

# Catalina Island 2017 Strategic Marketing Plan

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# 2017 Marketing Goal

Increase Catalina Island's visibility.

Position it as a California getaway with a unique island visitor experience that can't be found anywhere else.

*Even though it's only 22 miles from LA, it feels like you're a world away.*

# 2017 Marketing Objectives

*In order to project measurable objectives, a “Capacity & Business Needs Assessment” should be conducted in conjunction with the City of Avalon to quantify periods of seasonality, work force availability and island ability for increasing:*

- Overnight visitation
- Day visitation
  - Daily boat trips
  - Private boaters
  - Cruise Ships
- Groups business
- Shoulder season business



# 2017 Communications Objectives

*Identify what the marketing and advertising must achieve:*

- Marketing partners work together to ensure CI brand is consistent at all points of consumer contact (includes message, copy style, colors, fonts, photo style).
  - Create a Catalina Island Style Guide with branded photography (including diversity), copy style, colors, key messages.
- Based on research, media will reach target audiences with greatest potential for CI visitation.
- Promote Catalina's signature products, core competencies, attractions and events. Create a unique visitor experience that can't be found anywhere else.
- Drive website visitation and vacation planning.
- Generate new and repeat bookings.



# Present Situation

What are Catalina Island's...

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Opportunities?

Threats?

*Understanding this builds the foundation of our marketing strategy.*



# CI has Many Strengths Visitors Love

- Historic ambiance and local traditions
- Avalon is a walkable small town (no car needed)
- Charming atmosphere
- Excellent strolling
- Slower pace (you're on island time)
- Offers an emotional bonding that allows visitors to unwind, explore and revive
- Beautiful sunrises
- Friendly residents and businesses
- Clean and safe

# Strengths (Continued)

- Limited vehicle congestion and noise
- Variety of outdoor products, activities and attractions
- Nice weather and sunny beaches
- Natural island scenery and amazing ocean views
- Diversity of dining and bar options
- Day visits can be family affordable
- Fast and reliable accessibility from LA and Orange counties. Getting to Catalina Island is part of the experience. It's a chance to decompress before arrival.

# Weaknesses to Consider

- Winter weather affects visitor counts (wind, choppy oceans, cool temperatures).
- Visitors often do not plan activities until they get to the island. They may be confused or lack awareness on “what there is to do”.
- Overcrowding during peak summer months may affect the visitor experience. However, overcrowding may be a locals’ perspective; visitors are accustomed to less personal space.
- A perception exists that Catalina is old and dated. May be negatively impacting repeat visitation.
- Being asked to conserve water at every turn may impact or inhibit a relaxing vacation.
- Locals may be less than cordial at times, especially during peak seasons. Summer employees are working 2 or 3 jobs for 12-15 hours/day. Workers must be fairly compensated and have needed time off.



# Weaknesses (Continued)

- Digital access limitations. Visitors and locals are affected by spotty WIFI and/or lack of connectivity. For locals, getting content from the island to the mainland is challenging (we're losing PR and social media opportunities to promote CI). Limits ability to professionally service business groups. Public safety is also a concern.
- The cost of a visit (including transportation) may be a barrier for many families.
- Late night boats to mainland after events discourage overnight visitation.
- Limited marketing budget affects reach and frequency of CI messaging.

# Opportunities for Growth

- After Capacity & Business Needs Assessment, there is potential to grow shoulder season occupancy and cruise ship arrivals.
- Groups business (corporate, retreats, reunions, girlfriend weekends, outdoor enthusiasts, etc.).
- Hispanic/Latino visitation (nearly 50% of LA County, 35% of Orange County residents).
- Asian visitors; especially Chinese visitors (both domestic and foreign). Largest growing California immigrant group.
- Private boating and wharfage business.
- LA County has millions of international visitors each year. Work with Discover Los Angeles, state, regional and local DMOs to leverage marketing efforts.
- Repeat visitation (only about 25-30% of visitors have been to Catalina in the past three years).
- Increase the length of stay of overnight visitors. Convert daily visitors to overnight visitors.

# Potential Threats

- Drought, water disputes and local anxiety related to lack of water affects CI visitor growth and economic resurgence.
- High costs of operating desalination plants, water storage and drilling wells may be passed on to locals and visitors in higher costs.
- National economic uncertainty may affect travel planning.
- As they age, Boomer grandparents will be planning fewer multi-generational family vacations.
- Overnight lodging rates continue to increase during peak seasons, without proportional product upgrades.
- Avalon's limited physical area, combined with various government and agency restrictions and water shortages may inhibit future growth (especially employee housing and lodging).
- CI competing for attention in overloaded/costly LA media market.
- Terrorism continues to be a threat to all tourism. May be opportunity for CI?

