

Cape Breton Island

your heart will never leave.

Destination Cape Breton Strategy 2023-24



We acknowledge that we are in Unama'ki – the Mi'kmaw name for Cape Breton Island – one of the seven traditional districts of Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded home of the Mi'kmaw People.



Table of Contents

Section	Page
Results	3
Strategy Overview	12
Research	20
Product Innovation	24
Marketing	29
Events	37
Destination Development	40



Results



Results

As we look ahead to the next year, we start by taking a look back at the past few years to assess results and view trends. At the beginning of that period, in 2018 and 2019, Cape Breton Island was still riding a decade-long growth trend. This decade of growth directly corresponds to investments in marketing through the establishment of the Cape Breton Island Marketing Levy, accompanying investments by the Government of Canada and collaborative funding support from the Province of Nova Scotia. Over that period, the incremental growth in room nights sold on Cape Breton Island more than doubled the province overall. While licensed room nights sold declined slightly in 2018 and 2019, short-term rental units sold (mainly Airbnb) during those years more than made up the difference.

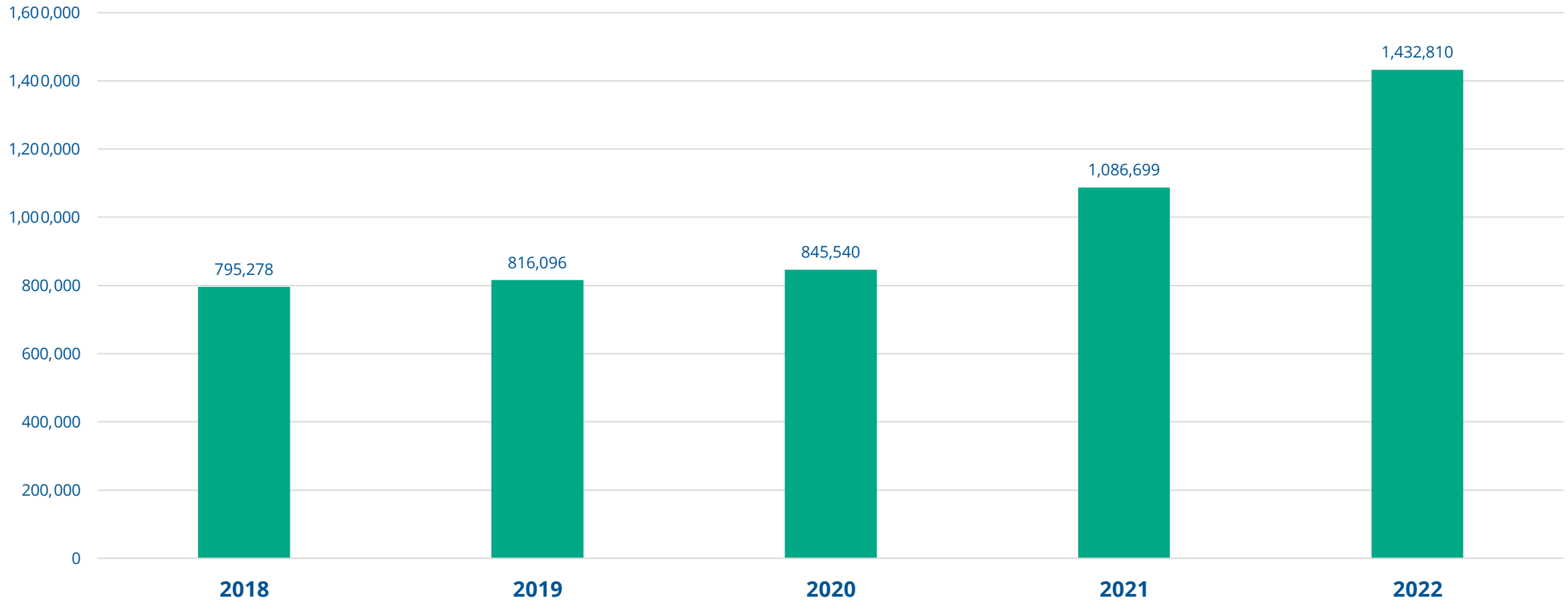
Through 2020 and 2021, Cape Breton Island was impacted significantly by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, room nights sold were down 55% from 2019. The tourism industry re-opened after the spring shutdown that year, but had to rely solely on Atlantic Canadians for visitation. In 2021, with visitation opened up to the rest of Canada in July, room nights sold improved significantly over 2020, but were still down 36% from 2019. Pandemic relief funding, while having gaps, did help the vast majority of operators survive through the pandemic.

The 2022 year has been a strong recovery year for most operators, with room nights sold up 5% over 2019 levels. Short-term rental units sold were up 21% over 2019 and at record levels. Hurricane Fiona had a significant impact on late September and early October visitation, but the return of a live Celtic Colours International Festival provided a vital boost.

The most significant challenge faced by the industry was a tourism workforce shortage that has reached a critical level. The shortage has been felt across the country and will likely take years and significant effort to fully address.

