Case study: Manchester
Objective 3: To champion a successful and thriving tourism industry

Summary

To deliver growth in the visitor economy destinations must offer compelling reasons to visit. They must also offer visitors high quality experiences, opportunities to stay longer, experience more and increase their spending. This case study focuses on Greater Manchester’s development as a destination and the importance of destination management planning in achieving their vision, contributing to the delivery of objective 2 in England’s Strategic Framework and associated Destination Management Action Plan.

The development of very strong civic leadership, a partnership approach with the public and private sector and a focus on Greater Manchester’s strengths and target markets have been Manchester’s key ingredient of success. Building on this, the Destination Management Organisation has developed a clear destination marketing approach supporting investment in the tourism product and influencing international perceptions through campaigns. Throughout the journey destination management planning has helped Manchester stay focused and improve cooperation and collaboration with local and regional stakeholders.

Approach

Marketing Manchester is the agency charged with promoting the City on a national and international stage. It aims to develop the Manchester city-region into a leading leisure, learning and business destination for domestic and international visitors, enhance the national and international reputation of the city-region and promote sustainable economic development and growth. Visit Manchester was created in 2004 as a division of Marketing Manchester (created 1996) and is the tourist board for the city-region.

The Strategic Framework for Tourism in England has helped develop the vision for Greater Manchester to be a more compelling destination. The Greater Manchester Destination Management Plan 2012-13 (which sits below the tourism strategy, ‘A Tourism Strategy for Greater Manchester 2008-13’) follows the Strategic Framework’s approach by establishing the following objectives:

• create globally recognised and iconic events, developments, initiatives and opportunities;

• ensure a better quality of life for the communities of Greater Manchester and the wider City Region;

• make the practices of the City Region’s tourism sector a key plank of delivering against the Original Modern brand vision;

• tackle the tough issues like wider community benefits through tourism; accessibility and diversity; a more inclusive night time economy;

• embark on a ‘blue skies’ strand of long range thinking that explores issues such as technological change, demographic shifts and environmental sustainability.
Manchester’s key ingredients of success are:

1. **Very strong civic leadership** - there are 10 Local Authorities throughout the Greater Manchester area (Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan) and for many years they have worked in close collaboration with each other and with Marketing / Visit Manchester. This strength is particularly prominent in Manchester City Council through the Leader and Chief Executive who have, for many years, recognised the value of tourism as an important economic sector but particularly since the 1996 IRA bomb and the 2002 Commonwealth Games. In very different ways these events have acted as catalysts for tourism as a positive driver of change.

2. **Partnership approach** - Visit Manchester and Marketing Manchester have established strong partnerships with both private and public sectors over a number of years and are now part of a ‘family’ of Manchester agencies with designated lead status in Marketing and Tourism. Over the last six months partnership working has been developed further through the creation of the Manchester Visitor Economy Forum, chaired by Visit Manchester but consisting of senior representation from Greater Manchester’s visitor economy – business tourism, hotels, culture, sport, city centre management, airport, transport and local authorities.

3. **Understanding of tourism and of the value of tourism** – key stakeholders understand the value and volume of tourism and its importance as an economic sector. Greater Manchester regularly invests in research & development - a key component in understanding tourism drivers as well as its challenges and opportunities - mainly through STEAM, hotel occupancy and visitor surveys. Through this research they have learnt that business tourism is a key economic driver across Greater Manchester and its importance for the city and the entire region continues to grow. All stakeholders have worked together to grow the value and volume of business tourism resulting in Manchester hosting a number of high profile conferences including: Conservative and Labour Party Annual Conferences, CIPD, Soccerex European Forum, UNISON, TUC. The growth in business tourism has been supported by a continual investment in the conference product with key venues such as Manchester Central and Lancashire County Cricket Club, Trafford undergoing substantial investment.

Internationally, there is agreement that ‘Manchester’ is the attract brand. A thematic approach has been developed domestically, using themes such as Culture and Sport and through developing brands such as *Modern History* and *Manchester’s Countryside* which have been developed as specific campaigns funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE). The rural tourism offer has also been developed through the existing Tourism Connect and Food Connect RDPE projects. This approach has proved to be a successful way of promoting the diverse offer of the region and in engaging and including destinations throughout Greater Manchester.
There are still negative perceptions of the city region nationally and internationally, and so Visit Manchester aims to influence perceptions by providing an exceptional destination experience to all visitors. A number of visitor attractions and infrastructure projects have been developed since 2008, including:

- **MediaCity UK** in The Quays, now the home to five BBC departments, ITV and a number of creative and digital agencies, includes new hotels, retail, food and drink, leisure and the launch of BBC Tours.
- **Manchester Airport** completed its £80m investment in the redevelopment of both Terminal 1 and 2 including improved security processes, new retail spaces and improvements to arrival and departure lounges.
- A £30m, three phase development of **Manchester Central** to create additional and more flexible spaces including a new foyer, entrance and events space.
- **The Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI)** has had a £9m investment into a new Revolution Gallery, conference and learning centre, shop and café, all of which opened in January 2011.
- **The People’s History Museum** re-opened in 2010 following a £12.5m redevelopment.
- **Manchester Art Gallery** along with other North West museums has been in receipt of funding to improve exhibitions and attendance.
- The Point at Lancashire County Cricket Club, Trafford, opened in 2010 following a £190m development of the site as a world class venue fit to host international cricket, including enhanced conference and exhibition facilities.

A positive shift in perceptions has been tracked in the Anholt City Brands Index since 2009. Manchester has now moved ahead of Dubai and Dublin, has closed the gap on Brussels and Chicago and experienced improvement in priority markets like the USA, China and Brazil.

In terms of developing the brand further, Peter Saville (a designer of unique influence who had co-founded the legendary independent music label Factory) developed a unique concept and approach ‘**Original Modern**’, following the Commonwealth Games, which provides a way of thinking for the destination in everything it does. The development of The Manchester International Festival, is a key example of this in practice, a contemporary festival featuring newly commissioned work.

Significant progress has also been made with the opening of the all new **Manchester Visitor Information Centre** in 2010. The Manchester Visitor Information Centre is now accessing a much higher proportion of visitors as well as local residents and has just (May 2012) been recognised as ‘Visitor Information Provider of the Year’, at the English Tourism Awards. The Centre has adopted the latest trends by using interactive Microsoft Surface Tables, which allow people to interact directly with the information available, and by streaming on video a Manchester Twitter feed. The primary asset of the Centre remains the experienced team of staff, who ‘walk’ the centre freely.

Visit Manchester's website [www.visitmanchester.com](http://www.visitmanchester.com) also reflects this new thinking through blogs, twitter feeds and fully embracing social media to capture what is being said about Manchester and give the visitor a sense of what is happening now in the city from the perspective of people who work, live and visit.
Measuring Success

In terms of value, the visitor economy grew from £5.2 billion in 2008 to £5.8 billion in 2010. Also employment increased from 73,000 in 2008 to 77,000 in 2010.

A study commissioned by Visit Manchester reported that, in 2009, the value of business tourism across Greater Manchester was £573m – by 2011 this had increased to £822m.

The political conferences have helped greatly (estimated impact at £13m - £15m per conference) but also important is the focus on the city and the fact that it is recognised as a credible conference destination.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

1. Persevere with a sound concept and get key stakeholder buy-in. Marketing Manchester made some mistakes in its very early days and in doing so lost the trust of many key stakeholders and almost disappeared. However the need for an agency of this kind became apparent at the time of the Commonwealth Games and Marketing Manchester was able to reinvent itself and get back on track by learning from its earlier mistakes.

2. Marketing Manchester should have communicated the early success stories more effectively. The focus at the time was internal in order to create the organisation that was credible enough to promote the destination. This meant that it had a low profile for a year or two. This did no harm but possibly some stakeholders were not as aware of Marketing Manchester during the re-formation period.

3. Becoming an all-purpose Tourist Board in 2004 was a steep learning curve so being better prepared; having a greater understanding of what a Tourist Board and a Destination Management Organisation really need to offer would have helped. Visit Manchester can now benefit from participation in the Destination Management Forum set up by VisitEngland as a vehicle for destinations to share different approaches, encourage collaboration, sharing experience and best practice in delivering the Strategic Framework and encouraging synergies and more effective ways of working.

4. The 2008-2013 Tourism Strategy should have had some clear targets. The gaps were later rectified through the Destination Management Plan, managed and monitored through the Manchester Visitor Economy Forum. This Forum is made up of cultural organisations, local authorities, sport organisations, universities, conference venues, hoteliers, the airport and others.

Funding

Marketing Manchester is a private company limited by guarantee with the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and Manchester Airport providing core funding helping to lever in other funds.

The Northwest Regional Development Agency provided support and core and project funding from 2004 up until the end of 2011. However, Marketing Manchester has always recognised the need to balance public and private sector funding and has developed commercial income streams through accommodation booking commission, marketing opportunities and merchandising.
TOP-TIPS

• Be bold and aspirational in your thinking. Be ambitious, push the boundaries.

• Get champions on side – people in the public and private sector, in tourism or other relevant sectors who are the key people that could be of help - critical friends.

• Focus on your strengths and local distinctiveness.

Visit:
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