

# The Five Seasons of Salem

A City Broadens Beyond Halloween Appeal

By: Caroline Cunningham







# Background

- 1692 Salem Witch Trials
- One million annual visitors
- Fifth season: October
- October 2011 net profit: \$250,000







# Background

- Lesser-known maritime history
- 1626- Seaport established
- Salem Maritime National Historic Site
- 1797 Friendship of Salem
- Peabody Essex Museum
- The House of Seven Gables





# The Opportunity

- Salem seen as "dead" after October 31
- Other non witch-related attractions (primarily maritime) not as well-known
- Opportunity: Increase year-round tourism by bringing awareness to other tourism attractions





# Key Players

+

- Salem businesses
- Salem residents
- Chamber of commerce
- North of Boston Convention and Visitor Bureau
- Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism
- Salem Office of Tourism and Cultural Affairs





# Response

# Timeline



**2007**

Mayor Driscoll initiated an effort to revive the city's Destination Salem tourism strategy.

- 25% of hotel/motel tax redirected
- New executive director hired
- New office location

**2010**

Rattle hired to "create a brand that would work for all of Salem's industries"

- Paid \$25,000 to create a new brand & positioning strategy

**2011**

A new logo and tagline were introduced.





# Marketing Focus

## Boston Market

- Boston market seen as a natural partner in developing tourism efforts
- Key strategy: promote Salem as a perfect day trip for those visiting Boston
- Salem Ferry
- Majority of overnight leisure visitors within the 35 - 54 age group
- Boston's cruise tourism





# Marketing Plan



## GOALS

- Grow overnight visitation
- Increase the economic impact of the visitor industry

## STRATEGIES

- Continue to incorporate data realized through marketing research into communications strategies
- Developing increased focus on niche markets
- Actively pursuing media coverage through an integrated media relations campaign

## TACTICS

- Advertising
- Media relations
- Social media
- E-newsletters
- Content development
- Website