visitcapebreton.com Sessions

Five-year Trend, 2018-22



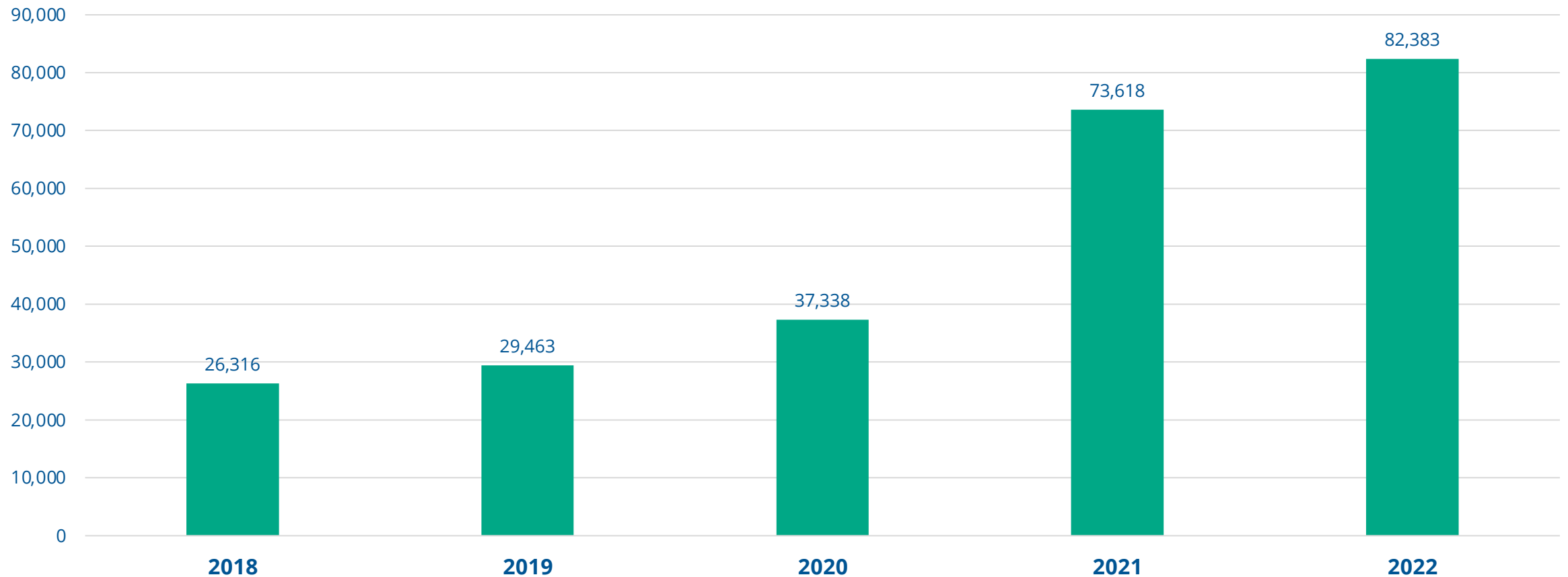
Source: Google Analytics

The vast majority of Destination Cape Breton's marketing efforts are designed to drive traffic to visitcapebreton.com. The chart shows the growth of website traffic over the past five years. Sessions in 2021 were up 29% over 2020 and eclipsed one million for the first time. This was driven by domestic traffic to the site, which saw a 31% increase.

In 2022, sessions hit a new record, eclipsing 1.43 million, a 32% increase over 2021. This was also driven primarily by domestic traffic. Leads (clicks from visitcapebreton.com to operator websites), a key indicator for measuring the intent to visit, were up 9% and also hit record levels.

visitcapebreton.com Winter Campaign Pageviews

2018-22



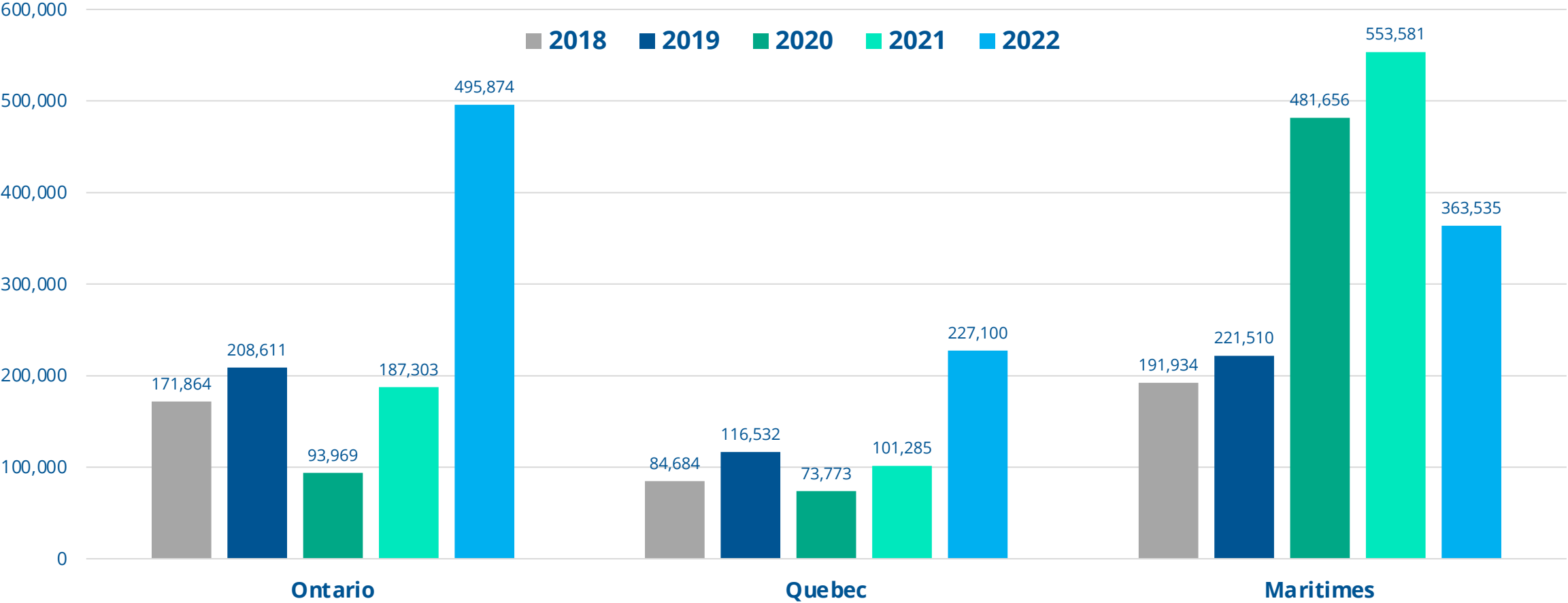
Source: Google Analytics

Destination Cape Breton has been marketing the winter season since 2016 and the campaign has continued to grow. The 2021 campaign almost doubled 2020 with a 97% increase in pageviews. This increase coincided with a much larger investment due to a partnership with Tourism Nova Scotia in their Digital Content Marketing Partnership. This partnership continued into 2022 and helped to drive a 12% increase in pageviews over 2021.

The winter campaign has focused completely on the Maritime market since its inception. However, with the introduction of new investments in the downhill skiing product at Cape Smokey and the establishment of more snowmobile rental operators, there is an opportunity to expand the market to Southern Ontario.