# Catalina Island Positioning

*What do we stand for in the minds of consumers?*

Perhaps it's something like....

“I relish the idea of getting away from busy urban living. After taking an easy trip to Catalina, I can truly relax in a quaint island lifestyle that offers a variety of activities I enjoy.”

# What is Our Target Market?

- Research shows approximately 75% of Catalina's visitors are from Southern California, with the number one market being the Los Angeles DMA
- Marketing efforts should continue to focus media and PR expenditures in DMAs of Los Angeles, and San Diego.



# Who are Our Target Audiences?

While the Catalina Island story appeals to mass audiences, for budget efficiency and marketing effectiveness it makes sense to identify and target specific audiences who would find our messages most appealing.

Those audiences, identified by “Personas” include....

# Persona #1: Couples



Nearly half of CI's visitors are married, partnered or LGBTQ couples from the Los Angeles area. They travel on ferries, and for the majority, this is the first time they've visited Catalina Island (in past three years). Most used Google, ferry and CI Visitor Bureau websites to plan their trip. Typically, they have a median household income of \$75,000-80,000 per year. They often come with other couples for a chance to escape the city and have some island/beach fun. They enjoy dining, shopping, sightseeing, lounging on the beach, touring in golf carts, arts/culture and socializing together. About half of these couples are Caucasians, half are other ethnicities (primarily Hispanic and Asian). About half of these couples will be overnight visitors (average two nights). Everyone will spend money on the island, with overnights spending more. In general, they are pleased with their Catalina experience and indicate they are likely to revisit soon.

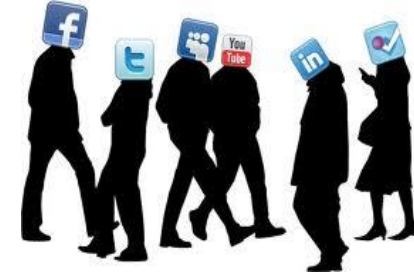
# Persona #2: Families



In the summer months, about 40% of Catalina's visitors are families with children. They can also be multi-generational families seeking a family-bonding experience. They reside in Southern California, yet only a third have visited previously (past three years). Their median household income is between \$50,000-100,000. They use a variety of Internet sources to plan their CI vacation and activities. They visit Catalina primarily for pleasure and to vacation, but may have celebrations such as a birthday, wedding or anniversary. They spend time on the beach, are engaged in water activities and exploring the island. Younger families have a lower incidence of shopping and dining in restaurants, which could be the result of budgets, fussy children, and time taken away from other activities. Overall, they are pleased with their CI vacation and plan to return.



# Persona #3: Millennials



While they visit Catalina for pleasure, millennial travelers (age 18-34) are more adventurous and have an endless thirst for knowledge. They use technology to plan their visit and expect WIFI wherever they go. They are less likely to dine and shop on Catalina; they will spend more time on beach, outdoor activities/adventures and cultural/historic sites. They are spontaneous, experiential, budget-conscious, swayed by peer review, and loyal to programs and destinations that offer rewards.

Things to consider:

- Break out younger vs. older millennials; offer experiences that appeal to each
- Host well-executed mobile sites, apps and WIFI (it's how they look and book)
- Offer rewards: Discounts, VIP experiences, exclusivity, freebies
- Embrace spontaneity: Hot deals, limited-time discounts, last minute deals
- Be authentic: Speak to their interests of interacting with nature, experiencing arts/culture and enjoying the “real thing” (not staged)
- Encourage engagement: Host hashtags and social media offerings

# Persona #4: Outdoor Enthusiasts



Many freeway-weary Californians are seeking backcountry adventures where they can hike, fish, walk, bike, surf, scuba dive, backpack, camp and explore. Catalina Island offers all of this and more. Depending on their age, health and interests, they may want customized adventures, leisurely adventures, group activities, on-their-own journeys, or high energy adventures. All have the same goal: to connect with nature. While on Catalina Island, they are looking for spectacular seascapes, scenic views, remoteness, fresh air, exercise, wild animals/birds, and escape from their daily routines. Marketing should include vertical media plans to reach this target. Use imagery and messaging that appeals to their needs and desires.