# Niche Markets

Family  
Travel

Culinary

International

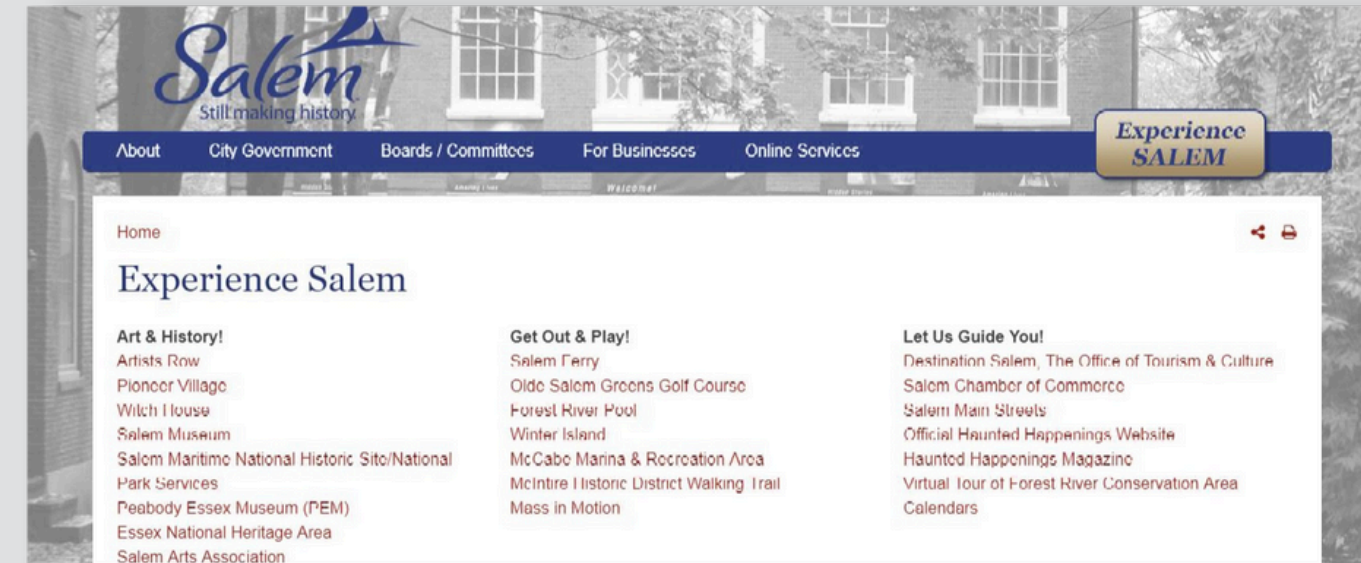
Cruise

Green

Meetings  
and  
Group  
Tours



# Results



## INCREASED VISITATION & REVENUE

- 2011: 1.5% hotel occupancy increase
- 2013 Haunted Happenings festivities: \$267,000 (up 21% from previous year)
- 45% of businesses saw an increase in business in 2013, 23% of businesses said it stayed the same

## GUIDE PRODUCTION & MEDIA RELATIONS

- 1,165,000 Salem guides (by 2012)
- 400,000 Haunted Happenings event guides
- 71 tours hosted
- Responded to hundreds of media inquiries
- Assisted nine film productions

## WEBSITE TRAFFIC

- 376,000 visitors in 2012 to 525,000 in 2013



# Takeaway



## **RESEARCH, FEEDBACK AND PLANNING**

- Appealed to both tourists and residents

## **TIMELINESS**

- Short amount of time to make changes regarding Destination Salem
- Rattle hired three years later

