW Government's vision to be the premier visitor economy in the Asia Pacific contributing \$65 billion in total visitor expenditure by 2030, with \$25 billion in regional expenditure.

AMBITIONS

				
Economic prosperity, jobs and lifestyle opportunities for the people of NSW	A compelling destination brand and iconic and world-renowned visitor experiences	Sustainable visitor destinations and world-class infrastructure	Vibrant tourism, transport, retail, sports, events, 24-hour economy, arts and creative industries	Globally connected business and education sectors

OUTCOMES

 Grow the NSW visitor economy	 8% Contribution to Gross State Product (GSP) by 2030 (6% in 2019)	 +10% Visitor economy job growth by 2030 (296,000 jobs in 2019)
---	---	---

VISITOR EXPENDITURE TARGETS BY 2030

Total Visitor Expenditure	Domestic Day Trips	Overnight Visitor Expenditure	Total Domestic Visitor Expenditure	Regional Overnight Visitor Expenditure	Total International Visitor Expenditure
\$65 Billion	\$10 Billion	\$55 Billion	\$47 Billion	\$25 Billion	\$17 Billion
From \$43 billion in 2019	From \$8.3 billion in 2019	From \$35 billion in 2019	From \$31.9 billion in 2019	From \$20.5 billion in 2019	From \$11.4 billion in 2019

AT A GLANCE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2025-2035

COUNCILS VISION: TO CREATE THE MOST LIVEABLE, SUSTAINABLE & INNOVATIVE PLACE IN AUSTRALIA

Economic Pillars & Growth Enablers	Next Generation Ready	Regional Strengths & Shared Identity	Informed By Data Insights	Enabling Infrastructure	Cultivating A Culture Of Enterprise	Empowering Business Ecosystems
Why	To ensure the future workforce is equipped with the skills and pathways needed to meet evolving industry demands.	To leverage the region's unique lifestyle, culture, and environment to attract talent, visitors, and investment.	To make evidence-based decisions that maximise impact and ensure resources are effectively targeted.	To provide the physical and digital foundations necessary for sustainable economic growth.	To foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable business practices.	To support business growth, innovation, and resilience in a rapidly changing economy.
Outcome	A skilled, adaptable, and future-ready workforce that supports economic resilience and innovation.	A strong regional brand that enhances liveability, attracts strategic investment, and supports high-value industries.	A data-informed economic strategy that is responsive, measurable, and aligned with emerging opportunities.	Infrastructure that supports business attraction, population growth, and regional connectivity.	A dynamic and creative economy driven by enterprise, collaboration, and environmental responsibility.	A thriving local business environment with strong networks, support services, and inclusive participation.
Objectives	Strengthen education-to-employment pathways, align training with industry needs, and support youth and jobseekers through partnerships and data-driven planning.	Promote the region's value proposition, develop investment tools and campaigns, and align investment, workforce, and visitor economy strategies with regional strengths.	Establish regular reporting, conduct targeted research, and share insights with stakeholders to guide collaborative planning and investment.	Advocate for and invest in transport, utilities, housing, and digital infrastructure to unlock economic potential.	Support collaboration and innovation, promote sustainability, and connect businesses through networks and funding opportunities.	Deliver capability-building programs, streamline regulatory processes, and promote inclusive economic development.

SECTION 4: **MARKETING**





BRAND POSITIONING

Port Macquarie Hastings isn't just a destination - it's an experience. We're the ultimate coastal and hinterland escape where time slows down, nature takes centre stage, and every moment feels effortless. Our mission is to grow high-yield, sustainable tourism by showcasing our iconic natural attractions and creating unforgettable experiences that visitors can't wait to share.

TARGET AUDIENCES



NATURE LOVERS

Adventurers chasing nature & authentic vibes.



FAMILIES & GROUPS

Looking for stress-free holidays with plenty to do.



VISIT FRIENDS & RELATIVES (VFR)

Our biggest advocates and storytellers.