visitcapebreton.com Sessions by Market

2018-22



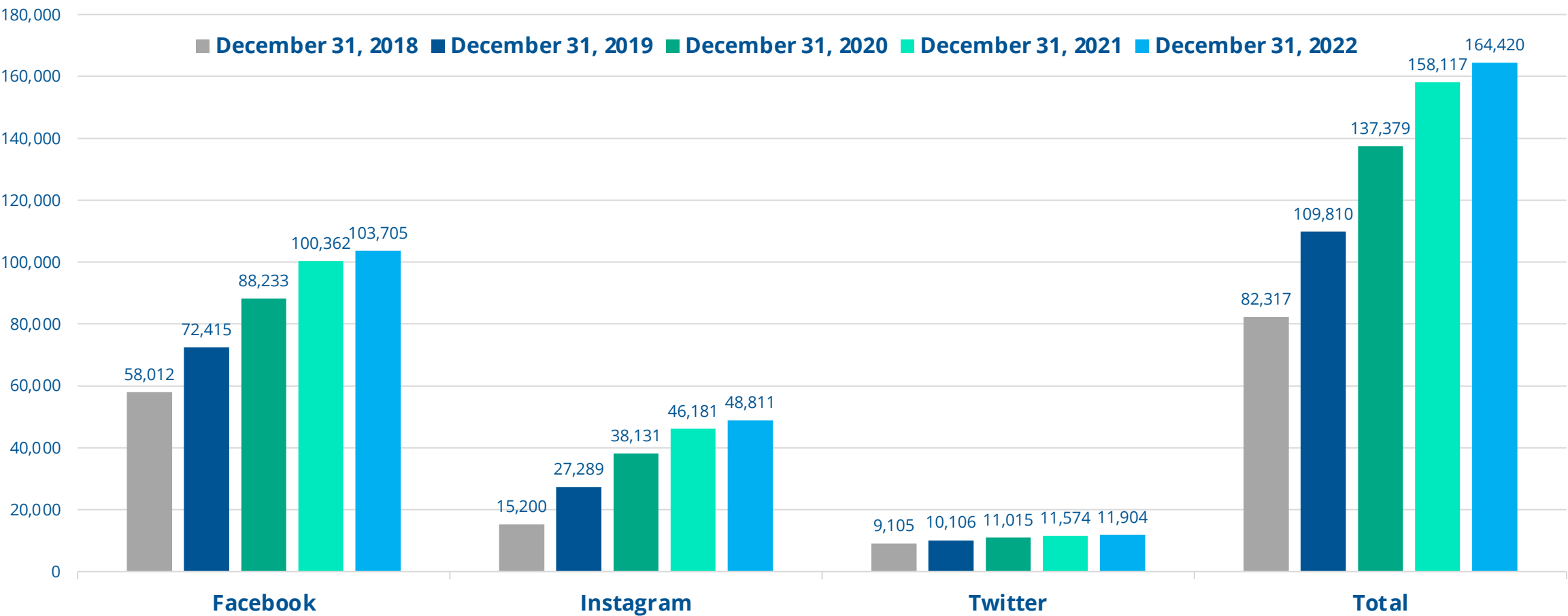
Source: Google Analytics

In looking at the three main geographic markets for Cape Breton Island, Ontario has been the largest source of sessions since 2015, with the exception of the pandemic years. The increases in the Maritimes market in 2020 and 2021 coincided with a much larger investment, as it was a foundation for travel demand in an uncertain time.

In 2022, investment levels reverted back to pre-pandemic allocations, however, a small portion that had been dedicated to the Northeast US in 2018-19 was reallocated across the three domestic markets. Website visitation from Ontario was up 138% over 2019, Quebec was up 95% over 2019 and the Maritimes was up 64% over 2019.

Social Media Follower Growth

2018-22



Source: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter Insights

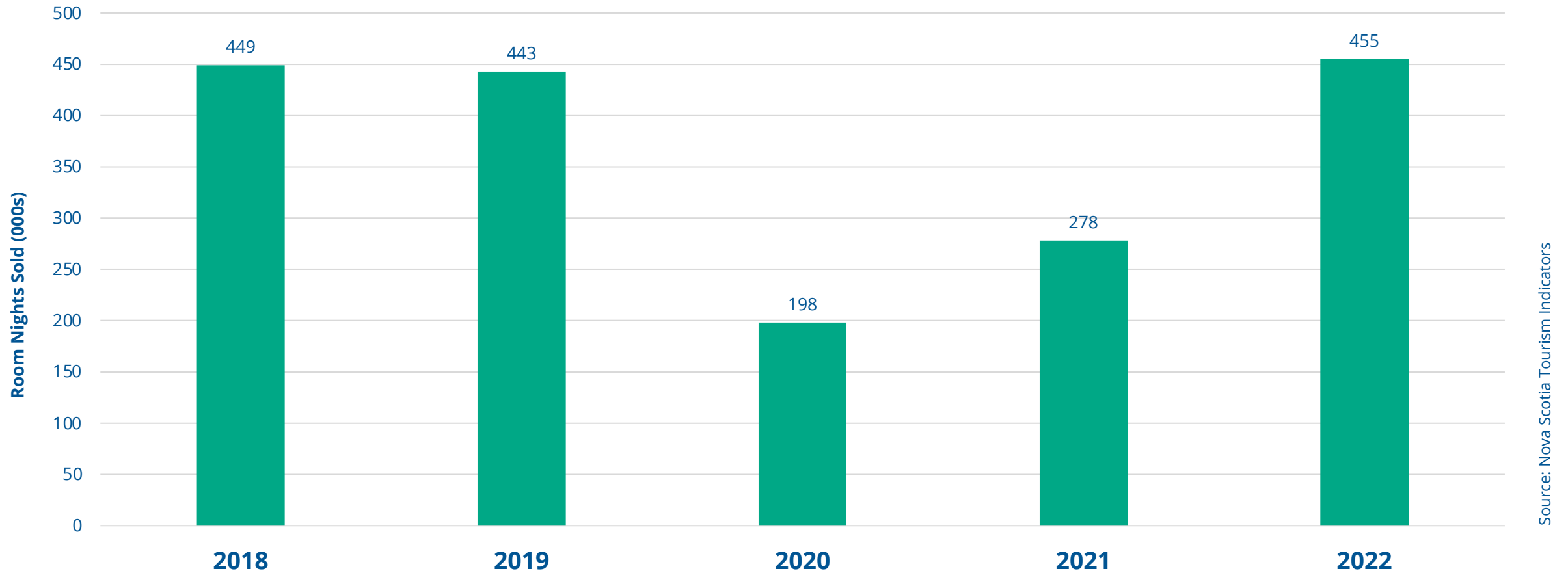
Social media follower growth increased steadily over the past five years and doubled over that period. This was led mainly by Facebook and Instagram, while Twitter had comparatively smaller growth. Women comprise about two-thirds of followers, with Instagram skewing toward the young adult segment and Facebook skewing

toward the 45+ segment.

Despite increases in follower growth, engagement (reactions, comments, shares) on social channels has been a challenge in recent years, mainly due to changes in the Facebook algorithm.