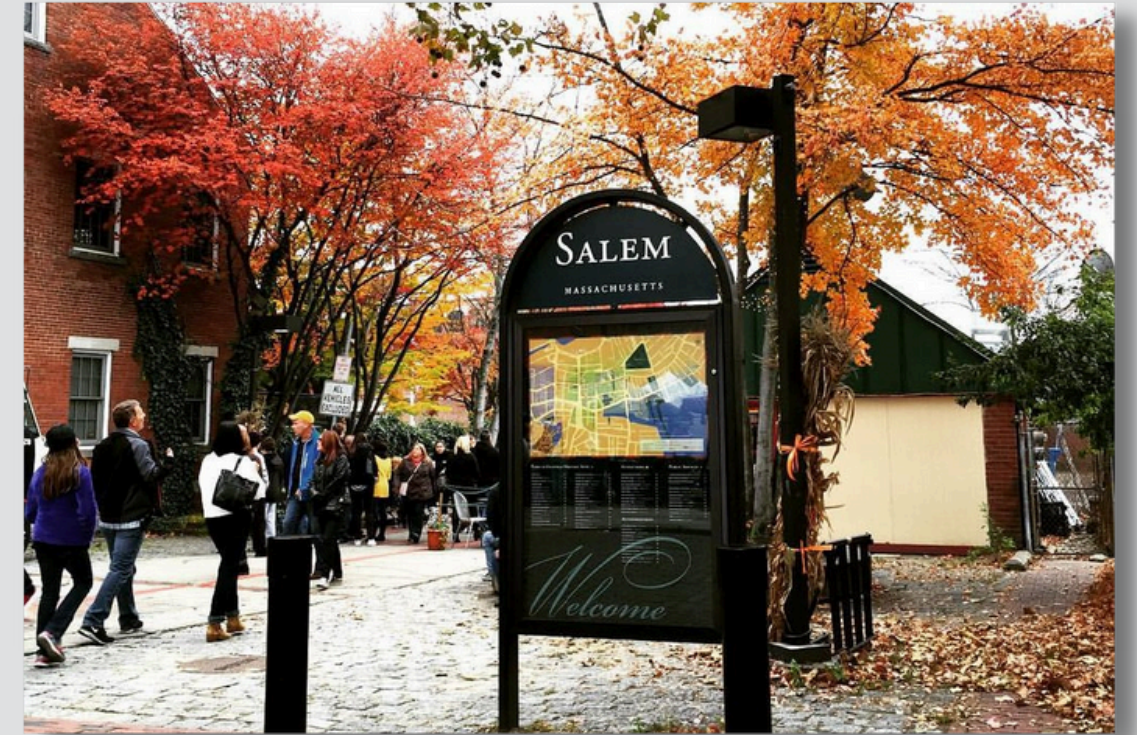
## **MEDIA RELATIONS**

- Strategic decision to host journalists



# What we can learn:

- Take advantage of opportunities.
- Proper research and planning lead to successful campaigns.
- Media relations are important when trying to influence public perception.
- Focus on relationships.
- It may take time to see results.