# Persona #5: Groups



With Catalina's variety of meeting facilities and abundance of activities to entertain and please any type of group, the island is prime to grow this lucrative market. Marketing to groups fills mid-week occupancy and shoulder seasons. After identifying niche targets, off-season and mid-week group messages should include:

- Lower rates
- Group activities and entertainment (no buses needed)
- Itineraries can be built for any group (including cruise ships)
- Smaller crowds during off-season
- Variety of meeting/group facilities
- Dining, shopping and arts/culture
- Flexibility to meet any group's needs
- Quality of service/relationships with hotels and facilities
- Easy/quick accessibility from LA and Orange counties

# Persona #6: Arts and Cultural Travelers



During the summer months, nearly 11% of CI guests visited an art museum/gallery and over 12% visited an historic or architectural site. These statistics are even higher for CI's overnight, Millennial and Boomer visitors. For many, cultural/heritage activities are part of a rich and rewarding visitor experience. This target seeks museums, galleries, studios, arts-related retail shops, special events, music, performing arts, unique dining, arts education, green space, interesting/historic architecture, etc. They are pursuing an authentic "sense of place." A growing market, cultural tourists tend to spend more money and stay longer. This target is an opportunity market for Catalina Island (i.e., Chihuly Exhibit)



# Marketing Strategy

*How do we combine our marketing objectives into a comprehensive plan to get the maximum impact from our limited marketing budget and time?*

# 1. Build Partnerships

- **Capacity & Business Needs Assessment:** Partner with the City of Avalon to conduct a Capacity & Business Needs Assessment to quantify seasonality, work force needs and infrastructural availability.
- **Digital Connectivity:** Work with City, service providers and community leaders to develop improved broadband, cellular and WIFI capabilities.
- **Lodging Partnerships:** Co-op with lodging community to identify high value lodging messages and promotions to attract more families, couples and groups.
- **Transportation:** Partner with boat and helicopter services to create/promote packages.

# Partnerships (Continued)

- **Turn Water Shortage into Opportunity:** Work with stakeholders and key community leaders to develop a water bottle recycling program that turns plastic into a renewable resource. Train front-line employees to talk to visitors about all the environmental things Catalina residents have done to conserve water.
- **City/County/State Partnerships:** Partner with other tourism entities to promote Catalina as an attraction, especially to reach international guests.

## 2. Brand Building is Key

- **Advertising:** Create a consistent brand experience with memorable ads and collateral that emotionally connects with new and repeat visitors.
- **Personas:** Develop ads and messaging that target our six personas. Address their needs and desires through relevant copy, photos and media placement.
- **Reinforce Brand Experience:** Educate the community on CI's key brand attributes. Ask each citizen to contribute to a positive visitor experience.
  - Consider conducting training workshops for island employees to build greater awareness of the breadth of visitor activities available. Encourage each employee to act as an "Island Ambassador" to enhance the visitor experience.



### 3. Target Personas in Paid Media

- **Research:** Plan media strategies based on demographic learning and personas developed from research.
- **Vertical Media:** Use search, behavioral, retargeting, pre-roll video, etc. to reach specific personas.
- **Seasonality:** Use learning from Capacity & Business Needs Assessment to build media strategies designed to fill need periods.
- **Broadcast and Print Media:** As budget allows, seek more video, broadcast and print opportunities to demonstrate product, promote events and build emotional connections to brand.

## 4. Engage and Build Credibility with Unpaid Media

- **Social Media:** Engage with pre-arrival and post-arrival visitors through a variety of popular platforms to demonstrate CI's fun activities, especially for Millennials.
- **Public Relations:** Generate publicity with experiential stories about Catalina. Promote the unique island experience through high impact video and story telling. Create PR strategies to counteract the negative water shortage articles. Provide positive stories about what locals have done to conserve water and inspire visitor participation. Highlight the variety and breadth of activities.
- **Press Tours, Blogger and Podcast Outreach:** Invite prominent travel media and thought-leaders to experience Catalina first-hand. Do follow-up to generate stories and media coverage.
- **Guerilla Marketing:** Create unusual and spontaneous programs and events that invite visitors and locals participation and generate buzz in the media.

# 5. Build Repeat Visitation

Research shows high satisfaction and intent to return, but repeat visitation is low. Develop strategies to build return visitation:

- Develop database segmentation marketing strategies to communicate relevant messages and imagery to past and prospective visitors.
- Bounceback offers; limited time and last-minute deals
- Loyalty offers
- Messages about “What’s New” in Catalina
- Contests
- Social media engagement
- Direct mail

# Next Steps

- After the Capacity & Business Needs Assessment, determine realistic and measurable marketing objectives for increased visitation by visitor type (personas).
- Given the current budget and available resources, assign priorities to the marketing strategies. Realistically, not every idea can be executed in 2017.
- Use analytics to view how visitors are interacting with our brand and products on website and other digital platforms.
- Develop a long term marketing strategy (Five Year Plan) that plans for targeted communication, higher numbers of visitors and larger budgets.

# Thank You

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