Registered Room Nights Sold

2018-22



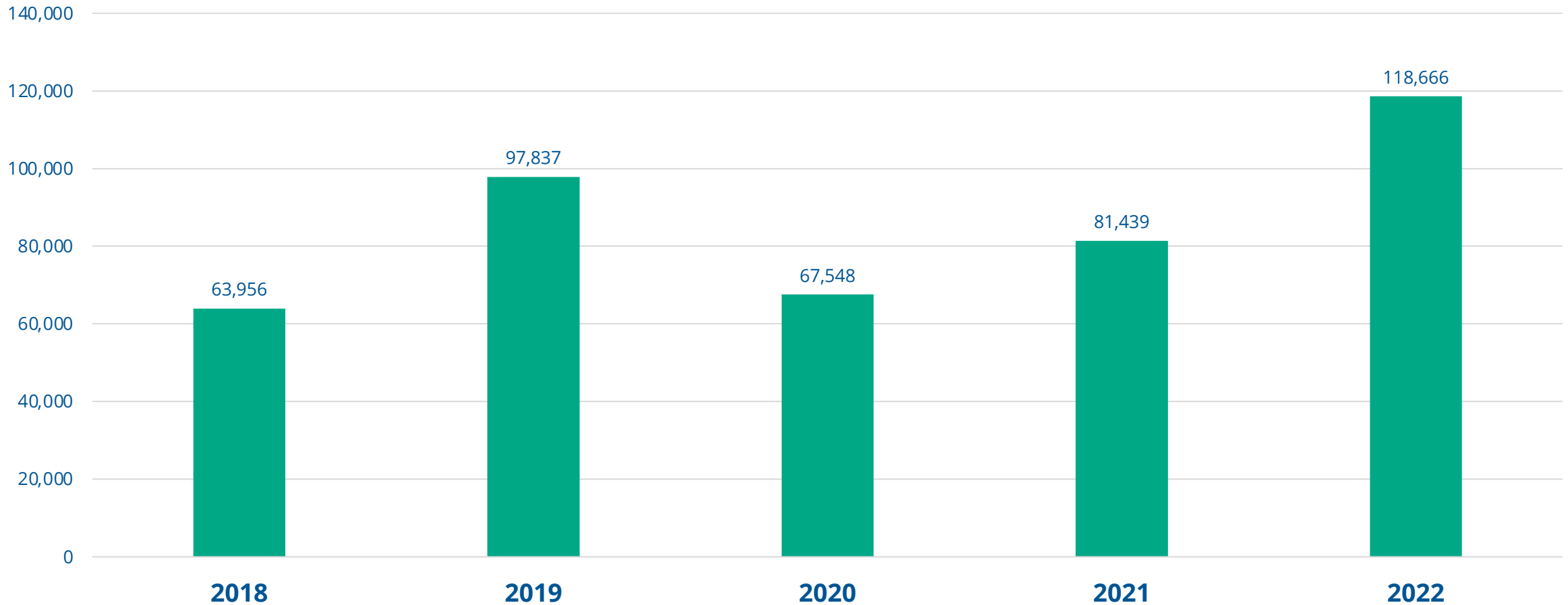
Conversions are measured mainly through room nights sold. Overall, registered room nights sold declined slightly in 2018 and 2019, mainly due to short-term rentals capturing a greater share of the accommodation market, as they saw strong growth (see next page). Room nights sold in 2020 were down 55% from 2019 and 2021 was down 36% from 2019.

Room nights sold in 2022 were up 5% over 2019, indicating a strong recovery year. While Hurricane Fiona created cancellations in many areas of the Island, it also resulted in many rooms being booked for weeks by crews working to restore power and services. The spring of 2022 was the best spring on record.

Source: Nova Scotia Tourism Indicators

Short-term Rental Unit Nights Sold

2018-22



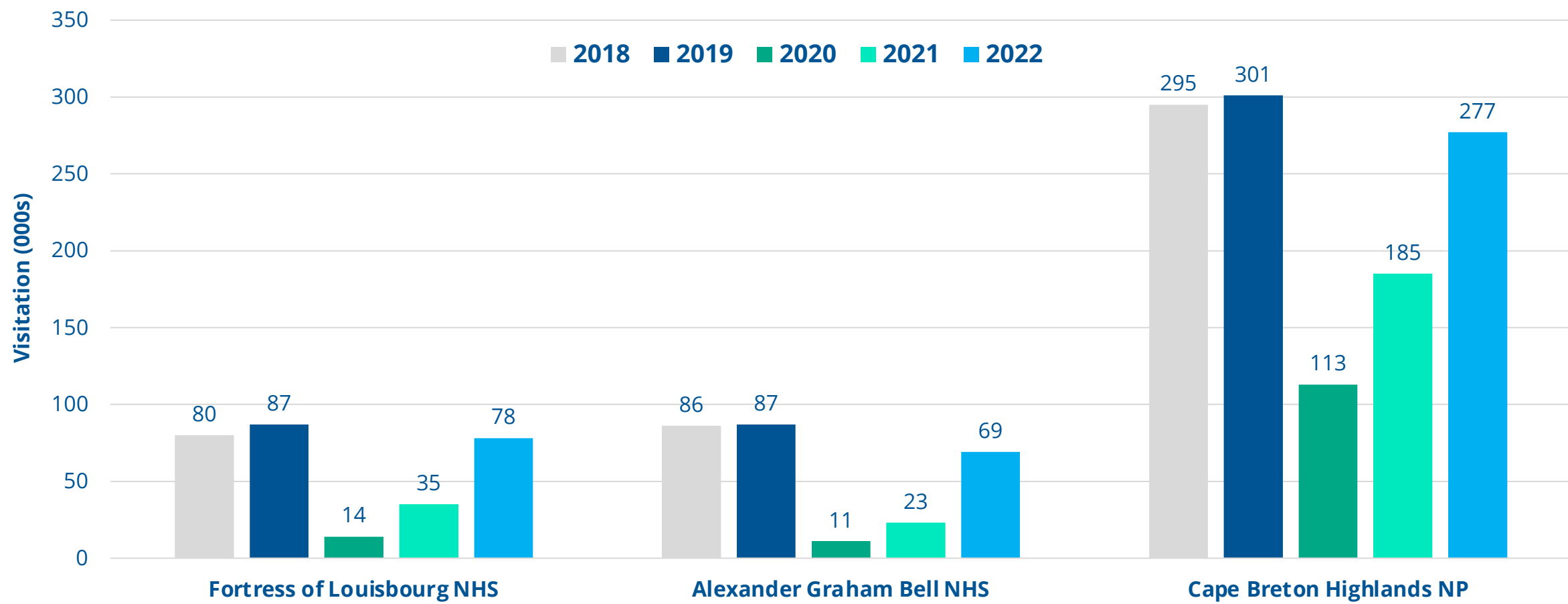
Source: AIRDNA

Short-term rental unit nights sold (mainly through Airbnb) grew significantly in 2018 (+87%) and 2019 (+53%) and captured a greater share of the accommodation market. During the pandemic, short-term rental unit nights sold were down 31% in 2020 and 17% in 2021 compared to 2019, but this was a lesser impact than for registered room nights sold.

In 2022, short-term rental unit nights sold were up 21% over 2019 levels, with record spring, summer and fall sales. This further illustrates the recovery of the industry in 2022, while also suggesting that short-term rentals are continuing to gain market share.

Parks Canada Site Visitation

2018-22



Source: Parks Canada

Visits to Parks Canada sites were up significantly over 2021 at 75%, and only down 11% from 2019. Visitation to the Cape Breton Highlands National Park had a strong recovery and was only 8% from 2019 numbers. If not for Hurricane Fiona, visitation would have been very close to 2019.

The Fortress of Louisbourg and Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Sites were both up significantly over 2021 at 123% and 200% respectively, but also trailed 2019 numbers. Both sites were directly impacted by Hurricane Fiona, with the Fortress having to close from significant damage and Bell experiencing the loss of visitation, particularly due to cruise ship cancellations.



2023-24 Strategy Overview



Forecast

The Conference Board of Canada's Nova Scotia Travel Markets Outlook to 2026 had forecast that 2022 would see a recovery in domestic leisure travel, which has been realized in the data so far. The report projects that full visitation recovery to the province would occur in 2023 with the recovery of US and overseas markets as well as business travel.