# The Page Principles

- ✓ • **TELL THE TRUTH**

---
- ✓ • **PROVE IT WITH ACTION**

---
- ✓ • **LISTEN TO STAKEHOLDERS**

---
- ✓ • **MANAGE FOR TOMORROW**

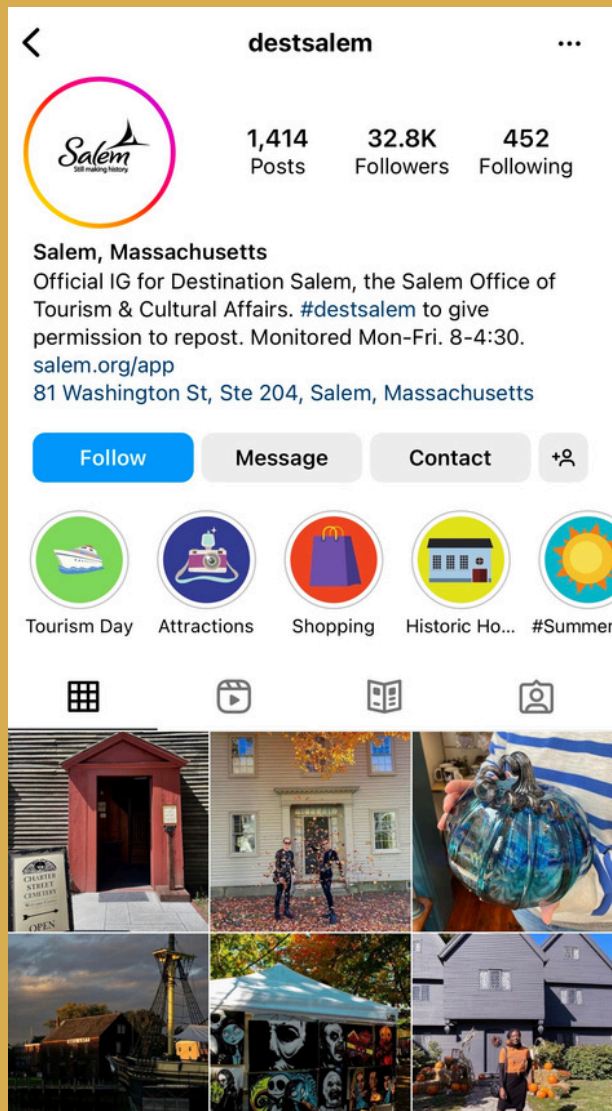
---
- ✓ • **CONDUCT PUBLIC RELATIONS AS IF THE WHOLE ENTERPRISE DEPENDS ON IT**

---
- ✓ • **REALIZE AN ENTERPRISE'S TRUE CHARACTER IS EXPRESSED BY ITS PEOPLE**

---
- ✓ • **REMAIN CALM, PATIENT AND GOOD-HUMORED**

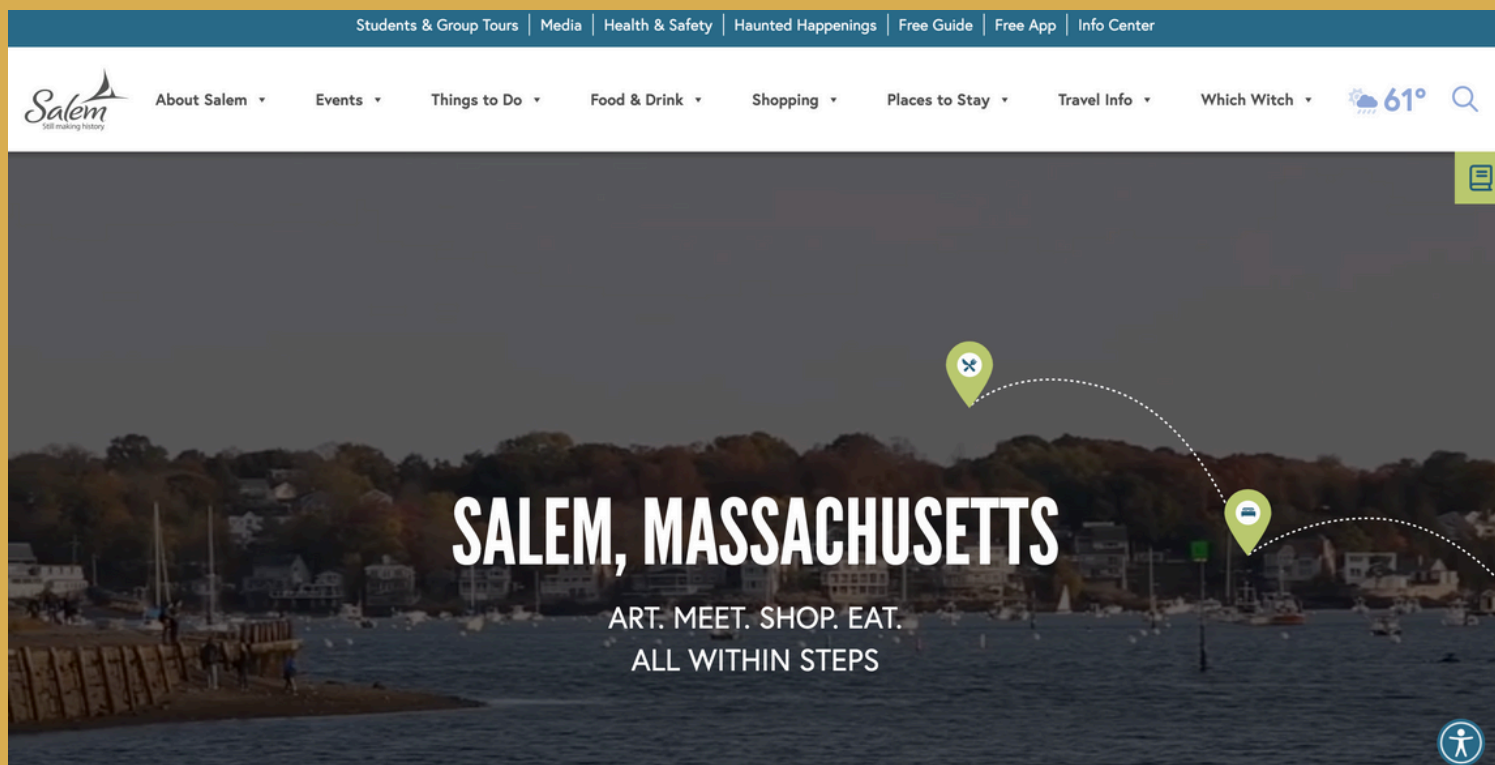
---





# Update

- Logo & tagline still used over 10 years later
- Increased use of social media
- Updated website look
- Record numbers in October 2021
- Current estimate: 1.8 million visitors annually





Questions?



# Questions for Discussion:

- Did Destination Salem wait too long before hiring an advertising and marketing firm? (three years)
- Are there any other ways Salem can satisfy its residents during the chaotic month of October?
- How would this case have been different if this new brand positioning and strategy began today?