FIFTIES PLUS

55+ high disposable income, off-peak, active and wellness oriented.



HIGH-YIELD TRAVELLERS

Luxury lovers, foodies and event-goers who want more than just a beach. Seeking aspirational, bookable signature experiences.



DIGITAL MARKETING

Digital marketing is essential for tourism because it connects destinations with audiences where they spend most of their time - online. Today's travelers research, plan, and book experiences digitally, making a strong online presence critical for influencing decisions. Through targeted campaigns, social media engagement, search engine optimisation, and data-driven advertising, Port Macquarie can showcase immersive experiences, inspire visitation, and drive conversions.

Digital platforms also enable real-time storytelling, user-generated content, and personalised messaging that align with visitor motivations. Unlike traditional marketing, digital channels provide measurable insights, allowing tourism operators and councils to track performance, optimise strategies, and ensure resources deliver maximum impact. In a competitive market, effective digital marketing elevates brand visibility, fosters emotional connections, and positions a region as a must-visit destination.

WEBSITE

The current Destination website is outdated and fails to meet modern user expectations and accessibility standards.

Navigation is clunky, search functionality is flawed, and key features like sticky menus, consistent image formatting, and clear calls-to-action are missing. Content is overly text-heavy in places, lacks engagement, and does not effectively drive conversions. Accessibility issues such as missing alt text, low-contrast text, and non-compliance with Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 limit inclusivity and SEO performance. Additionally, the site is difficult to update in-house, requiring external developers for even minor changes, which increases costs and slows responsiveness.

These limitations hinder our ability to deliver personalised, inspiring content, leverage social media and Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) listings, and optimise for analytics-driven improvements. A new or refreshed website will allow us to create a user-friendly, visually cohesive, and accessible platform that positions Port Macquarie as a distinctive destination, supports local operators, and drives measurable growth in visitation and engagement.

We measure the website's performance monthly using analytics tools to track key metrics such as page views, bounce rates, and conversion rates, allowing us to continually refine our content and improve the effectiveness of the website as a marketing tool.

We are planning a new website launch or refresh in 2026 to address these issues and set fresh goals focused on improving engagement and consumer satisfaction throughout the visitor journey.

WEBSITE METRICS (OCT 2024 - OCT 2025)

	Active Users	232,000
	Return Views	2.91
	Average Session Duration	1 min 3 seconds
	Average Bounce Rate	66.86%

Google Analytics (November 2025)

ATDW

The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) is a trusted database and distribution platform created by the joint effort of Tourism Australia and all Australian State and Territory Government Tourism Organisations. Its main purpose is to provide small and medium-sized tourism businesses with a one-stop shop to advertise their business information and have it widely distributed and published – not to mention making it easier for travelers to find the right information while planning their itineraries. With a single listing, operators can keep everything up to date for their customers across relevant travel websites and smartphone apps including State, Territory and Regional Tourism websites.

Tourism listings enable businesses to gain access to larger audiences than they can reach on their own. We aim to educate and support our local industry in creating and keeping their listings up to date to give them the best shot at reaching new customers and sharing important information with return customers to make it easier for them to plan their visit to the region.