In its Fall 2022 Tourism Outlook report, Destination Canada states that "while headwinds and tailwinds persist, our recovery trajectory becomes clearer, bolstered by resilience in travel demand." They forecast that inflation and geo-political issues will hinder the speed of recovery, but that strong bookings and consumer research are indicating that tourism spending nationally will return to 2019 levels in 2024, a full year earlier than previously forecasted. This forecast is reinforced in Skift's Global Travel Outlook 2023 report that states, "We still see potential for significant catch-up growth in travel to continue in every region of the world even as that optimism is tempered by gathering economic storm clouds."

Economic growth was strong in 2022 with Canada's GDP expected to have grown by 3.5% for the year and the US GDP expected to have grown 1.9% according to TD Economics. Canada's economy is forecast to grow at 0.7% in 2023, 0.4% in 2024 and 1.3% in 2025, while the US economy is forecast to grow 0.9% in 2023, 0.9% in 2024 and 1.7% in 2025. While the forecasted growth rates are lower than 2022, a recession is not currently forecast in either country at this time and inflation is expected to decelerate in 2023 and return to pre-pandemic levels by 2024.

These forecasts point to favourable conditions for steady growth at a manageable pace. With workforce shortages expected to persist, at least in the short-term, a manageable rate of growth is optimal for the tourism industry. It is prudent to remain cautiously optimistic, however, as pandemics, major storms and geopolitical issues have all shown they can be powerful headwinds for the continued recovery.



The Travel Context

While the macro level looks cautiously optimistic for steady growth, there are other underlying trends and predictions in travel that can inform the strategy. In terms of geographic markets, Destination Canada's Fall 2022 Tourism Outlook report states that the domestic market (78% of Cape Breton's visitors pre-pandemic) will fully recover in 2023 in nominal terms. The US market (16% of Cape Breton's visitors pre-pandemic) will accelerate in 2023 and fully recover in 2024. The overseas international market (6% of Cape Breton's visitors pre-pandemic) is expected to recover at a slower pace with full recovery in 2025.

In terms of demographics, in MMGY Global's Data-Led Predictions for 2023, they state that "leisure demand is likely to remain strong; however, it will be led by the affluent and older generation of travellers." In their forthcoming Portrait of American Travelers report, they state that 25% of US adults who expect to travel in the next six months will do so internationally. At the same time, they predict that less affluent will opt for more local and regional travel experiences.

In alignment with this prediction, Destination Canada has placed an emphasis on targeting high value guests as their leisure target audience. They define high value guests as follows:

Our high value guest (HVG) is a Canadian or international traveller who makes travel choices based on their desire for self-enrichment and personal motivations for travel. They visit destinations consistent with their personal values, with an increasing consciousness around responsible travel. They are not driven by price. They are naturally curious and want to invest time and energy into a destination by staying longer and immersing themselves into the local culture, actively seeking the local hidden gems in addition to the tourist attractions. They respect and celebrate the place and people. At best, they want to leave a destination better than they found it and, at least, they want to minimize their footprint.



How people travel is also expected to change. In Expedia's 2023 Travel Trends Report, which is based on a comprehensive survey of over 24,000 travellers, they state:

The past few years saw travellers worldwide adjusting to a series of "new normals." They spent seasons inside, then sought the great outdoors. They jumped at the chance to reconnect with loved ones in person as soon as possible, then made up for lost time with extravagant bucket list trips.

Now, travellers are tired of compromise and ready to experience an array of destinations, be influenced in new ways and book what they want when they want it. There will be no "one size fits all" approach.

In 2023, travelers are ditching the conventional and veering off course for all-new experiences. Prepare for the year of the no-normal.

A number of other travel trends can inform this strategy. In Skift's Mega Trends – Looking Ahead to 2025 report, the following trends are relevant to Cape Breton Island:

- **Travel's new cadence is more deliberate, introspective and soulful**
A growing portion of travellers is concerned for the impact they will have on a destination. They are choosing destinations that can provide enrichment to them as well as the local community.
- **Backyard tourism will continue to be on a pedestal**
Many travellers rediscovered their own backyards during the pandemic and will continue to value local and regional getaways for coastal, wellness, adventure and cultural experiences.
- **The rise of global mobile wallets upends travel payments**
Travellers will be in more control of how they book their trips and spend money during their travels. A growing number will leave the travel experience if their preferred payment method is not accepted.



- **Digital automation will be accelerated**
With a global workforce shortage, digital automation will be a necessity for many tourism operators. Contactless technologies, from to accommodation check-in to placing restaurant orders, will be more commonplace.
- **Short term rentals will become more mainstream while coping with headwinds**
Short term rentals like Airbnb and VRBO will become more of a mainstream option for accommodations, but will be more regulated by governments to curb their unbridled growth and impact on the housing market.

In Destination Canada's report, Tourism's Big Shift: Key Trends Shaping the Future of Canada's Tourism Industry, the following travel trends were identified that are relevant to Cape Breton:

- **Responsible Travel**
There is growing consumer research predicting that travellers want to lighten their footprint on destinations – supporting local economies, engaging with local cultures, reducing carbon emissions and enabling environmental conservation.
- **Indigenous Connection**
Research conducted by the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada and Destination Canada shows that one in three Canadians is interested in Indigenous experiences and culture.
- **Wild for Wilderness**
Many travellers are seeking physically challenging adventures, while others are seeking passive ways to engage with nature.
- **Health and Wellbeing**
According to the Global Wellness Institute, the wellness travel market is growing and people have become hungry for a sense of wellbeing during the pandemic.



In MMGY Global's Data-Led Predictions for 2023, they are predicting that corporate travel will continue to recover in 2023. With more employees working from home, companies are likely to see the need to occasionally gather employees to meet. Additionally, strong corporate earnings are likely to mean that corporate travel budgets for employees are likely to reach 2019 levels again. That will likely translate into stronger attendance at conferences and business events.

For the cruise sector, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) forecasts that cruise will fully recover to 2019 levels by the end of 2023 and will have double-digit growth in 2024. According to Similarweb Insights, website traffic of the leading eight cruise lines has been steadily increasing over 2022 and was collectively up 15% in November over November 2019. Similar to previously mentioned trends, the volume of searches for cruise deals has been trending upward, while conversely, the share of search volume for premium cruise brands has increased 35% over the past tree years.

Cruise returned to Cape Breton Island in 2022 with 78 ship visits in total, comprising just over 100,000 passengers. The numbers would have been higher, except for 19 cancellations with most due to Hurricane Fiona. Sydney saw 68 calls, Louisbourg 6, Baddeck 3 and Chéticamp 1. The schedule for 2023 is looking even stronger with a projection of over 200,000 passengers.

Canada's airline industry is still in recovery mode, but saw some positive signs in 2022. Air Canada's Q3 (i.e. peak tourism season) revenues were just below 2019 levels and domestic yields (revenue per capacity) increased 12% over 2019. The seat capacity of flights to JA Douglas McCurdy was down 45% in 2022 compared to 2019, which resulted in passenger loads being down 38%. The loss of daily direct flights to Halifax was the significant factor, as loads on direct flights from Toronto and Montreal were strong. Canada's two largest ultra low-cost carriers, Swoop and Flair, are in expansion mode and are planning to add more capacity and more destinations in the coming years.