 Number of Listings	220
--	-----

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) October 2025

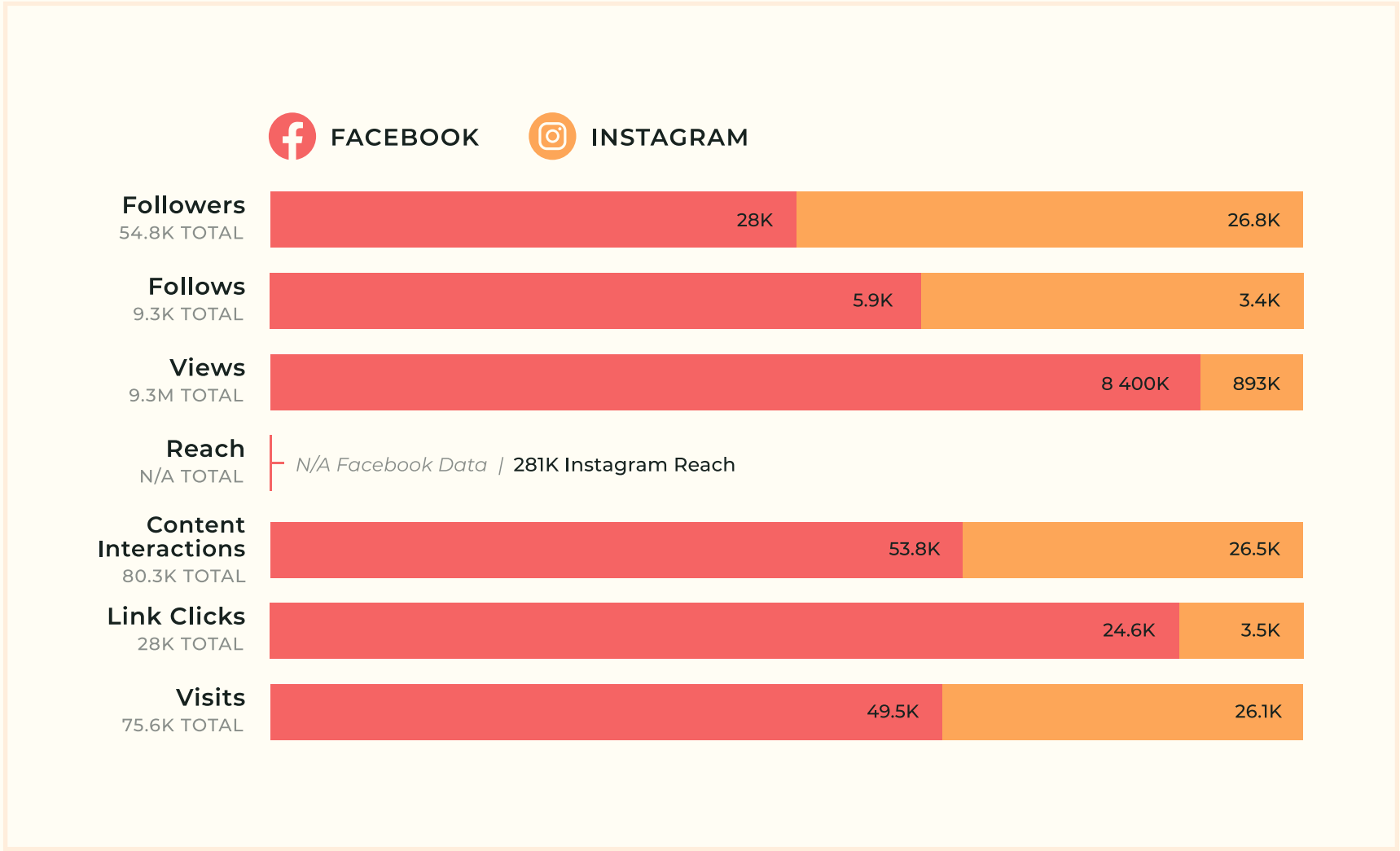
MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Our marketing campaign approach combines two major destination campaigns each year, various partnership campaigns and ongoing “always-on” activity to maintain visibility and engagement. These flagship campaigns are designed to drive peak seasonal visitation and showcase Port Macquarie’s unique experiences, our partnership campaigns are specific to targeted audiences, while our always-on strategy ensures consistent presence across digital channels, social media, and partner platforms. Collaboration with key partners - including tourism operators, regional bodies, and industry stakeholders - amplifies our reach and strengthens messaging, ensuring that our campaigns deliver maximum impact and measurable results throughout the year.

VISITOR EDM METRICS (OCT 2024 - OCT 2025)

 Audience Size	N/A
 Open Rate	N/A
 Click Rate	N/A
 Unsubscribe Rate	N/A

SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS (OCT 2024 - OCT 2025)





BRAND COLLATERAL

PRINT

Maintaining an up-to-date suite of print collateral is essential for reinforcing our brand and delivering inspiring content to visitors through Visitor Information Centres, partner outlets, and trade events. While tracking distribution numbers is useful, our priority is to create high-quality, lifestyle-driven materials that reflect our brand essence and motivate both visitors and residents to explore and connect with the region.

ASSET LIBRARY

Compelling imagery and video are critical to showcasing Greater Port Macquarie. We will continue to expand our visual library to highlight signature experiences, hidden gems, and stories that resonate with our visitor target markets. These assets will be curated to reflect our brand values - authenticity, sustainability & connection - and inspire dispersal across the region.

COMMUNICATIONS

A targeted, brand-led approach to communications is vital for reaching our audiences and amplifying awareness. This includes building strong media relationships, leveraging influencer partnerships, and aligning messaging with our brand pillars: Unhurried, Authentic, and Human. Paid partnerships and owned campaigns will complement PR efforts to position Greater Port Macquarie as a lifestyle destination, not just a place to visit. By consistently communicating our brand essence and proof points, we will strengthen recognition, inspire advocacy, and attract markets seeking meaningful experiences.

TRADITIONAL & OUT OF HOME

Continue selective use of print and out-of-home advertising to complement digital efforts, focusing on in-region visibility and trade events.

EVENTS

Support and develop events that align with the brand and deliver economic and social benefits, including cultural, sporting, and business events.

COLLABORATION

Work closely with local operators and industry bodies to:

- Provide training and resources
- Share insights and market data
- Strengthen partnerships with Destination NSW, Tourism Australia, and regional networks



SHOWCASE OUR STRENGTHS

To attract new visitors, encourage them to stay within the region, travel further, spend more and return, we need to offer outstanding and unique experiences based on visitor interests. We will leverage current experiences and attractions through targeted marketing campaigns and work with current operators to increase the quantity and quality of experiences. They are as follows:



National Parks



Beach



Hinterland



Food & Wine



Art & Culture



**Small Towns
With Soul**



**Changing Colours
of the Seasons**



**History &
Heritage**



**Local &
Handmade**



**Up Close with
Marine Life**



**Winery, Brewery
& Distillery
Experiences**



**Iconic Walks,
Mountain Bike
Trails & Cycling**



**Self-Drive
Tourism**



**Caravan &
Camping**



**Luxury Stays &
Glamping**

EMERGING STRENGTHS

To further grow the visitor economy, PMHC will focus on developing new strengths to diversify the region's visitor experiences.



EVENTS

Bid for business, sporting and cultural events to boost off-peak visitation.



ABORIGINAL TOURISM

Collaborate with First Nations communities to create authentic cultural experiences.



INCLUSIVE TOURISM

Improve accessibility and inclusivity across experiences.



WELLNESS

Work with industry to understand what developing a wellness offering means for their business.



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Support eco-friendly practices and regenerative models.



NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

Advocate for infrastructure and initiatives that enhance evening activities and entertainment.



AGRITOURISM

Develop farm-based experiences and food trails.

SECTION 5: **ACTION PLAN & TRACKING**





OBJECTIVES

1

Strengthen and differentiate the regional brand through targeted campaigns and immersive storytelling.

2

Encourage travel outside peak season & address business sustainability by smoothing out seasonal peaks & troughs.

3

Encourage dispersal of visitors around the region to address over-tourism in 'hot-spots' over peak periods.

4

Attract High Value Travellers which means fewer visitors who spend more.

5

Increase length of stay - increasing spend.

6

Drive visitor economy growth through collaboration.

7

Collaborate with industry partners through education and engagement to develop and sustain a strong and mature tourism industry.

SECTION 6: **KPIS**