Guiding Principles

The 2023-24 strategy for Destination Cape Breton is based on the following guiding principles:

1. It is developed in alignment with ACOA's Tourism Innovation Action Plan, Tourism Nova Scotia's strategy and Destination Canada's strategy.
2. It adheres to the Research/Product Innovation/Marketing Continuum.
3. It focuses on promoting the Island's core assets/motivators and niche activities.
4. It continues to utilize Destination Canada's award-winning and proven Explorer Quotient (EQ) psychographic profiles, focusing primarily on Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers.
5. It bases all decisions on the best evidence, wherever possible.
6. It is designed to be flexible to quickly adapt to changing conditions.



Goals and Objectives

To optimize impact for the Cape Breton Island visitor economy, the strategy will focus on four main objectives for 2023-24:

- To enhance the brand of Cape Breton Island as a bucket-list destination for Canadian travellers, and beyond;
- To optimize domestic visitation for the greatest possible impact in all periods of the year, with particular emphasis on the growth of shoulder and winter seasons; and
- To work with partners to mitigate supply side constraints to the greatest extent possible.
- To make substantial strides in becoming a sustainable and inclusive destination.

Using these objectives as the focus, the following measurable goals will be:

1. To grow total registered room nights sold on Cape Breton Island by 2% in 2023.
2. To reach average monthly accommodation occupancy rates of 50% for spring (May-June), 65% for fall (September-October) and 35% for winter (January to March).
3. To collaborate with partners to eliminate the tourism industry workforce shortage on Cape Breton Island by 2025.
4. To develop and begin the implementation of a regenerative tourism plan.
5. To develop and begin the implementation of an equity, diversity and inclusion plan for Cape Breton Island's tourism industry.



Research



Research

The Research/Product Innovation/Marketing Continuum begins with research to define the target audience, identify trends and determine what they are seeking in our destination.

Research conducted over the past number of years has clearly defined the target audience. For the coming three years, it can continue to be defined as follows:

Demographic

- Empty nest couples aged 45+ (boomers and Gen X)
- Pre-nest young adults aged 22-32 (younger millennials and Gen Z)
- Females do majority of travel planning (57% of web visits and 60%+ of social followers)
- Post-secondary educated, employed full-time or retired

Geographic

- Maritimes
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Alberta and British Columbia are emerging markets (as rental car supplies replenish)

Psychographic (Explorer Quotient Types)

- Authentic Experiencers (33% of visitors)
- Cultural Explorers (24% of visitors)

Destination Canada categorizes Authentic Experiencers and Cultural Explorers as 'Learners'. They are drawn by culture and natural beauty. They seek engagement in a destination – to meet locals and to be participants in the culture.



Key Research Observations

Through research conducted over the past three years, a number of observations may be made that can inform the strategy:

- Destination Canada's Fall 2022 Tourism Outlook suggests that many travellers will continue to look domestically for their travel plans in the short-term, while the US will recover by 2024 and other overseas markets will recover by 2025.
- Motivations for out-of-region domestic visitors include the Cabot Trail, cultural experiences (particularly music), outdoor adventures, and fall activities.
- Motivations for regional visitors include the Cabot Trail, winter activities, festivals and events and outdoor adventures.
- The average length of stay for out-of-region domestic visitors is 5.6 nights and for regional visitors is about 3 nights. Forecasts are predicting longer stays in destinations for longer haul travellers.
- The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) reports that there was a 23.5% growth in Indigenous tourism revenues in 2019, which significantly outpaced the rest of the sector.
- The rental vehicle supply is projected to improve each year as rental companies will be able to gradually increase their fleet inventories. Longer haul travellers usually book earlier, so they should be able to secure vehicles.
- As mentioned in the #RiseAgain2030 Destination Development Strategy, there is a lack of Cape Breton specific data upon which to make decisions. Destination Cape Breton and CBU's World Tourism Institute are working with new data tools to address this gap and new data should be available in 2023.



Research Objectives

In pursuit of the goals and objectives, the following strategic objectives have been defined for Research:

1. To continue to measure and report on key performance indicators

- Room nights sold and occupancy rates
- Shared economy unit nights sold
- Google Analytics
- Social media insights
- Digital marketing effectiveness

2. To continue to monitor relevant regional, national and international research related to tourism trends

- Attend key destination focused events and webinars
- Monitor tourism research sources such as Tourism Nova Scotia, Destination Canada, TIAC, and others

3. To continue to explore new research opportunities

- Evaluate and refine the research provided through the current partnership with Cape Breton University's World Tourism Institute
- Explore the potential to measure Net Promoter Score to benchmark the brand health of the destination with visitors and residents



Product Innovation



Product Innovation

Over the past few years, there have been a number of product innovation initiatives on Cape Breton Island, including:

- Experience development workshops with one-on-one follow-up sessions, conducted in partnership with Tourism Nova Scotia;
- A project with Unama'ki tourism partners to create an inventory of current Indigenous experiences and chart next steps in Indigenous tourism development;
- A culinary development project, in partnership with the Cape Breton Food Hub, NSCC and ACOA, that included Accelerated Market Readiness assessments (AMR) and a culinary conference;
- The development of a “Cultural Storytelling through Food” project with Acadian partners;
- A sportfishing assessment focused on the Bras d'Or Lake, conducted in partnership with CEPI;
- A mountain biking assessment, conducted in partnership with Victoria County and the Cape Breton Partnership;
- Initial exploration of the potential for Cape Breton Island to enter the luxury tourism market;
- A winter market readiness project, conducted in partnership with Inverness County, Victoria County and ACOA that included AMR assessments;
- An initiation phase of a new nighttime experience at the Fortress of Louisbourg, in partnership with Parks Canada and the Fortress Louisbourg Association;



- A cultural tourism development session with African Nova Scotian community stakeholders;
- Conceptualizing and development Waterfall Season, a new initiative to drive spring visitation; and
- Implementing initial development on a new approach to marine tourism development.

Many of these initiatives will be continued into the 2023-26 period and priorities will be established for these and other new initiatives.



Product Innovation Objectives

In pursuit of the goals and objectives, the following strategic objectives have been defined for Product Innovation:

- 1. To work with Indigenous partners to support the enhancement of their experience offerings and support their continued development**
 - Work with the Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network (NSITEN) and Unama'ki partners to support their tourism development priorities
 - Establish a regular process for meeting with Mi'kmaw tourism partners
 - Support reconciliation and decolonization projects related to tourism, such as the Mukla'qati project of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq that aims to restore the original name and story of what has been commonly called Kelly's Mountain
- 2. To work with industry and partners to develop and promote experiences and offerings that will appeal to the target audience**
 - Work with partners to support the ongoing development of new signature experiences, including Destination Cape Smokey, the Seawall Trail, Fortress of Louisbourg nighttime experience, Dear Rita production at the Savoy Theatre, etc.
 - Continue working with cultural tourism partners, including Acadian, Gaelic, African Nova Scotian and other cultural groups to continue product innovation initiatives
 - Continue working with culinary tourism to elevate their experiences and offerings
 - Support the work of Destination Canada in its pilot project related to the emerging adventure tourism cluster in the Cape Breton Highlands
 - Work with adventure tourism partners in the development of new experiences



3. To elevate the overall experience to meet the expectations of the target audience

- Educate the industry on what the target audience is seeking
- Work with Cape Breton University and its Cape Breton Island Tourism Training Network project to develop and implement world-class customer service training
- Design strategies to address the need for more evening experiences across the Island, particularly in rural areas

4. To continue to develop winter tourism

- Coordinate a winter best practice mission for 2024
- Prioritize actions from the Winter Readiness Project and implement with partners
- Collaborate with partners to build winter capacity

5. To explore further development of the spring and fall shoulder seasons

- Build on the foundation of the first Waterfall Season with new experiences and events
- Capitalize on the success of the Cabot Trail Food Truck Rally to explore other events to drive early and late fall visitation

6. To continue to develop niche markets with growth potential

- Prioritize next steps in the development of 2SLGBTQIA+, marine tourism, mountain biking, sportfishing and luxury travel markets
- Conduct a market assessment for wellness travel



Marketing



Marketing

As shown in the Results section, the marketing program has driven strong results, particularly during the past recovery year. It has been continually honed, based on data and research, to deliver incremental gains. Now, the latest data and trends are pointing to an evolution of the program, to address four key directions:

- The brand and messaging must match the deliberate, introspective and soulful focus of today's travellers, which is likely even more true with Learner EQ types.
- With more and more of the visitors' path to purchase taking place online, a comprehensive, end-to-end digital marketing strategy is vital.
- Marketing activities must be responsible from a sustainability standpoint.
- The marketing program must convey that the destination is equitable, diverse and inclusive.

With the current digital reality, travellers act on their needs and make decisions in what Think with Google calls micro-moments. For travel, there are four micro-moments: 1. Dreaming (wanting to get away and looking for inspiration), 2. Planning (planning when to go, where to stay, what to do and for how long), 3. Booking (booking tickets and reserving rooms) and 4. Experiencing (when the trip is underway).

These micro-moments provide a Path to Purchase that Destination Cape Breton has been using for the past number of years. The marketing strategy is designed to bring the target audience through this Path to Purchase toward conversion to a visit, and beyond. The following page outlines the tactics that will be employed at each stage of the Path to Purchase.

The Path to Purchase

DREAMING	PLANNING	BOOKING	EXPERIENCING
Digital Marketing* Display Video Social	Digital Marketing* Category search Re-marketing Social Email	Digital Marketing* Branded search Re-marketing Social	Digital Marketing App
Content (Hero) Hero video Influencers Travel media	Content (Hub) Locals Know blogs Experience videos List-style content Local ambassadors	Content (Help) FAQ blogs Itineraries Packages Operator listings	Content User-generated (UGC) Reviews
Collateral Material Digital Lure Piece	Collateral Material Digital Lure Piece Seasonal Guides	Collateral Material Seasonal Guides	Collateral Material Map
TV Regional	Specialty Print Motorcycle Guide Sno Trails (SANS Guide)	Travel Trade	
Artist Ambassadors	Travel Trade		

* Digital marketing is largely conducted in partnership with Tourism Nova Scotia through their Digital Marketing Content Program.



Marketing Activities

The prescribed marketing activities are:

Brand and Messaging

Enhancements will be made to the brand and messaging to appeal to the deliberate, introspective and soulful focus of today's travellers. Within messaging, care will be taken to communicate that Cape Breton Island is diverse and inclusive for all visitors.

Additionally, DCB will collaborate with Mi'kmaw partners to complete a thorough review of the brand from a two-eyed seeing perspective. Based on this review, changes may be made to branding and messaging.

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is the largest component of the Destination Cape Breton marketing campaign and delivers the strongest ROI. Over the past few years, DCB has partnered with Tourism Nova Scotia through their Digital Content Marketing Program, which provides matching dollars to target the key markets.

Over the next year, DCB will be focusing even more on digital strategies through implementing a personalization and end-to-end digital visitor experience, enhanced marketing automation and a mobile first focus.

Content Marketing

A robust content strategy will continue to be honed, following the 'Hero, Hub, Help' approach of Destination Canada's Content Playbook. This approach identifies compelling, relevant content and distribution channels to reach the target audience at each stage of the Path to Purchase. This includes social media, website content, videos and photography, etc. New content development will ensure that the destination is being portrayed as diverse and inclusive.



A particular focus will be placed on the development of short-form, looping videos for TikTok and reels.

Website

A key piece of the digital marketing and content strategies is the website, which has been designed to be a content hub. In addition to the personalization engine previously mentioned, the website will incorporate marketing automation using HubSpot. It will continue to be optimized for improved performance.

Communities of Interest (COI)

Following the success of three communities of interest projects, DCB will continue to incorporate the model into its content and digital strategies for niche markets, including golf, marine, luxury, culinary, adventure, wellness, motorcycling, skiing, sportfishing, etc. This approach will utilize local ambassadors and targeted influencers to create and disseminate interest-focused content.

Collateral Material

The Cape Breton Island Experience Guide will be discontinued due to its expense and carbon footprint. It will be replaced with a digital lure piece. Print collateral will continue with Fall and Winter guides and the Cape Breton Island Visitor Map, but each piece will be printed through suppliers that offer carbon neutral printing.

Television

Television advertising continues to be effective with the Maritimes, particularly with news programs. This will be continued for regional spring/summer, fall and winter campaigns, so long as viewership numbers remain strong.

Artist Ambassadors

The Island's touring artists are the finest salespeople of our destination. DCB has partnered with Natalie MacMaster and Donnell Leahy and family, the Barra MacNeils, Ashley MacIsaac, Jimmy Rankin and the Men of the Deeps to promote the Island



during their tours. These partnerships will continue and other ambassadors will be considered.

Travel Trade

Destination Cape Breton will continue to work closely with Tourism Nova Scotia's sales team to support their efforts to draw more visitors to the province, and Cape Breton Island specifically. This will include attending Rendezvous Canada, Atlantic Canada's Showcase and the Adventure Travel Trade Association's AdventureELEVATE.

Specialty Print

Ads will continue to be placed in the Atlantic Canada Motorcycle Touring Guide and Sno Trails, the guide of the Snowmobile Association of Nova Scotia, which are both widely utilized by those niche audiences.

User-generated Content (UGC)

Recommendations of friends and family is one of the most effective ways that potential visitors learn about a destination. Visitors will continue to be prompted to share their photos and videos on social media utilizing the #visitcapebreton hashtag.

Special Campaigns

Marketing support will be provided to special campaigns, such as Waterfall Season and the Cabot Trail Food Truck Rally.



Marketing Objectives

In pursuit of the goals and objectives, the following strategic objectives have been defined for Marketing:

- 1. To maintain website traffic on [visitcapebreton.com](https://www.visitcapebreton.com) at 1.4 million sessions, while increasing site engagement to 40% (from 37.8%)**
 - Enhance the digital marketing strategy to focus on engagement
 - Implement an end-to-end personalization strategy with marketing automation where possible
- 2. To increase the social media footprint by 10% to 180,000 followers, while also increasing engagements by 10%**
 - Enhance the content marketing strategy (with an emphasis on more EDI)
 - Bring in targeted influencers from Ontario, Quebec and Western Canada
 - Create more short-form videos for TikTok and reels
- 3. To generate shoulder season demand**
 - Expand the campaign for Waterfall Season
 - Leverage Lobster Season to drive culinary interest
 - Continue to promote the Cabot Trail Food Truck Rally
- 4. To generate increased demand for winter visitation**
 - Continue to expand winter marketing to the Greater Toronto Area
 - Capitalize on the increased investment at Cape Smokey to drive more visitation
- 5. To support established and existing niche markets through the communities of interest (COI) approach**
 - Continue the COI approach across all aspects of the content strategy
 - Develop targeted campaigns for marine tourism, outdoor adventure, sportfishing, etc.



6. To enhance the brand for greater appeal to the target audience

- Explore seasonal treatments of the brand identity as well as Mi'kmaq, French and Gaelic versions
- Develop new campaigns and content with introspective and soulful messaging

7. To continue integrating Cape Breton Island music into marketing and promotion

- Continue working with touring artists as ambassadors and utilize them for live social events
- Expand the music section of visitcapebreton.com to add profiles of Cape Breton musicians, music-based itineraries, and playlists
- Continue to commission and utilize music created by Cape Breton artists in videos and commercials

8. To mobilize visitors into advocates for Cape Breton Island

- Develop and implement a user-generated content (UGC) campaign in conjunction with operators



Events



Events

Since the establishment of the Events Cape Breton program, Destination Cape Breton has collaborated with partners on the attraction of events, including sport, cultural and business events. While the funding for the ECB program concluded in 2020, Destination Cape Breton and partners have still pursued events and have had some recent successes.

In the 2023, Cape Breton Island will host the U SPORTS National Women's Basketball Championship, Council for the Development of National Development Officers (CANDO) National Conference, Canadian Armwrestling Championships, STIHL Timbersports Championships and U SPORTS National Men's Soccer Championship. In 2024, the Island will host the World Women's Curling Championship, Canadian 3D Indoor Archery Championships, Music Tourism Convention and Canada Soccer U-17 Nationals. This is in addition to annual festivals and events like the Celtic Colours International Festival, KitchenFest, Vince Ryan Memorial Hockey Tournament and numerous others.

A number of new festivals and events have been conceptualized and are in varying stages of development. While not all will go forward, Destination Cape Breton is supporting their development.

While business events have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, they have been returning over 2022 and trends are showing that smaller meetings and corporate retreats are on the rise. Cape Breton Island is perfectly placed to compete in this niche.

With an expected increase in Marketing Levy revenues beginning in 2024 once new municipal bylaws are passed, a stronger focus will be placed on the attraction, creation and innovation of events. These events have the potential to drive incremental visitation in the shoulder and winter seasons.



Events Objectives

In pursuit of the attraction, creation and innovation of events, the following strategic objectives have been defined for Events:

1. To evolve the Events Cape Breton program with a broader focus of attraction, creation and innovation of events

- Assign dedicated financial and human resources to the program to be reinvigorated in 2024
- Create a new Events Advisory Committee of key stakeholders
- Create a new action plan from the events strategy that was developed in 2020
- Update branding, creative and collateral

2. To work with existing organizers on the Island to elevate their festivals and events

- Conduct assessments of events using the Event Impact Calculator (a Destinations International tool)
- Continue the community festivals & events program for ACOA and the municipalities

3. To implement a program that positions the Island as a premier small meetings (500 people or less) and corporate retreats destination

- Create a partnership program with meeting venues
- Update the inventory of meeting venues, rooms, suppliers, etc.
- Create new content and creative for the promotion of meetings
- Attend meetings industry events, including the Canadian Meetings & Events Expo, CSAE Tête-à-Tête, etc.



Destination Development



Destination Development

In 2021, Destination Cape Breton released the #RiseAgain2030 Cape Breton Island Destination Development Strategy, which was developed in collaboration with ACOA, Parks Canada, the Province of Nova Scotia, the five Island municipalities, the Cape Breton Partnership, Cape Breton University, NSCC and industry stakeholders. The strategy provides a shared vision for the sustainable growth of the Island's tourism economy. The 2030 vision is:

Cape Breton Island is a four-season, sustainable, and smart tourism destination that provides positive benefits and wealth creation opportunities for residents, tourism operators, stakeholder organizations and ancillary businesses, the public sector, and visitors. Through nurturing and celebrating cultural expression, authentic experiences, culinary offerings, events, and the abundance of natural beauty and outdoor adventure opportunities, the Island's position as the #1 Island in North America is continually fortified. Education and training, research, and innovation support the development of dynamic tourism clusters that support and leverage our tourism industry's growth.

The full strategy may be downloaded at riseagain2030.com.

Many of the strategic objectives of the strategy have been initiated and this work, and more, will be continued over the next three years.



Destination Development Objectives

In prioritizing the objectives of the #RiseAgain2030 strategy to pursue, in collaboration with partners, following are the priorities for 2023-24:

1. To continue to work with partners to address and mitigate the current labour shortage

- Continue to collaborate with partners to provide education to operators on immigration, recruitment readiness, HR practices, etc.
- Continue to work on housing solutions in rural areas that focus on tourism
- Work with the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) on a Mature Workers program for Cape Breton
- Promote tourism employment opportunities from the Cape Breton Job Board on visitcapebreton.com and social channels
- Work with CBU and other partners to explore digital and/or other innovative options to mitigate the labour shortage

2. To work with Cape Breton University's Cape Breton Island Tourism Training Network, NSCC, TIANS and the Nova Scotia Tourism Human Resources Council on upskilling within the industry

- Collaborate with partners to identify the areas of greatest priority
- Support partners in conceptualizing and delivering education and training for industry employees

3. To develop a sustainable tourism plan for the Cape Breton Island tourism industry

- Develop a sustainable tourism task force of key stakeholders to guide the process



- Work with a recognized sustainability consultancy to conduct an assessment of the destination
- From the assessment, create and implement a sustainable tourism action plan

4. To enhance the position of Cape Breton Island as a marine tourism destination

- Continue to support the work of the Port of Sydney, niche ports and the Atlantic Canada Cruise Association to elevate the cruise experience
- Conduct an assessment of marine infrastructure and market readiness at ports, marinas and anchorages around the Island
- Develop a marine tourism plan to effectively attract and service marine visitors from small craft to superyachts

5. To enhance communication channels with industry and residents

- Continue regular industry communication vehicles – newsletter, industry website and corporate social channels
- Conduct 'State of the Industry' presentations and interviews



For more information, visit:
destinationcapebreton.com